

Studio South: Co-creating Architecture Education through Residencies in Calabria.

SANDRA DENICKE-POLCHER & RITA ELVIRA ADAMO

London Metropolitan University
s.denicke@londonmet.ac.uk
r.adamo@londonmet.ac.uk

Abstract

The paper discusses a programme for studying architecture through student residencies in a small village in Calabria, Italy. Called Studio South, the programme runs as part of the research initiative Crossing Cultures at London Metropolitan University. It addresses social and political concerns caused by migration and the depopulation of marginal areas in Europe.

Facilitated through the local NPO Le Seppie, London-based students have engaged with the village and its inhabitants since 2016 through a “fluid” timetable which produces small-scale constructions, art-led community activities and large-scale regeneration strategies beyond the boundaries of the academic calendar. In an area with high immigration, this engagement has grown a community of practice (CoP) which embraces students, locals, refugees and other newcomers. Different student cohorts from London have applied peer-learning, team-work, experimentation and agency alongside Le Seppie’s onsite engagement. Both can now see how they have influenced change over time through an intercultural dialogue which has started to reactivate the area.

In 2020, ten students moved to the village during the Covid lockdown and self-initiated the first residency supported by Le Seppie, which amplified the previous engagement. In 2022, this has developed into funded residencies, offering a small group of students to develop their design projects for the village, while embedded in the local community and connected with their course online.

The paper evaluates how the residency model disrupts the formal pedagogy and studio culture associated with academic engagement and its relationship to research and practice. It will be outlined how the residencies have blurred several institutional boundaries and enabled students to occupy the gaps between architectural education, research and practice.

Firstly, the students, as research partners, have driven a thematically organized investigation through their design projects which address the research questions framed by their design brief. At the same time, they have themselves become subjects in an action-research in which their activities and responses have created the data for pedagogical and cross-cultural findings.

Secondly, the paper identifies new hybrid roles and collaborative relationships that bridge academic and lived worlds and presents how this immersive pedagogy blurs the boundaries between learning

and living. For example, the locals have started to perceive the students as part of the NPO, while the students' individual goals and Le Seppie's concerns have merged into a common ambition.

Thirdly, our evaluation framework itself blurs the boundaries between research and subject matter. Based on reports, focus groups and interviews, data has been gathered through a graduate research partner who was a student in the 2020 residency and is now a member of the NPO. Analysing the viewpoints of the different collaborators - students, the NPO and local community members – the paper concludes with a recommendation for future student residencies as an innovative pedagogical and practice model. It proposes to apply learning through immersive practices on world issues, to benefit society as well as facilitate students' transition into the workplace and entrepreneurship.

KEYWORDS Studio South, architecture residencies, engaged pedagogy, immersive practice, reactivating marginal areas

Crossing Cultures - Disrupting Pedagogy

The research initiative Crossing Cultures¹ at London Metropolitan University explores new pedagogical models within the academic structure that facilitate the development of intercultural relationships and collective practice while filling the gap between education and practice.

As part of this initiative and in collaboration with an interdisciplinary not-for-profit organisation, called Le Seppie², London-based students have engaged with an Italian village and its inhabitants since 2016 through a *fluid* timetable. This includes activities within and outside of the curriculum and results in small-scale constructions, art-led community activities and large-scale regeneration strategies. These activities have grown a productive presence in the village over time while disrupting the boundaries of the academic calendar. Through successive field trips, workshops and residencies, Crossing Cultures has established an intercultural learning platform in the village. Students benefit from research-led learning and teaching that supports their individual projects and interests, while the collective effort simultaneously addresses common concerns caused by migration and depopulation of marginal rural areas in Europe.

The village, called Belmonte Calabro is located in Calabria, South Italy, in a region suffering from depopulation. For decades' people felt the pull from the large cities promising prosperity. At the same time, the region has faced the arrival of refugees on its Southern shores. These two opposing conditions have created a need to rebuild local communities while offering an opportunity for students and academics to become "agents of change"³ Having created an experimental teaching and research platform which sits outside of the physical university boundaries, Crossing Cultures has over time raised social capital by attracting and integrating students as well as refugees, and through this process started to rejuvenate the area around Belmonte and helped its economy to regrow.⁴

So far, the long-term engagement with the village, which has been key for the project's success, has been established through a thoughtfully designed curriculum, engaging

different student cohorts from London alongside Le Seppie's presence in the village. Repeatedly bringing students and activities to the location has established a connection between the village and the university in London. The activities sit partly within the academic curriculum (field trips, workshops, residencies etc), they are complemented by voluntary activities located outside of the curriculum (summer workshops organized by Le Seppie, individual initiatives etc).⁵

Notably, Le Seppie was set up by a group of Londonet graduates who were empowered by the project and continue to empower others by working on the boundaries between education and the profession. Working in partnership with the Italian architecture collective Orizzontale and the local municipality, both Le Seppie and the students, are now able to see how they have together influenced change over time.

