

NETWORK: ARCHITECTURE, EDUCATION AND SOCIETY

ARCHITECTURE AND KNOWLEDGE: CRITICAL THEORIES, METHODS AND PRACTICES: FOR SETTINGS OF EDUCATION, FOR PROFESSIONAL SETTINGS AND FOR SETTINGS OF SOCIAL URBAN PLANNING PARTICIPATION.

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Lights and shadows in university classrooms

"How important are considered the light conditions and the visibility in university classrooms?" and "In relation to which of these objectives: the well-being of the users, and / or the fitness of the educational setting, and / or the proper use of the energy resources?". Furthermore, "In which way, natural lighting is supposed to contribute to these goals?". These questions, seemingly rhetorical, showed up in to their relevance, during a research work on the performance evaluation of university classrooms, that is part of a wider project, called "City Studies - Sustainable Campus", aimed at increasing and improving the sustainability practices of the university campuses in Milan.

This research was to detect, through a process of post occupancy evaluation, the main problems in terms of comfort and lighting, of some classrooms of the Architecture and Engineering schools, placed in one of the buildings of the first campus of the Politecnico di Milano, undergone to adaptation works over time.

Therefore, a technical audit of the building layout, of the equipment and of the lighting conditions of the classrooms, as well as some observations on the way of use of the space and a users' inquiry were carried out in subsequent stages. This method turned out to be effective, since the outcomes of the on-site analysis made it possible to get a framework of criticalities, problems and unsatisfied needs. On this basis, it could be possible to outline proposals for the building performance improvements, that are sustainably oriented, while ensure the comfort as well as meet the user's needs, too.

Despite its practical purposes, this evaluation activity allowed, in the meantime, to develop an analysis of the behaviors and of the selection criteria, both of the students –in terms of use of spaces and adaptation to places - and of the buildings managers - in the intervention programs for meeting continuously updated needs and purposes. The results of this analysis show a widespread lack of attention to the correct use of the available resources and to the opportunity of exploiting the natural light. Moreover, this disattention affects more and more, due to its occurrence in those places specifically aimed at a projectual education.

All this brings us back to the need both of critically rethinking the initial questions -due to the evident distance, even in academia, between theory and practice; and of in

increasing empower strategies of awareness of the environmental dimension of our actions.