

TEACHING-LEARNING PROCESS OF HISTORICAL HERITAGE: A JOURNEY AS A BEGINNING, PATH AND END

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Abstract

The implantation of new university degrees within the European Higher Education Area implies the need of innovative methodologies in teaching and learning to improve the skills and competencies of students and to answer the growing needs that society continuously demands to heritage management experts.

The present work shows an application of the teaching methodology proposed during the international workshop entitled "*I International Planning Preservation Workshop. Learning from Al Andalus*", which included the participation of the University of Alicante and Granada, Università Politecnico di Milano and Hunter College City University of New York; where we tried to dissolve traditional boundaries derived of interuniversity cooperation programs.

The main objective of the work was to discuss and debate the role of urban Historical Centers within the Global Heritage by the integrated work through multidisciplinary teams and the creation of a permanent international working group between these universities to both teach and research.

The methodology of this workshop was very participatory and considered the idea of a new learning process generated by "a journey experience." A trip from global to local (from the big city to the small village) but also a trip from the local (historical) part of a big city to the global dimension of contemporary historical villages identified by the students through a system of exhibition panels in affinity groups, specific projects proposed by lecturers and teachers or the generation of publications in various areas (texts, photographs, videos, etc.). So, the participation of the students in this multidisciplinary meeting has enhanced their capacity for self-criticism in several disciplines and has promoted their ability to perform learning and research strategies in an autonomous way.

As a result, it has been established a permanent international work structure for the development of projects of the Historical City. This relationship has generated the publication of several books whose contents have reflected the conclusions developed in the workshop and several teaching proposals shared between those institutions. All these aspects have generated a new way of understanding the teaching process through a journey, in order to study the representative role of university in the historical heritage and to make students (from planning, heritage management, architecture, geography, sociology, history or engineering areas) be compromised on searching strategies for sustainable development in the Contemporary City.

Keywords: Historical heritage, workshop, multidisciplinary, innovative methodology.

1 INTRODUCTION

The implantation of new university degrees within the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) implies the need of innovative methodologies in teaching and learning to improve new skills and competencies to answer the growing needs that society continuously demands to heritage experts.

The main aspects that will characterize European heritage management professionals in the coming years and that university education should give a response are based in specialization, better understanding and control of technical advances in the field of heritage; but it is also important the participation in multidisciplinary teams to increase competitiveness by opening markets as a result of global convergence.

Because of that, it is necessary to develop a new education practice to enhance student's ability and to implement technical knowledge to solve problems in heritage architectural projects; it is also essential to respond to growing social benefits and technical requirements and to promote the study of

ancient architecture in a compatible way with the knowledge, control and critical analysis of new materials and traditional construction systems.

2 OBJECTIVES

The present work shows an example of the teaching methodology proposed during the international workshop entitled “*I International Planning Preservation Workshop. Learning from Al Andalus*”.

During this international workshop, several universities and professors participated in the study of global historical heritage. As universities we can find the University of Alicante and the University of Granada (Spain), Università Politecnico di Milano (Italy) and Hunter College, City University of New York (USA); where we tried to dissolve traditional boundaries derived of interuniversity cooperation programs with the collaboration of Pablo E. Vengoechea (Hunter College) and Antonio Jiménez (University of Alicante) as international coordinators.