Crossing Cultures sits within the context of other co-productive, university-based architecture live projects. For example, the Castlegate project by the University of Sheffield "has grown beyond the limits of the design studio to reach out for a broader constituency"⁶, or the Grangetown project by Cardiff University has "co-produced an annual cycle of public celebrations and collaborative research"⁷. The focus of such live projects is on the impact of their collaborative processes rather than on final outputs. In Calabria, teamwork, peer learning, experimentation and agency have grown a community of practice (CoP) which embraces London Met students, local people, refugees, and professionals. Extending previous research about how Crossing Cultures' collaborative process has created "a culture of global citizenship"⁸ and "a home for newcomers"⁹, this paper focuses on the student residencies as an innovative form of engaged pedagogy. It disrupts the formal pedagogy of academia and contributes a new outlook for live projects.

Studio South - Disrupting Studio Culture

"Be free and don't stuck in a circle, explore and be open to meet people... it will... change your experience [of architectural education] and... help you learn and understand more about culture, traditions, languages, and dialects, talents and creativity, values and

*much more...*¹⁰ (Undergraduate student, Calabria Residency 2022)

In 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent move of universities to online teaching, was an opportunity to amplify the previous engagements which had started in 2016. After the first lockdown of 2020, a group of ten undergraduate students approached their tutors with a proposal to move to Belmonte as Studio South, while following classes online. LondonMet's architecture students faced the prospect of working and living in isolation because UK universities decided to continue online teaching in response to government directives. As a result of the first lockdown, the majority of the cohort had moved back home to live with their parents in different parts of the UK. The ten students, all in their final year, were hoping to combine their studies with living together as a "bubble" in Belmonte to break up their isolation (figure 1). Their studio tutors developed a brief related to Crossing Cultures, which would allow them to study while living on their project sites and being supported by Le Seppie.



Figure 1: Students socialising with locals in Belmonte's Bar dello Sport (Rita Adamo 2020)

In 2022, this initiative was developed into an eight-week student-in-residence programme as part of the universities' study-abroad Turing scheme. The residency offered students to build on the knowledge by previous cohorts and develop their design projects for the village while embedded in the local community. Students started the first five weeks of the academic year in London, then moved to Belmonte for the remainder of semester 1, and returned to London before

Christmas to complete their modules with the rest of their cohort in London. Casa di BelMondo, a half-renovated and half-building site, served as the studio space where students worked, lived, cooked, and met new people during both residencies (figure 2).



Figure 2: Working and living in the Casa during the second residency (Giulia Rosco 2022)

Studying off-campus, Studio South spatially disrupts the studio-based design teaching in London. Referencing theories of CoPs, the residencies have enabled students to learn beyond developing "knowledge and practice", as this learning "also involves a process of understanding who [they] are and in which communities of practice [they] belong and are accepted"¹¹. As students are living and working within the local community and with Le Seppie, what is "practised is learnt and vice versa"¹².

While architect residencies have no historical relation to commonly-known artist residencies, there are international parallels with the practices by architecture collectives, for example Exyzt, Collectif Etc and Assemble. Édith Hallauer's article "Living to build, building to live..."¹³ is instrumental to better

comprehending the opportunities of “residential architects”¹⁴.

As part of the large-scale renovation of a social housing estate in Boulogne-sur-Mer (2010-2013) the architect Sophie Ricard, alluded to as the “neighbourhood referent”¹⁵, lived and worked amongst the residents while the renovation took place¹⁶. “Living on the site” allowed “the understanding of the societal issues”¹⁷ in which the project took place and built trust over time, essential for the success of the renovation.

As such, Studio South shares the aspirations and methods of this practice, which includes the transformation of “social living conditions through the experience of living itself”¹⁸. The residencies in Calabria blur the boundaries between living and working. Le Seppie’s and the students’ joint-venture benefits long-term residents, refugees, and other newcomers. It facilitates the enhancement of the village’s community life through the place-specific nature of the residencies, instrumental for a new form of architecture practice.

