

Preface

This publication concerns the multidisciplinary set of studies, researches and projects developed in recent years within the Laboratory for International Cooperation of the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies (DAStU) of Politecnico di Milano and particularly in relation with the Post-graduated Programme “Coopera(c)tion: Knowledge and skills for sustainable cities in the Global South”, promoted by the Laboratory from the academic year 2013–2014.

The Programme was organised in collaboration with many local, national and international institutions: POLISOCIAL of Politecnico di Milano, UNESCO Chair in Energy for Sustainable Development (Politecnico di Milano), UNESCO Chair in Architectural Preservation and Planning in Heritage Cities (Politecnico di Milano, Mantua Campus), UNESCO Chair in Urban and Regional Planning for Sustainable Local Development (University of Ferrara), Architecture Sans Frontières Italy, Engineers Without Borders Milan.

The Programme was designed to promote a culture of international cooperation among students, scholars and professionals of spatial planning, architecture, urban design and land management, in order to raise awareness about the need of a global urban knowledge and to nurture a tendency to find common solutions to deal with the challenges posed by the major environmental, social and cultural changes brought about by globalisation in cities and territories.

In the deeply re-articulated scenario of changing relations between the Global North and the Global South, the old paradigm of international cooperation intended as aid by the North to the South of the world has declined and cooperation is today meant as exchange and sharing of knowledge and practices, in order to proceed towards a more inclusive and sustainable model of development drawn on jointly addressed issues concerning urbanisation and the built environment. Actually the worldwide, massive and rapid urban growth and the related growing social demand for quality and equity assigns specifically to architecture, urban planning and territorial governance the responsibility of bringing out this new paradigm of international cooperation, for the sharing of “knowledge and skills that make cities and urban settlements inclusive, secure, resilient and sustainable”, one of the key goals of the Agenda for sustainable Development 2030.

The Programme Cooper(a)c(t)ion implemented such a philosophy through a multidisciplinary project drawn on the current lines of study, field researches and experimental projects on the Global South produced internationally. A wide range of topics was investigated, including: new forms of socio-spatial inequality; spatial conflicts; informal urbanisation; informal economies; strategies for slum up-grading; inclusive urban management; building techniques for informal contexts; projects for the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage in the territories in transition; strategies and technologies of access to primary resources (soil-water-energy-food); territorial risks assessment, mitigation and management; new technologies for development and social innovation; capacity building; empowerment and local governance.

The publication offers a wide overview of studies, researches and projects related to these topics and fields of intervention, presented by a large number of teachers of the programme—equipped with different disciplinary backgrounds: they are architects, urban planners, urban sociologists, engineers, etc.—and organised following the thematic modules of the same programme, where the different competences and approaches interact on the same issues.

The volume also contains the results of a multidisciplinary Workshop organised “on the field” (Johannesburg 2015) to give the opportunity to the students of the programme and other international students and young professionals to experiment the theoretical approach and the research methodologies on urban development inspired by the principles of socio-ecological sustainability and collaborative governance.

Finally, a selection of the final project works and reports developed by students of the Programme Cooper(a)c(t)ion is presented in the Extra materials online platform attached to the volume.

The interest and the quality of this publication depend to a large extent on the commitment of this large group of teachers, researchers, professionals and students who have all contributed to the implementation of the three editions of the Post-Graduate Cooper(a)c(t)ion Program and the production of such a large and articulated complex of studies and projects.

As curators of the book, we want to thank them first and foremost.

We would also express our special thanks to the Director of the Department of Architecture and Urban Studies, Prof. Gabriele Pasqui, and the Delegate of the Rector for Cooperation and Development of the Politecnico di Milano, Prof. Emanuela Colombo, for the great support given to the project and the activities of the Laboratory of International Cooperation and of the Post-graduate Program Cooper(a)c(t)ion.

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Here we can only remember the international experts with whom we developed the Workshop in Johannesburg, which allowed us to realise an international scientific cooperation experience of great interest and high profile, widely documented in the volume: the teachers and researchers at the University of the Witwaterstrand (Philippe Harrison, Marie Huchzermayer, Noeleen Murray, Garret Gantner, Alex Wafer, Costanza La Mantia, Kristen Kornienko), Roberto Rocco (Technical University Delft), Antje Stockman (Stuttgart University), Chris Harnish (Philadelphia University), Mohamed Salheen (Ain Shams University), Montgomery Narsoo (Governance Consultant to the South African National Department of Human Settlement), Diane Arvanitakis (South African National Department of Housing), Jhono Bennet (University of Johannesburg; 1to1—Agency of Engagement) and Blanca Calvo (CORK/South African Shak Dwellers International Alliance; 1to1—Agency of Engagement).

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