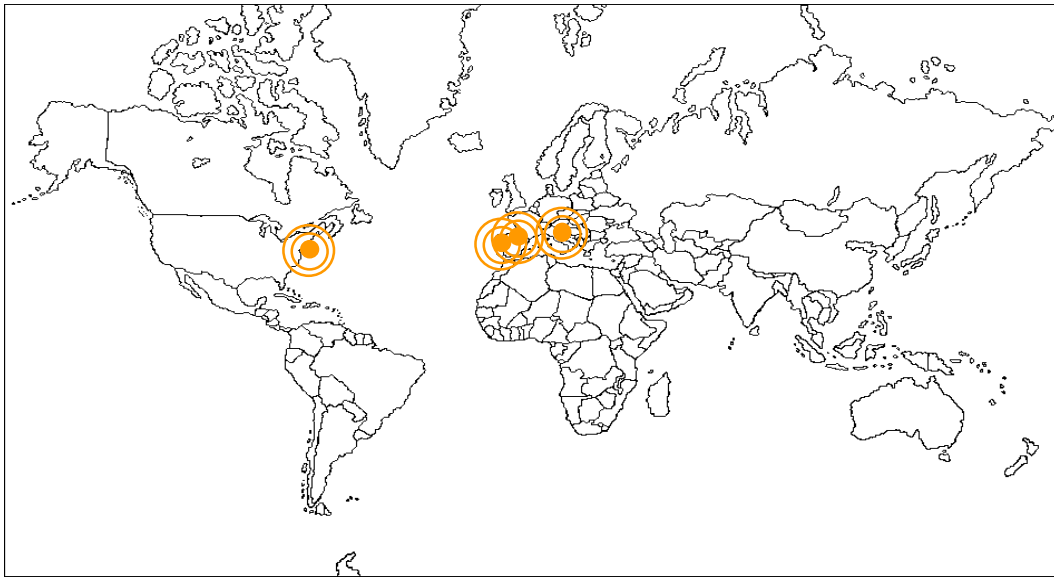


Fig 1. International networks between the organizations participating in the workshop.

As professorate, the workshop was composed by: Gabino Ponce, Bernardino Lindez, Maria José Collado and Antonio Jiménez (from Spain); Lorenzo Jurina and Silvia Petrucci (from Italy) and Pablo Vengoechea (from USA). As invited lecturers we could find Ángel Luis Fernandez, José A. Saéz Mentxacatorre, Achva Benzinberg Stein, Fernando Villaplana, Mary Lawlor and John McClure.

The main objective of the workshop was to discuss and debate the role of urban Historical Centers within the Global Heritage by the integrated work through multidisciplinary teams and the creation of a permanent international working group between these universities to both teach and research. Another aim of this project was to make professionals acquire skills to undertake strategies that encourage self-learning and personal research in constructed and urban heritage and to propose new solutions to preserve this kind of architecture by using present technologies, systems and materials.

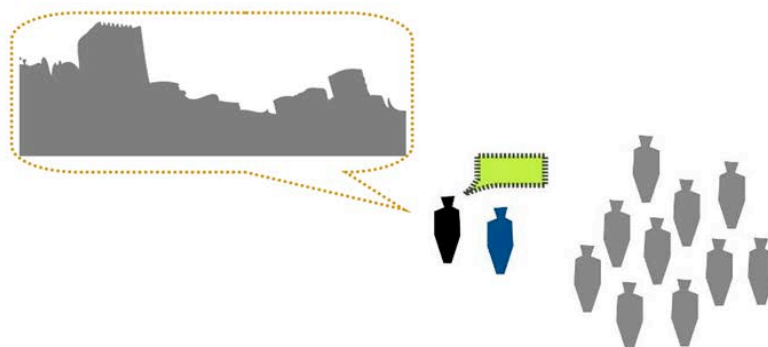


Fig 2. Peer interaction about historical heritage.

An analysis of the experience of recent years involves an opportunity to redefine teaching methodologies in order to be adapted to the new structure proposed by the EEES. We believe in the necessity of continuous adaptation to the socio-economic changes by learning methodologies which better prepare heritage experts for future professional work in multidisciplinary teams. That's why it is especially important the ability to expose their ideas and technical solutions to professional people and other heterogeneous agents involved in this field.

During the workshop, students analyze and debate in international teams the role of the Historic City, the identity of the region and its residents in the context of the Contemporary City. In this process, there are several key ideas to discuss:

- A journey through time anchored in the memory of the historic cities of Al-andalus.
- The cultural and geographic landscape of the Iberian peninsula.
- Understanding the historic city through the study of its formal and spatial structures.
- The Mediterranean Sea as a historical setting of cultural diversity.
- The historic city as a generator of urban identity, coexistence and social interaction.
- Public space as location of meaningful and creative learning.
- The city as an evolving model of sustainability.
- Historic centers as containers of the DNA of the contemporary city.