La Rivoluzione delle Seppie - Disrupting Research and Practice

La Rivoluzione delle Seppie (LRDS) started as a movement by Italian architecture students studying at London Metropolitan University. Returning to their country of origin, they wanted to contribute to local developments in a meaningful way. Moreover, they sought to experiment with more practical methods of education than those traditionally used by the Academy. They wanted to create new possibilities for hinterlands like Belmonte by inviting unexpected interlocutors to participate in rethinking architecture in a responsible manner. This quickly developed into an expanding network of like-minded young people, as anyone who arrives in Belmonte is welcome to become part of the so-called BelMondo, the parallel imaginary place created by the encounters and interaction between students, locals and newcomers.

The Italian students arrived in Belmonte in 2016 without a fully formed plan. They were driven by personal interests and the ambition of their future careers to sit outside of the architectural tradition. When they saw their initial impact on the local community and the integration of refugees during the first summer

workshop they had organized, their ambitions grew quickly. Less than a year later, the informal group founded the NPO, called Le Seppie.

Today, Le Seppie’s base in Calabria is built on a transdisciplinary approach in collaboration with LondonMet, the Municipality of Belmonte, the Italian architecture collective Orizzontale, other international professionals, students and collectives (Figure 3). All involved are collaboratively developing a long-term plan for the village’s historic centre. With reference to Encore Heureux collective, this creates a place that welcomes “the unexpected”¹⁹ and offers hybrid spaces that can be appropriated for collective needs.



Figure 3: La Rivoluzione delle Seppie’s collective working in the Casa (Nicola Barbuto 2020)

Since 2019, they operate from the municipality-owned Casa, a former nunnery. Activities, such as building, working on laptops, studying, cooking and eating together on a very long table, watching movies on a large projector or sunsets and partying, are dependent on the physical space of the Casa di BelMondo as well as its virtual world, called BelMondo, too. Both together generate, elaborate and transmit ideas, processes and events that impact urban and social reactivation. With minimal architectural interventions, e.g. the construction of wooden and travertine floors and furniture-sized installations, the municipally-owned abandoned house has been transformed into a factory of ideas, research and experimentation.

Alberto Magnaghi has called such experiments “the consciousness of a place,... promoting active citizenship, civic networks and forms of self-management of common property, capable of creating sustainable wealth in all parts of the world.”²⁰ At its heart is the creation of a collective action that reflects the locals’ and

newcomers' cultural values. As these are communicated on a local to global level, partnerships and relationships with stakeholders and other national and international organizations have rapidly expanded.

We consider the students and young professionals who work with the local community and refugees as protagonists. Part of their practice is continual experimentation. Architecture is at the centre of their transformative practice, which has turned the Casa into a laboratory for informal action research. They utilize research practices and methods that are not embraced by established institutions or defined by specific categories. Their research is carried out through generosity and conviviality, cooperatively and autonomously. Tools and valuable equipment are built as required to implement different activities, which ensures creativity and productivity. This form of autonomy allows the protagonists to conduct their research without adhering to standard methods while being flexible and adapting to various lifestyles. This working method has developed a model which connects different disciplines by integrating practice and theory in various contexts.

The first student residency in 2020, helped Le Seppie and the BelMondo project to deepen their research about the site. By living and working together on-site, they entered real space. They were no longer visitors, but had become local residents, recognized by the entire community. We observed that the students, as temporary residents, helped change local perspectives and attitudes towards the area. Crucially, by living and studying on-site, the daily concerns of the community became part of the research and vice versa, and as a result, the students and locals entered a reciprocal relationship.

Methodology - Students as Research Partners

This paper seeks to develop a better understanding of the cross-cultural live engagement of the Calabria residencies and the impact this pedagogical model can have on students and the local people. We also wanted to understand the relationship between the students and the hosting NPO to draw

recommendations for future student residencies within marginal areas.

To gather data, we used a mechanism which disrupts the traditional hierarchy of academic research. As part of their academic work, the students not only made the village and its territory their temporary home, but they also became research-active within it. In recent years, other universities have also created opportunities for research-active students. For example, our method mirrors the Connected Curriculum at UCL which intends "[to connect students] with researchers and with the institution's research" and also "with each other and with alumni"²¹. In 2022, five undergraduates and two postgraduate final-year students participated in the residency in Belmonte. This gave rise to peer-mentoring, but also to knowledge exchange beyond the group. The knowledge that students develop each year and pass on to the next cohort is also passed on to the local community while the students learn from the locals.



