Veredicte · Veredicto · Verdict

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The Reading of the Verdict: ETSAB, 9th June 2021, Barcelona
With its third edition, the Manuel de Solà-Morales European Prize has consolidated its role as an observation point that provides a view of the most advanced urban planning and design research in a contemporary, global context. Furthermore, the award provides anyone who engages with cities and their surroundings with a broad perspective of current contemporary transformations, such as issues related to urban expansion and environmental crises.

Despite its short history, the award serves as a review of the evolution of research in this field, with its ever-increasing complexity and essential cultural contribution to the study of cities. The award complements the development of this new culture within urban studies, providing up-to-date and in-depth insight into urban phenomena and their history, with interdisciplinary frameworks capable of addressing the responsibilities of the environmental crisis and socio-economic inequality. This new culture is centred in Europe, yet it has influenced research methods in many other parts of the world and can today act as a tool for positive urban transformation.

Manuel de Solà-Morales made a vital contribution to this new approach with his ability to combine analysis and design, to connect history with contemporaneity, and to assess real-world contexts with impartial, yet creative insight.

The third edition of the award saw the participation of 43 candidates from 16 countries: Spain, Italy, Serbia, United States, Greece, Belgium, Austria, Romania, Chile, Bosnia, Brazil, Portugal, Mexico, Germany, Switzerland, France. The candidates were supported by professors from leading European universities who, in turn, represent a wide network of academics.
JAUME BLANCAFORT
Title: Participation and Collective Creation in the Architecture of Lawrence Halprin. The ‘take part’ methodology in the participatory processes of urban projects
Supervisors: Juan Domingo Santos, María Elia Gutiérrez Mozo
University: Universitat d’Alacant

The primary objective of Jaume Blancafort’s research into the work of Lawrence Halprin is clear from the outset: to highlight, for contemporary urban planning and architecture, the importance of Halprin’s participatory methods to urban transformations in the United States, as developed during the 1960s. Starting with case study analysis, the research goes on to investigate the emergence of a ‘take part’ methodology that encompasses both the knowledge of cities and their design. The methodology questions user-designer and designer-administrator relationships, and the wider urban-architectural culture of the time, simultaneously providing significant food for thought to today’s urban planners.

JEROEN STEVENS
Title: Occupation & City: The Proto-Urbanism of Urban Movements in Central Sao Paulo
Supervisor: Bruno De Meulder,
Co-supervisors: Nadia Somekh, Ann Cassiman
University: KU Leuven (Belgium)

Jeroen Stevens’s innovative and well documented research is backed up by his own experience in the field, and reveals the complexities and contradictions of Sao Paulo. The work centres on the relationship between city growth and the ways in which its buildings and previously abandoned spaces are inhabited. The result is an original portrait of Sao Paulo in which its history is intertwined with contemporary social movements and the occupation of the city’s buildings. At the same time, the research proposes an important line of enquiry for future study and a new geography of the city based on cultural practices. This could form the basis for an alternative to the official ‘urban planning map’, as defined by the ruling classes.
José Javier Pi Chevrot’s research addresses a challenging theme, the reconstruction of the history of a city that no longer exists and of which little documentation remains: San Sebastian before 1813, the year it was destroyed by the English fleet. To be able to ‘reconstruct’ what was lost, the study analyses the city as it is now in detail; alongside the testimonies of the past that survive within it, and documents relating to its history. Using 3D visualization, the research recreates a geography and a history that were partially lost, filling a significant knowledge gap with regard to San Sebastian while, at the same time, experimenting with a new methodology for the field of urban analysis.

Mafalda Batista Pinheiro Pacheco’s research reconstructs the origins and evolution of the fishing village of Fuzeta, in the Algarve (Portugal). Through the analysis and redrawing of land registry documents, this research project investigates not only the history of the village, but also the development of a traditional construction technique used in its vaulted buildings, comparing it with similar cases along the European coasts of the Mediterranean. The study traces the urban history of a small settlement that ‘lacked history’, rediscovering knowledge that had been lost and that formed an important part of the identity of the village and its population.
Claudio Forgaci’s interesting and well documented research differs from other studies conducted on the Romanian city. This is largely due to its transdisciplinary approach and investigative point of view, which focuses on the most recent aspects of urban transformations. It takes Bucharest’s relationship with Dâmbovita and Colentina rivers as the primary cipher to understand the city. Using this relationship as a starting point, Claudio Forgaci retraces the history that formed the contemporary capital through critical analysis of its urban history and the ‘ecological’ dimensions of its development. The picture that emerges presents not only an unprecedented vision of Bucharest, but also an outline of the main themes and opportunities that could characterize its future development.