Fig 3. Poster announcing the development of the workshop and the proposed activities.

The teaching methodology developed is based on the synthesis of the skills previously acquired by students, in order to enhance their competences for the application to practice as heritage management experts. Our travel took us from the global to the local, from the large city to the small village. Paradoxically, the experience also showed a trip from the local and historic neighborhood scale to the international dimension of the historic and contemporary 'global' village.

The journey took us from our respective cities to Madrid, Valencia, Alicante, Granada, Ronda and Gaucín in the Valley of Genal. A journey to search cultural and social markers and to identify the historic Andalusian city: its development patterns, its urban form, its history and its architecture, to participate in the development of sustainable strategies for historic centers.

During the workshop we followed and interesting itinerary between June 10th and June 24th.

- 6/10 (F) Meeting in Madrid, start of the International Workshop.
- 6/11 (S) Visit Madrid's Historic Center.
- 6/12 (S) Departure: Madrid – Valencia (Historic Center) – Alicante.

- 6/13 (M) Seminar I, Alicante “University, preservation, planning and research”.
- 6/14 (T) Seminar I, Alicante “University, preservation, planning and research”.
- 6/15 (W) Seminar I, Alicante. Departure: Alicante – Granada.
- 6/16 (T) Seminar II, Granada “Architecture and landscape”.
- 6/17 (F) Seminar II, Granada “Architecture and landscape” – Córdoba.
- 6/18 (S) Seminar II, Granada “Architecture and landscape”.
- 6/19 (S) Seminar II, Granada. Departure: Granada – Ronda – Gaucín.
- 6/20 (M) Seminar III, Gaucín. “World heritage. Analysis and global strategies”.
- 6/21 (T) Seminar III, Gaucín. “World heritage. Analysis and global strategies”.
- 6/22 (W) Seminar III, Gaucín. “World heritage. Analysis and global strategies”.
- 6/23 (T) Project presentations and findings.
- 6/24 (F) Conclusions and reflections.

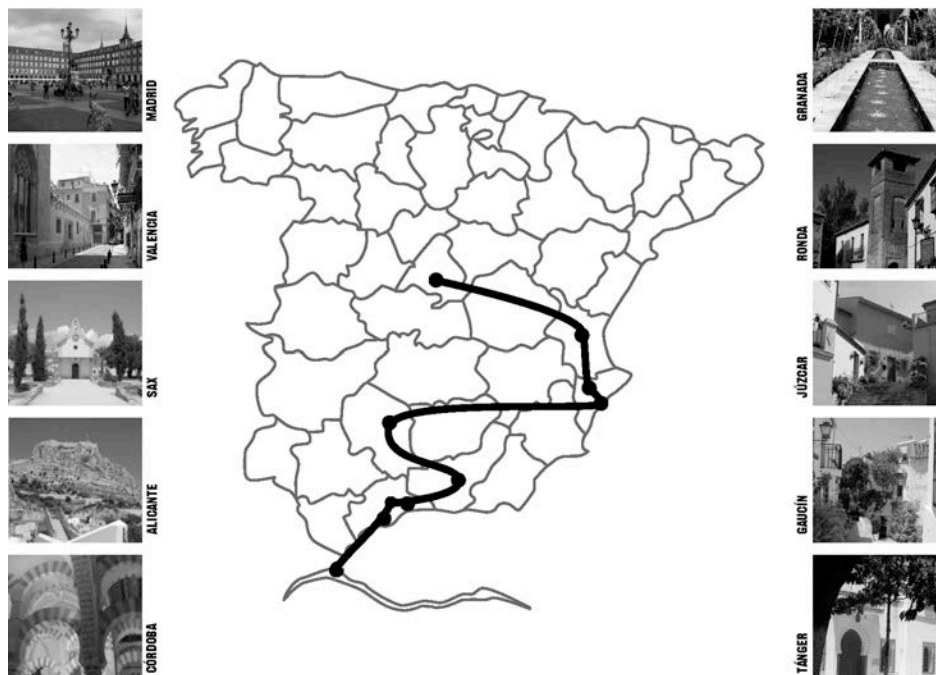


Fig 4. The journey proposed in the workshop (Madrid, Valencia, Sax, Alicante, Córdoba, Granada, Ronda, Júzcar, Gaucín and Tánger).