Figure 4: Factory Village by student Hailey Savage (2023)

The presence and involvement of students offers opportunities for enhanced learning, but also serves as a vehicle and subject matter for research in and importantly through the students. Firstly, students conduct a

thematically organized investigation through their own design projects, for example in 2022, answering how Belmonte could become a factory village to enhance local industries²² (figure 4). Students also related their dissertations and essays for their subject studies to the Calabrian territory and Le Seppie's practice. Secondly, the student-researchers are also implicated as subjects in an action-research endeavour in which their own activities and responses create the data through which the pedagogical and cross-cultural findings for this paper have been recorded. And thirdly, the presence of the students in Belmonte functions as a catalyst for social engagement with the locals in which the relationship with Le Seppie provides a structure of support and collaboration.

Furthermore, we selected the research team's leading members to have multiple and hybrid roles within the project; Dr. Rita Adamo, now lecturer at London Met, is also co-founder of Le Seppie and a former student; Joe Douglas, now free-lance architectural assistant and a resident of Belmonte, is also a member of Le Seppie and a former student of the first residency. Following his move to Belmonte during the pandemic in 2020, Joe never returned to the UK and was employed as a research assistant to collect data throughout the 2022 residency.

For the study, we collected experiences and observations via questionnaires at the end of the residency, asking students what they valued and what could be improved. We also convened three focus group interviews with the students at the beginning, middle, and after students had returned to the London studio. These were conducted using a semi-structured interview approach allowing for an in-depth picture to unfold. In addition, our research assistant wrote field notes over the eight weeks of the residency.

Through analysis of the transcripts and notes from the focus groups, we wanted to understand the students' experience and perceived benefits for themselves and the local community. We noticed that the residency had helped the erosion of boundaries between living and studying, as well as allowed participants to play out hybrid roles between academia, research and practice. The research assistant also noted how the boundaries between the students and the NPO had blurred,

which was a new observation. To further understand how the students contributed to the work of the NPO and how they were recognized by the local community, Joe conducted three additional interviews with local stakeholders in Belmonte, a young female member of an established family business, a middle-aged male entrepreneur and a son of a local farmer who had left the village.

With our own hybrid roles as researchers/participants, we had already observed collaborative relationships that operate between academic and lived worlds. Nevertheless, the themes that emerged from the data also supported a new theory of hybrid roles which bridge the gaps between education and practice.

Ethics approval continues from the first interdisciplinary study in 2019. Permission to publish was obtained from all participants mentioned in this paper.

Discussion - Co-production of Architecture Education and Practice

Blurring boundaries between academia and practice

Joe's field notes supported previous observations of how boundaries between academia and practice were blurred during the residency; firstly, between students' living and working at the Casa di BelMondo, and secondly, between the different groups (LondonMet students, NPO, local people, students from other universities and other professionals) which brought their own activities to the Casa at different times. Joe mapped how the students' learning - about the place, themselves, other people - developed in parallel to their design projects during the residency. During Week 1, they got to know the Casa and a "feeling at home" was developed. In week 2, students started to "establish a routine", but there were also distractions through events outside of the Casa. Week 3 saw the "Casa opening-up" and students started more actively to engage with the locals. During week 4, students felt "supported" for their design projects as the London-based tutors came for a field trip with students. Activities in the Casa culminated during Week 5 with the visit of 20 people as part of School of Commons²³. Some students felt this was a distraction while others

considered it a tremendous source of inspiration for their work. In Week 6, the focus returned; students built relationships with locals which also informed their projects. Week 7 saw students finalising their onsite research and gaining new insight into both their lives and their projects. Week 8 saw most of the students departing, yet they also identified “opportunities for future engagement”.²⁴ As one student noted in his final report:

“...this was the best experience of my entire education... quite [a] unique new form of teaching and learning. It allows students... to see the impact that their work could actually have on real people and motivate them to continue working within fields of architecture that directly impact people's lives for the better...”²⁵

Our research makes the case for a model of applied learning on world issues through immersive practices, which can ease students’ transition into entrepreneurship and build relationships to benefit society.

Hybrid spaces

During the residency, students’ activities of studying and living mainly took place in and around the Casa di BelMondo. The study supports previous theories that the Casa’s hybrid structure functions similarly to the traditional design studio. Spaces for collaboration and a wood workshop include additional living spaces; a beautiful kitchen overlooking the landscape and sea and two large terraces where students study or spend time to relax (Figure 5). The Casa offers students the opportunity to find inspiration and interact, often by creating synergies between different groups.



