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Summer School, Feed Europe

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Publication date:
2014

[Link to publication from Aalborg University](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Tvedebrink, T. D. O., Fisker, A. M., & Hvejsel, M. F. (2014). Summer School, Feed Europe: 8 Urban Farming Scenarios (DCE Lecture Notes; No. 36). Aalborg University.

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DEPARTMENT OF CIVIL ENGINEERING
AALBORG UNIVERSITY

SUMMER SCHOOL “FEED EUROPE: 8 Urban Farming Scenarios”

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DCE Lecture Notes No. 36

Summer School
“FEED EUROPE: 8 Urban Farming Scenarios”

by

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July 2014

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Published 2014 by
Aalborg University
Department of Civil Engineering
Sofieldalsvej 9-11
DK-9200 Aalborg SV, Denmark

Printed in Aalborg at Aalborg University

ISSN 1901-7286
DCE Lecture Notes No. 36

WORKSHOP ASSIGNMENT
FEED EUROPE
SUMMER SCHOOL 2014

8 URBAN FARMING SCENARIOS

ENGINEERING – ART – ARCHITECTURE – CITY PLANNING – FOOD STUDIES



“Beauty will result from the form and correspondence of the whole, with respect to the several parts, of the parts with regard to each other, and of these again to the whole; that the structure may appear an entire and complete body...” Andrea Palladio
(Wundram 2009:index)

The fundamentals of architecture

Long time ago, sited on a small hill of easy access and surrounded by cultivated land full of fruits and wines in Northern Italy the Italian architect Andrea Palladio (1508-1580) designed an extraordinary villa called Villa Almerico Capra Valmarana - La Rotonda. The villa is characterised first of all by its four symmetrical and nearly identical facades, a series of large sculptures and classical elegance. Another significant feature for the villa is the complex pictorial and ornamental decorations. Here iconography and mythology is present through the sculptural articulation of the surface and it transmits a sense of history and of the divine, but it is also an intellectual enjoyment when reconstructing the sacred symbols, myths and history revealed within the precisely orchestrated interior and its relation to the surrounding landscape (Golin 2013:10,19). In this meeting between building interior and landscape the villa frames a set of perspectives; the shifting colours of the seasons, sky-land, past-present, front-back, indoor-outdoor, the contrast between fields and garden. In its totality as a synthesis of vivid imagination, mathematical precision and abstraction that brings together real and imaginary situations the villa seems exemplary of the multidisciplinary task that it is to build as such.

According to Golin (2013:35) the villa was created for a man who delighted in reading and music, but who also wished to enjoy the benefits of farming. Combining healthy air, humanistic leisure and lavishness the villa stands as a granary of food reserves that supplied distant states and guaranteed nutritional survival (Golin 2013). Palladio is still today considered as one of the most important architects in the history of Western art. His thinking, writing, drawing and building have had a long lasting effect for centuries in most of Europe, and as emphasised by Wundram (2009), Palladio made a fundamental contribution to classicist thinking in modern architecture. Not just through his strict focus on rhythmic order, proportion, geometry and symmetry around central axis, but also through his sensitive concern for the relationship between the whole and the detail – to create harmony defined not only by the uniform design of the building itself, but also by its integration into the landscape or urban context (Wundram 2009:12).

Palladio's sensitive reaction to the surrounding context was combined with a profound understanding of history, cultural traditions and mythology, but perhaps more importantly according to Wundram (2009:7) Palladio also emphasised that architecture must focus on general welfare. If summarizing, the villa is exemplary not only of the physical parameters that make up the built environment but also of a unification of engineering, art, architecture, city planning and food studies at a methodological level. But, also as an example for future studies and development, the villa has a prevailing relevance when considering environmental challenges that the built environment faces today regarding food supplies, climate changes etc. Consequently, it is our intention to use the villa as critical point of departure for the FEED EUROPE Summer School 2014.

Detailed description of the FEED EUROPE Summer School

Addressing issues of climate change, decreasing resources, food waste, and lifestyle diseases challenging our welfare society, the Feed Europe summer school joins master students of engineering, art, architecture, city planning, and food studies to design 8 Urban Farming Scenarios. We believe that the built environments have to transform to meet the challenges climate change, decreasing resources, food waste, and lifestyle diseases pose to society. Houses, schools, hospitals, and offices are the focal venue of our consumption habits as well as of our sense of joy and wellbeing in everyday life. Hence, built environments form the basis of change, both technically with regards to energy usage or food production, and aesthetically with regards to the perception of our surroundings. However, as is visible both in the construction industry and in the food industry, the aesthetic potential of this transformation is easily oppressed in tight economical and technical conditions. A multidisciplinary approach is therefore needed reformulating or re-thinking our built environments if the necessary transformation is not to be conceived solely as a technical matter but also as a means to bring joy and wellbeing to city dwellers.

With the Feed Europe summer school we therefore propose a turn-around joining research and educational forces of engineering, art, architecture, city planning, and food studies. Under the headline "8 Urban Farming Scenarios" we propose a synergy of growth, consumption, emotion, form, space and structure. With the purpose to bring together diverse theoretical, methodological, and operative perspectives on Urban Farming the pedagogical strategy and structure of the Feed Europe summer school is therefore an interdisciplinary approach born within the problem based learning environment (PBL) that characterize Aalborg University. It is our hope that our fellow partner Universities in the Summer School with their contribution will fulfill the interdisciplinary approach.