The methodology of this workshop was very participatory and considered the idea of a new learning process generated by "a journey experience." A trip from global to local (from the big city to the small village) but also a trip from the local (historical) part of a big city to the global dimension of contemporary historical villages identified by the students through a system of exhibition panels in affinity groups, specific projects proposed by lecturers and teachers or the generation of publications in various areas (texts, photographs, videos, etc.).

So, the participation of the students in this multidisciplinary meeting has enhanced their capacity for self-criticism in several disciplines and has promoted their ability to perform learning and research strategies in an autonomous way by both interactive classes and practical exercises supervised by teachers, working individually and in groups.

Bidirectional teaching allows to use tools for synchronous and asynchronous communication between teachers and students in order to promote a participatory and active attitude. This will create different forums for the resolution of doubts, working in groups, and study of relevant data and literature.

The methodology enhances the ability for understanding new concepts, the ability for working in groups, and their ability for conveying their ideas and solutions in public exhibitions by oral communications of their technical proposed resolutions (what shows their capacity for solving heritage problems).

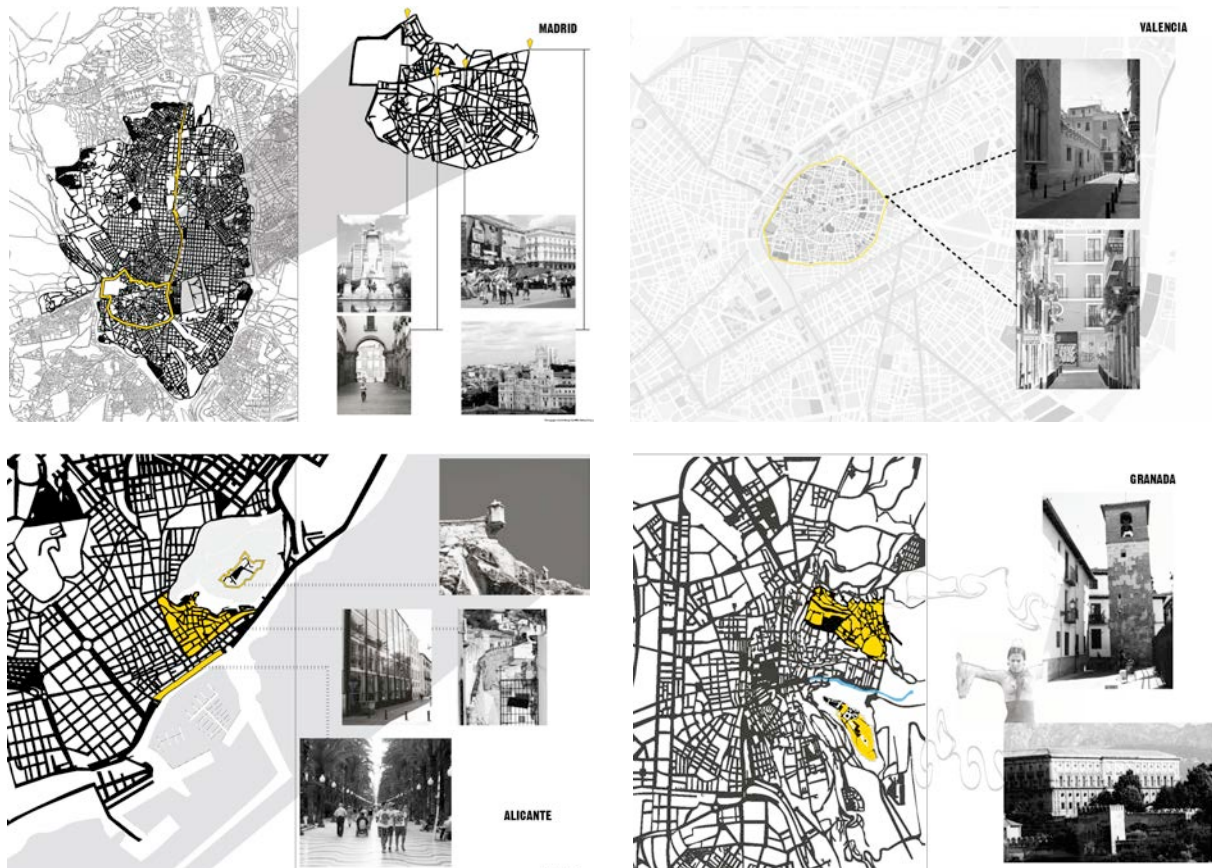