Figure 5: Enjoying a sunset after a day of work during lockdown, Studio South 2020 (LRDS 2020)

The Casa offers an additional educational experience by physically allowing to arrange and adapt spaces to changing needs. As such, the inhabitants of the Casa not only participate in its construction but plan for different scenarios at different times, enabling the group to enjoy the same rooms in various layouts for different activities. LRDS coined the term “domestic building site” for the Casa. This characterises that it is constantly evolving, as the construction of spaces follows the needs of those who live there. “Building as a verb”²⁶ has become an answer to open-ended and uncertain projects that incrementally take on meaning by constantly adapting to the context, new possibilities and changing objectives.

The immediateness of the residency has offered students a reality in the making. In the void of the marginal territory of and around Belmonte, students can experiment with their speculative projects and try things out, which is a luxury compared to their university studies in crowded big cities, such as London.

The residencies allow students to share their projects - while in the making - with the local community who provide insightful information, as a student reflects:

“When locals are present in the Casa, it is good for students to see how locals take part in the project, via their reactions, comments, actions etc. These relational dynamics between local and non-local inhabitants could begin to spark curiosity for students as to how they can live and work and take part... outside of their residency.”²⁷

Local artisans and craftspeople have also offered their workshops to students. As such, the village has become a temporary and dispersed university, a research factory between practice and education, a hybrid space.

Common concerns

In her essay “No-man’s Land. The Pre-occupation of Belmonte Calabro”²⁸, postgraduate student Rachel Buckley explains that living in Belmonte means becoming part

of a community rather than acting as an individual:

“Methodologies of ‘regeneration’ being employed by a ‘young generation...’ as a ‘critique of existing models’ emerges from an understanding of ‘the strength of intangible relationships, which are expressed in gestures, trades and traditions, according to the dynamics of each community...’”²⁹

Drawing up on the theories of CoPs, knowledge is therefore no longer the product of individual barter but of collective action, and itself a form of action. Knowledge is, therefore, intrinsically a factor of change. As a result, “Not only is the map not the territory” (Korzybski, 1933), “but it is the map itself that modifies the territory” (Bateson, 1970). Such an approach questions the traditional academic system, as student-citizens, LondonMet, Le Seppie, and the local community are all called upon to actively collaborate in the pedagogical practice.

Situated Learning, established through Lave and Wenger, provides the theoretical framework for this pedagogical approach³⁰. As CoPs are closely linked to the construction of identity, a sense of belonging and commitment³¹, such communities of practice can serve both, individual interests and common concerns. Our research suggests that the residencies encourage the development of common concerns through collaboration by living and working together (Figure 6). The term “radical collaboration” coined by Howell and Brown Wilson (2018) might be useful to closer define this particular CoP. It describes “an approach, often led by community-oriented non-governmental organizations, that seeks to transform the ways disadvantaged groups access the city”³².



Figure 6: London Met students collaborating during a week workshop (Nicola Barbuto 2019)

The residencies in Belmonte stimulate synergies between the different participants' interests and help create a concern for marginal territories. As such, the pedagogy of Studio South is proposed as a laboratory which experiments with design activities that are not stereotyped or imposed. It is a collective expression that interprets the evolution of the place and redesigns the social and territorial order. Using marginality as a lever, it repositions those places as active players back into the territorial system of the region.

Referencing Roberta Feldman et al., the close alignment between this project and public interest design is evident, since the common concern lies “at a scale that is bigger than the individual project” and aims to target “long-term societal problems”³³. Importantly, this process has allowed students to become protagonists. They have been given a voice and are actively involved in their learning journey. They have become agents of change for fragile territories, able to build confidence and pride during their education.

Collective Care

“The organisations’ care, awareness, and sensitivity, is a vital dimension, especially when navigating through a complex field of influencers; or considering their own influence on the community.”³⁴

The “care” here expressed by a student is a common thread which has been observed in the various roles played out by the permanent and temporary community members. For example, Joe Douglas, who took care of the students and their initial connections with the local community during the residency; Gerardo Vespucci, a local musician and historian, who became a landmark for the students, taking care of his dog Italo like his son; and Giuseppe Grant, architect of Orizzontale, caring for the architectural project of BelMondo since 2017. It seems that actions of care have become contagious and key for the success of the project.