Giulia Testori’s thesis offers a series of reflections on the processes of shared decision-making that characterise global urban development. The research focuses on the relationship between the ancient practices of community participation in urban management and construction, and the inclusion of the concept of Buen Vivir in contemporary Ecuador. In particular, the practice of Minga (community gathering/working) is investigated in relation to its recent reintroduction across three case studies in Quito, where it is linked to contemporary social movements. In addition to its highly original theme, this thesis also stands out for its striking visual content that diverges from current trends in visualization techniques.
ROBERTO SEGA  
Title: New Alpine Ecologies – Industrialization and construction of the city territory  
Supervisor: Paola Viganò  
Co-supervisor: Gioacchino Garofoli  
University: EPFL-École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne

Roberto Sega’s thesis deals with a mountain belt that has been largely unaffected by tourism but is currently enduring a profound crisis. The project investigates the area’s characteristics, formed in recent decades, to identify possible opportunities for the transformation of its current, critical state. The period investigated covers recent industrialization; the planning-orientated perspective is original and well developed, relying partly on direct observations from a variety of viewpoints, for example from the ground (walking) and from the air (travelling by plane). The research includes comparative studies of similar territories in the Alpine area between France, Switzerland, and Italy; the dissertation concludes by proposing a series of guidelines for their positive transformation. The proposed guidelines are based on respect for the environment and the production of clean energy, addressing the impending emergency and degradation caused by climate change and the current economic crisis.

TONI VIDAL JORDI  
Title: Atlas of the Port of Maó  
Supervisor: Magda Mária Serrano  
University: Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya – UPC

The port of Maó (the main port of the Balearic Islands) and the city that surrounds its deep inlet are analysed by Toni Vidal Jordi’s study in a detailed, ‘anatomical’ breakdown of their various parts. The research work is divided into two volumes: the first resembles an exhibition catalogue with examples and analysis of prevailing architectures, starting from the beginning of the city’s architectural history to the present day; the second volume shifts the perspective away from individual works of architecture to investigate broader, more complex issues raised by Maó. The research work gradually ‘re-composes’ the history of the city starting from the special relationship between the port infrastructure and the urban settlement. Construction projects (completed or otherwise), political and economic events, and current criticalities are analysed. In the naming of his project, Tony Vidal Jordi uses the term ‘Atlas’ with explicit reference to the Warburg Atlas, however the research can be understood in a variety of ways: as an in-depth interpretation, a guide, and a catalogue. Yet overall, the work is characterized as a project undertaken by an architect for whom Maó was not only the subject of research, but also the background to his life and work.
Finally, the jury awarded the title of **WINNER** of the Third European Solà Morales Prize to:

**WIM WAMBECQ**

Title: *Forest Urbanism in the Dispersed Flemish Territory*

Supervisor: Bruno de Meulder

University: KU Leuven

The Thesis explores the possibility of reforesting urbanized landscapes. The dispersed urban patterns of the Flemish territory function as a laboratory to test this possibility. The research addresses and shows that deforesting and the need of reforesting is not only a matter of regions like the Amazon river, Central Africa or Borneo, but also relevant for Europe. Especially in dispersed urban landscapes, as there are many in Europe, reforestation is not only possible but can also deliver new qualities, spatial coherence and ways of use of these landscapes. The thesis shows that Forest Urbanism can be a knife that cuts both ways: contributing to the enhancement and variety of ecosystems and improving spatial qualities of sloppily organized urban territories.

The approach and the results of the thesis are original, refreshing and surprising, and challenge theory and practice of urbanism to reconsider the urbanized landscapes of Europe in a fundamental way.

The jury is very impressed by the way how PhD students of European universities have picked up the changing conditions of urban development and the changing agenda of urbanism, by addressing topics in relation to climate change, economic and energy transitions, social equity, and by the variety of innovative approaches and original ways of thinking. Next to this attention for new development and innovation, it is impressing that most of the theses focus on the way how the new conditions can be related to long term historic processes of landscape structures and urban form, so that an ambition to combine ‘modernization’ and innovation with historic continuity can be observed through the research.