

Reflection

Personal reflection on the MSc graduation process:

Looking back from now to when I first thought about embarking this Master Thesis topic I see myself walking a trail, which was not linear, but very curvy; not straightforward, but with crossroads everywhere; not direct, but with many deviations; not flat, but with deep descents and steep climbs; and this trail is paved by stones, either black or white. Looking back I see myself sweaty and panting, hands on my knees for the effort.

Looking back I see myself continuously steering direction, forgetting my intention was to go straight ahead; stopping for long at any decision, maybe too much, to then find out there was no better option than to just proceed; exploring all the possible alternatives up to lose my orientation and struggling to find back the way; constantly speeding up and slowing down, with a great effort to keep myself going at the right pace; continuously finding ideas and making mistakes, encountering impasses and achieving breakthroughs. Looking back I see myself balancing mind and body, with my head between my hands for the effort.

With hindsight however, I see myself in this path, much further then where I began even if not as far as I initially thought; able to consider the alternatives and my decisions even if not yet to take them as serenely as I would; realizing the difference between relevance and superfluity even when constantly tempted to widen my perspectives; seeking tenacity in the highs and lows even if still too much at the mercy of my energies; recognizing where could I best walk my next step to proceed even if partially unable to consciously coordinate my movements. With hindsight, I see that from where I am now, the path behind me brought me to this place and that the black and white pavement, from here, looks like all the shades of grey.

With the same hindsight I realize that, from now on, I shall proceed accordingly to what I learned, so to shape my next route on how this one route shaped me. Still when I turn to look in front of me, I see the trail is not over yet, and I see more curves, more crossroads, more deviations, more descents and more climbs, and the pavement looks again like an infinite ocean of black and white stones. Still, when I look in front of me, my eagerness of walking this path indefinitely arises and I start walking again towards these curves and crossroads and deviations and descents and climbs, on those white and black stones.

But every long trail is made of many stages, and for every stage there is a milestone to be reached. And even if I have always been stubborn and I have always ignored most signs and milestones until now, it has come the moment to reach this one next milestone and to conclude this long stage of the trail, so to take breath again and to then follow the signs to the next milestone, and then the one after, and so forth. It has come the time to divide this infinite path into finite stages and to realize that, planning the way and focusing the view on the next milestone, the pavement turns again into grey shades.

Reflection on the graduation track and choices:

The approach by which the thesis's topic was undertaken consisted of a multi-disciplinary integration between three of the main domains involved in adaptive reuse transformations of defunctionalized historic campus-like architectural complexes: the architectural heritage, the real estate management and the entrepreneurial/economical one. The aim of this integration was to define a fully sustainable cross-domain operational model employable to enable successful adaptive reuse interventions also by means of stakeholders' involvement. While this approach successfully led to the definition of an operational model on which to build up a Master Thesis, the process by which this model was achieved revealed not to have been ideal either efficient. On one hand this was due to the broad spectrum and specificity of the fields of investigation, which would have enjoyed from more adequate knowledge backgrounds which I lacked. On the other hand, this has happened because of the lack of an educational support structure outside of the specific competencies of my mentors. If in fact I can only thank them for their support throughout all the phases of my Master Thesis, I must express my perplexity for the lack of assistance to master students opting for a non-standard and multidisciplinary thesis project between the BK and TBM faculties. In many cases I found myself entangled between inexistent protocols, unmatching procedures and uninformed faculty personnel, which slowed down my graduation process and depleted the additional potential initially prospected by the same faculties.

Because of these circumstances, the constant, valuable feedback of my mentors allowed me to go back within the track of their own disciplines and to develop meaningful knowledge and skills in their respective fields, but also took away in terms of coherence among the different aspects of this Master thesis' project. In this sense, I would not advice any prospective Master Thesis candidate to embark in an interdisciplinary project in the same terms I was prompted to. If I could go bac to the beginning, I would apply again for the Explorelab Graduation studio, and I would certainly deepen my knowledge in Real estate Management and Management of Technology. However, I would not opt for the Master thesis + Annotation formula proposed. Other than in completing my design, my research and my annotation, I plan on concentrating my efforts in building a coherent graduation project between P4 and P5.

Reflection on the relevance, pertinence and significance of the graduation project:

Due to the design proposal essentially constituting an assessment and validation tool of the Master Thesis research, the relation between these two components in this project is mutually beneficial and aimed to the improvement of the proposed heritage intervention projects and intervention methods. If on one side the research provides for perspective improvements to the intervention design methodology, on the other the resulting design can make apparent any possible inconsistency or flaw not initially included or considered in the integrated operational model. In the perspective of phasing large scale interventions, the resulting recursiveness between operational model cycles and adaptive reuse stages allows for incremental tuning, correction, modification and improvement of the transformations, eventually amplifying the magnitude of the benefits obtainable through one-off interventions.

While the thesis develops homogeneously throughout the three fields of Architecture and heritage, Real Estate Management and Entrepreneurship, its initial push is inherently architectural and concerns the loss of architectural, urban, functional, economic and socio-cultural values suffered by the examined typology in its wider contexts. Due to the large number of factors to be considered in the proposal of more effective intervention models and to the necessity of tackling the problem with a multidisciplinary approach, this Master Thesis little remained exclusively within the architectural ranks. Instead, it immediately included

those skills and theories that could better ensure the viability of such massive reorganization of the intervention models. Given the ineffectiveness of the standard procedures and/or methods usually inherited by architecture from the disciplines to it closer (such as the social, cultural and technological ones), the necessary breakthroughs were searched in the field of Real Estate and Entrepreneurial management. Specifically, they were searched in those fields in which the stakeholders involved in a large-scale project would necessarily constitute a mutual network of relationships in order to achieve a desired goal. In this regard, the Campus Management and the Entrepreneurial Venturing fields gave the best support to an otherwise hard integration between the public and private mixed ownerships, interests and dynamics, constituting the critical point to be tackled in the redefinition of adaptive reuse operational models on the typology. This integration resulted in an unprecedented and little investigated innovation potential, that could prospectively constitute an embryonic blueprint on which to start redefining more sustainable and feasible heritage transformation methods and policies. In that case, the findings of the research could be further translated outside of the specific typology of defunctionalized historic campus-like architectural complexes, and include different kind of interventions in the wider heritage panorama or even in other kind of built environments (such as urban voids, gentrified neighbourhoods, post-industrial areas etc.).