The care for hands-on construction has also been an essential role in creating both the physical and mental collective spaces. Not just

thinking about building, but actually *building* to stimulate and direct the thinking toward collective care has constantly been redefined. All people involved make up the interdisciplinary group which has developed the skills, knowledge, awareness, and intuition needed to comprehend, respond to, and explain the ongoing social phenomena of BelMondo.

Hybrid roles

The role of the designer and of the builder merge in the creative process of living in the Casa. There is no clear distinction between the design process and construction, both are flexible and mutually exchange meaning in the actual context. As research, construction and communication merge over time, the process takes on a tangible value. This forms the speculative and incremental construction idea of non-constant spaces which allows hybrid roles to play out.

Designing while constructing, learning while teaching creates and/or regenerates and/or strengthens a range of new/existing roles between the realm of education and practice. Merging different roles is foremost a pedagogical tool when students are invited to apply theoretical knowledge in a real situation for their own needs. For example, Giuseppe Grant from Orizzontale and the students jointly designed and built spaces which were tailored to their need for privacy; a meaningful action as it flipped the traditional role of the profession.



Figure 7: Working with local craftspeople to improve the Casa during a field trip (Domenique Guglielmo 2021)

This educational model enables the dialogue between theory and practice, which supports the collaboration between professionals and laymen (Figure 7). While helping the renovation of the Casa by using local

resources, the local community has received a place to meet in the Casa.

The study has also helped to clarify the relationship between the students and the hosting NPO. Students become part of the movement of LRDS as soon as they arrive on the residency. Some, like Joe Douglas, transition in their role over time to become an official member of the NPO Le Seppie. Students very much understand these different roles as they are “less aware of the longer-term tasks and concerns of the NPO which are not related to the immediate residency”³⁵.

Nevertheless, the study found that most locals amalgamate the students and Le Seppie into one group. For example, one local explained that “the activity of the students seems an extension of the aims of Le Seppie” with the students’ “engagements and enquiries”³⁶ helping locals to understand more of the overall ambition. Another local suggested that students act as agents for the NPO as their initial interest in the family’s confectionery business helped to approach and engage with Le Seppie. Joe explains these hybrid roles as students share the experience of “understanding and appreciating the territory” by living and working together with the NPO. Importantly he reflects, that “this creates the shared ambition and therefore the productive partnership which also blurs the boundaries between the students and the NPO”³⁷.

Conclusion - Towards A New Pedagogy and Practice Model

*“Students from all over Europe could come and live in Belmonte at different periods over the year... The knowledge and culture exchange would be quite [a] unique new form of teaching and learning. It allows students a chance to learn what it is like to work in the real world.”*³⁸

In this vision from a postgraduate student who joined the residencies in 2022, the Casa as “an international design studio”³⁹ is the key ingredient of this new pedagogical model. While also promoting moments of encounter between local and temporary communities, the Casa plays a significant role in initiating territorial reactivation and allowing all involved to take on different roles. It exhibits testimonies for local culture in the form of physical, cultural and social assets (Figure 8).

It has been renovated to hold events, pedagogical activities, seminars, etc. organized by the university or by Le Seppie. It facilitates educational and practical experimentation for students and tutors within the village context. The action-research taking place in and from the Casa has enabled both, the reactivation of the territory and the creation of an active and practical pedagogy. The coming and going of international students and young professionals has given the area a new visibility, as well as the locals a fresh perspective on their region. For students seeking a new practice model outside the densely populated cities where little is left to be done, this represents a new land of opportunity built on collaboration. A student's reflection on the 2022 residency might be instrumental to conclude the significance of collaboration: "...individual soft skills...when applied naturally (socialising, organisational and logistical help, occasionally language translation)... are contributing to the forms of activity we consider *work* and are just as highly tangible."⁴⁰



Figure 8: Traditional basket weaving in the Casa with local craftlady (Giulia Rosco 2022)

Nunzio, a farmer's son who has moved to Switzerland and only returns twice a year to Belmonte, provides an outsider/insider perspective. He suggests that "the assets of Le Seppie could be shared with other young groups that may operate close-by within the region. Working with other towns [would be] a good way to expand..."⁴¹. Assuming that sustainability and social cohesion can only be achieved through global action, the future would be to develop cooperative relationships that can generate trust and affect a wider geographical area.