Fig 5. Work carried out within the workshop in the cities of Madrid, Valencia, Alicante and Granada.

Some of the activities performed in the workshop are the study of theoretical issues, conducting individual work, participation in guided tours and field work, interviews with experts in the area, team work and publication of findings.

After the work, we prepared a publication whose content reflects all the material, ideas and projects generated within the workshop and, due to the great sharing experience between different countries, we decided to establish an international working group with several participants to develop projects related to historic and contemporary cities.

3 CONCLUSIONS

As a result, it has been established a permanent international work structure for the development of projects of the Historical City. This relationship has generated the publication of several books whose contents have reflected the conclusions developed in the workshop and several teaching proposals shared between those institutions.

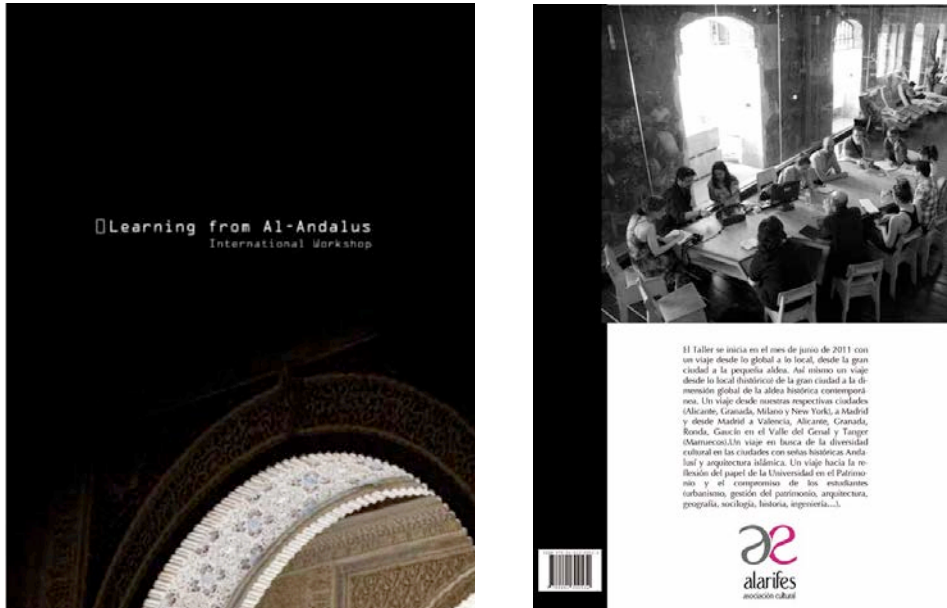


Fig 6. One of the books that reflected the conclusions developed in the workshop.

All these aspects have generated a new way of understanding the teaching process through a journey, in order to study the representative role of university in the historical heritage and to make students (from planning, heritage management, architecture, geography, sociology, history or engineering areas) be compromised on searching strategies for sustainable development in the Contemporary City.

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