During the Feed Europe summer school the students will be introduced to a classical and magnificent architectural setting – the Villa Rotanda – by the Italian architect Andrea Palladio. During their work in the first part of the workshop, the students will analyze existing renowned historical architectural and artistic elements from the villa, such as the window, column, sculpture or landscape, and relate these analyses to the current challenges posed by climate changes. The idea is then to transform these architectural and artistic elements by pairing them with a series of new functions positioning the current need for the built environment to be able to grow, produce, harvest, prepare, share, cure, dispose and reuse. This means, the students critically consider these architectural and artistic elements as growth potentials, as inviting spaces, as structural details, as art forms, or as eating environments and finally transform them into new Urban Farming Scenarios. As the primary result of the project a series of these scenarios are drawn and built in scale 1:10 on a large piece of paper and exhibited at the Venice Architectural Biennale, thus setting the scene, for an international and interdisciplinary discussion of future educational and research perspectives related built environments.

In this way the workshop assignment is designed to connect the FEED EUROPE Summer School with the particular work of Palladio and that of exhibiting the result on the 14th International Architectural Biennale. The 14th International Architectural Biennale directed by Rem Koolhaas is dedicated “Fundamentals” and is about tracing the history of modernity over the past, identifying the fundamental elements - e.g. the floor, the wall, the ceiling, the roof, the door, the window etc. - that act as references for the relationship between human perception and architectural settings. Illuminating the past, present and future the theme of the Biennale thus invites participants to reconstruct how architecture and built environments positions itself in the future. We have accepted this challenge and have a unique contract with the Biennale to facilitate one of the first student workshops ever to be held at the Biennale. With Villa Rotonda as the frame of our work, we define the common thread uniting the Biennale exhibition, the workshop assignment and the FEED EUROPE Summer School. As a response to the Biennale theme “Fundamentals” we have chosen an architectural setting that is known for its proximity, a building that gives a unique opportunity to study classical disciplines such as aesthetics and technique within disciplines of Fine Arts, Food Studies and Architecture. Hence, following the footsteps, so to speak, of the great Italian architect Palladio, the Summer School will take place first in Vicenza and then in Venice.

The Task – “keeping the meaning, but changing the function”

During the summer school a number of theoretical and practical approaches to the field of urban farming are introduced to the students through lectures provided by lecturers from the participating organisations. The specific task of the students will be to design future urban farming scenario by juxtaposing analysis and design using Villa Rotonda as the point of departure. In this matter the students are divided in 8 interdisciplinary groups, each with the task to analyse one fundamental architectural element (*window, column, stair, portico, vault, dome, door, loft*) and one artistic element (*sculpture, surface, ornament, colour, landscape, view, material, light*). This analysis is paired with one new urban farming functions (*grow, produce, harvest, prepare, share, cure, dispose and reuse*) forming a synthesis of the three disciplines Fine Arts, Architecture and Food Studies, and thereby also forming the basis for the task of designing a future urban farming scenario.

8 architectural elements

Window
Column
Stair
Portico
Vault
Dome
Door
Loft

8 artistic elements

Sculpture
Surface
Ornament
Colour
Landscape
View
Material
Light

8 new functions

Grow
Produce
Harvest
Prepare
Share
Cure
Dispose
Reuse

The synthesis of the three disciplines interpret, change and transform the classical functions of the Villa Rontonda while at the same time seeking to keep the inherited spirit, role and meaning of the architectural setting. In practice the students use projections of the original drawings of Villa Rotonda to redraw their own transformation in scale 1:10 on large stripes of paper rolled out on the workshop floor. Upon these transformed drawings the students create their Urban Farming Scenarios as parasite structures to be mounted, cut, folded, drawn etc. upon the drawings. Hence, the students are intended to transform an architectural element by means of an artistic principle and food related insight into the urgent challenges related to Urban Farming. An Urban Farming scenario is in other words both defined as a physical instance, a future architectural element, an artistic act, a

societal comment, and as a methodological and visionary instance intended to exemplify a multidisciplinary future approach to the development of the built environment. The format secures a comparable typology, which can form the foundation for exploration in the cross field of engineering, architecture, city planning, arts and food. Also the work will contribute to a state-of-the-art not only in architectural practice and theory but also in the other disciplines.

In continuation of the summer school in Vicenza, a workshop and Session on the 14th International Architecture Exhibition in Venice will be arranged. The objective is to display the results of the summer school to the public in an internationally esteemed exhibition milieu. According to the above description of the Summer School Task the workshop is divided in two phases, marked also by two different locations:

Phase 1: Vinzenca – analysis and design

The students join forces in multidisciplinary groups and conduct analytical field studies at Villa Rotonda using sketches and scale models. Each group analyse one architectural element and one artistic element paired with the task of redesigning those elements in order to unfold one new Urban Farming Function.

Phase 2: Venice – design synthesis and presentation

When arriving at Venice the design synthesis phase commences. For this phase and for the final exhibition a series of posters together forming Villa Rotonda in its entirety at scale 1:10 are positioned on the workshop floor as the canvas for the presentation of the final Urban Farming scenarios. During the workshop the students redesign and transform their assigned elements through sketches, drawings and scale models before presenting their final Urban Scenario as a 1:10 model by mounting it onto the exhibition posters as a redesign of these elements.

AMF. MFH. TDOT. AAU. Denmark 05.08.2014.