To make this pedagogical model situated in Belmonte transferrable to other locations, our

observations and students' feedback have identified areas for future improvement. For instance, students suggested how the next group of students could organise their daily lives in the Casa not only as university students but as flatmates and help with the hurdles of communal living. For example, a system for sharing money, car sharing/car drivers, for cleaning/food sharing and maybe rotas for doing these tasks"⁴². Mobility away from Belmonte and around it is another important logistical issue raised by most students as the village lacks public transport. A car-sharing program with locals has been proposed for the future as a sustainable way of getting around and is to be tested next year.

To conclude, these suggestions demonstrate the hybrid nature of the research since universities rarely engage at this level in the domestic life of their students. While the boundaries between professional and personal realms blur during these residencies not always to the students' comfort, it is important to acknowledge that living in a temporary community is an essential aspect of their learning and research.

The residencies encourage a non-commercial and non-professional approach to architecture which has an advantage over practice not only because the student-researchers represent a "critical mass" for the project, as pointed out by Rita Adamo: "They collect so much information, particularly during the residency, which has a powerful potential not only for their academic architectural projects."⁴³ Le Seppie is currently investigating how to include students as official team members in the NPO and to structure this new form of practice. Becoming a member of the NPO would need a definition of responsibilities and privileges, including a source of income.

As the residencies provide students with the opportunity to live and learn as (temporary) members of the society in which they are designing, they can explore contemporary issues of today's society while they learn and experiment in a real-world context. As a result, we believe that future architects will be able to contribute to civil, social, cultural, and economic transformation in society. This would benefit from a long-term study to monitor how the residencies have impacted graduates' careers. We believe this would also evidence that by fostering cultural and social

exchanges between students and local communities, marginal areas can affirm their value in a global conversation.

Acknowledgements:

We want to express our gratitude to all the students involved in this project for their confidence and bravery in disrupting pedagogy by joining this new hybrid programme in Calabria, showing complete comprehension, ingenuity and collaboration.

REFERENCES

¹<<https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/research/centres-groups-and-units/the-centre-for-urban-and-built-ecologies/research-projects-and-funding/crossing-cultures/>> [accessed 6 March 2023]

²<<https://larivoluzionedelleseppie.org>> [accessed 6 March 2023]

³ Sandra Denicke-Polcher, 'Reactivating underpopulated areas through participatory architecture in southern Italy by creating a home for newcomers'. *Architecture_MPS*, 21.1 (2022). <DOI: 10.14324/111.444.amps.2022v21i1.003> [accessed: 5 March 2023] p.5

⁴ Federica Calissano, Sandra Denicke-Polcher, Domenico Giacco and Corinna Haenschel, 'Participatory architecture workshops with asylum seekers and local people: Experiences from the Crossing Cultures project in Southern Italy', *Health Education Journal*, 82.1 (2023), 95–107 <DOI: 10.14324/111.444.amps.2022v21i1.003> [accessed: 5 March 2023]

⁵ Denicke-Polcher, 'Reactivating underpopulated areas', p.2.

⁶ Carolyn Butterworth with Ranald Lawrence, 'Provocateurs or Consultants? The Role of Sheffield School of Architecture in the Co-production of Castlegate', *Architecture & Resilience, Interdisciplinary Dialogues* (Routledge 2019) p.131.

⁷ Mhairi McVicar and Neil Turnbull, 'The live project in the participatory design of common ethos', *Charrette*, 5.2 (2019), 117-135

We also want to thank our colleague, Jane McAllister, co-tutor of Studio 3 and partner of the project since the very first beginning.

Thanks to our research assistant, Joe Douglas, for invaluable observations and new insights.

Thanks to all the professionals and collectives involved during the residencies of Studio South and all the years, making BelMondo a reality: Le Seppie, Orizzontale, Antico Caffè Marano, Collectif Etc, Zuloark, Politecnico di Torino, and many more.

<<https://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/arched/char/2019/00000005/00000002/art00009>> [accessed: 5 March 2023] p.117.

⁸ Sandra Denicke-Polcher, 'Expanding the Scope of Architectural Education: Creating a Culture of Global Citizenship for Students', *Charrette: Learning Through Practice*, 6.2. (2020), 31-52
<<https://www.ingentaconnect.com/contentone/arched/char/2020/00000006/00000002/art00003>> [accessed: 5 March 2023]

⁹ Denicke-Polcher, 'Reactivating underpopulated areas'.

¹⁰ Sandra Denicke-Polcher, 'Studio South: co-creating architecture education through residencies in Calabria', Dataset, unpublished (2023).
<https://repository.londonmet.ac.uk/cgi/users/home?screen=EPrint%3A%3AView&eprintid=8424> [accessed: 26 April 2023]

¹¹ Karin Handley, Andrew Sturdy, Robin Fincham and Timothy Clarke, 'Within and beyond communities of practice: Making sense of learning through participation, identity and practice', *Journal of Management Studies* 43.3, (2006), 641–653 <<https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6486.2006.00605.x>> [accessed 5 March 2023] p.644.

¹² Karin Handley et al., 'Within and beyond communities of practice', p.641.

¹³ Édith Hallauer, 'Living to build, building to live: architectural permanency as an urban

development tool?', *Politiques urbaines alternatives* (2), (Métropoles 2015)
<<https://doi.org/10.4000/metropoles.5185>>
[accessed 5 March 2023]

¹⁴ Édith Hallauer, 'Living to build', p.2.

¹⁵ Édith Hallauer, 'Living to build', p.6.

¹⁶ Édith Hallauer, 'Living to build', p.3.

¹⁷ Édith Hallauer, 'Living to build', p.11.

¹⁸ Édith Hallauer, 'Living to build', p.9.

¹⁹ 1 AA.VV. *Infinite Places, Constructing Buildings or Places* (Éditions B42, Paris 2018)
<https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/IMG/pdf/dd-lieuxinfinis-def-040518-en_1__cle04a553.pdf>
[accessed 3 May 2023]

²⁰ 1 AA.VV. *Infinite Places*.

²¹ UCL Connected Curriculum: a framework for research-based education
<<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/teaching-learning/connected-curriculum-framework-research-based-education>>
[accessed 5 March 2023]

²² Project brief 2023, available at
<<https://www.londonmet.ac.uk/schools/art-architecture-and-design/studios/2022/undergraduate-architecture/ug-architecture-studio-03/>>
[accessed 5 March 2023]

²³ School of Commons
<<http://www.collectifetc.com/realisation/a-school-of-commons-2/>> [accessed 5 March 2023]

²⁴ 'Weekly Report' by Joe Douglas, 'Studio South', Dataset, unpublished (2023).

²⁵ 'Student Questionnaire' by Postgraduate Student, 'Studio South', Dataset, unpublished (2023).

²⁶ Ammendola, J. (2019). Building as a Verb, *The Journal of Public Space*, 4(3), 7-40
<DOI: <https://doi.org/10.32891/jps.v4i3.1219>>
[accessed 3 May 2023]

²⁷ 'Weekly Report' by Joe Douglas, 'Studio South', Dataset, unpublished (2023).

²⁸ Rachel Buckley, 'No-man's Land. The Pre-occupation of Belmonte Calabro', *Studio South*, Dataset, unpublished (2023).

²⁹ Rachel Buckley, 'No-man's Land'.

³⁰ Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger, *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1991).

³¹ Karin Handley et al., 'Within and beyond communities of practice', p.644.

³² Kathryn Howell and Barbara Brown Wilson, 'Preserving Community through Radical Collaboration: Affordable Housing Preservation Networks in Chicago, Washington, DC, and Denver', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 36.3 (2018)
<DOI:10.1080/14036096.2018.1490812>
[accessed 3 May 2023] p.1.

³³ Roberta Feldman, Sergio Palleroni, David Perkes and Bryan Bell, 'Wisdom from the Field: Public Interest Architecture in Practice', *American Institute of Architects Latrobe Prize Research*.
<<https://www.publicinterestdesign.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Wisdom-from-the-Field.pdf>>
[Accessed 3 May 2023]

³⁴ Rachel Buckley, 'No-man's Land'.

³⁵ 'Student in an interview, unpublished (2023).

³⁶ 'Interviews with locals', 'Studio South', Dataset, unpublished (2023).

³⁷ 'Weekly Report' by Joe Douglas, 'Studio South', Dataset, unpublished (2023).

³⁸ 'Student Questionnaire' by Postgraduate Student, 'Studio South', Dataset, unpublished (2023).

³⁹ 'Student Questionnaire' by Postgraduate Student, 'Studio South', Dataset, unpublished (2023).

⁴⁰ Rachel Buckley, 'No-man's Land'.

⁴¹ 'Interviews with locals', 'Studio South', Dataset, unpublished (2023).

⁴² Student Questionnaire' by Postgraduate Student, 'Studio South', Dataset, unpublished (2023).

⁴³ Rita Elvira Adamo in an interview, unpublished (2023).