

The Dutch myths. Imageries of architectural culture of The Netherlands in postwar Italy (19XX-1980)

Original

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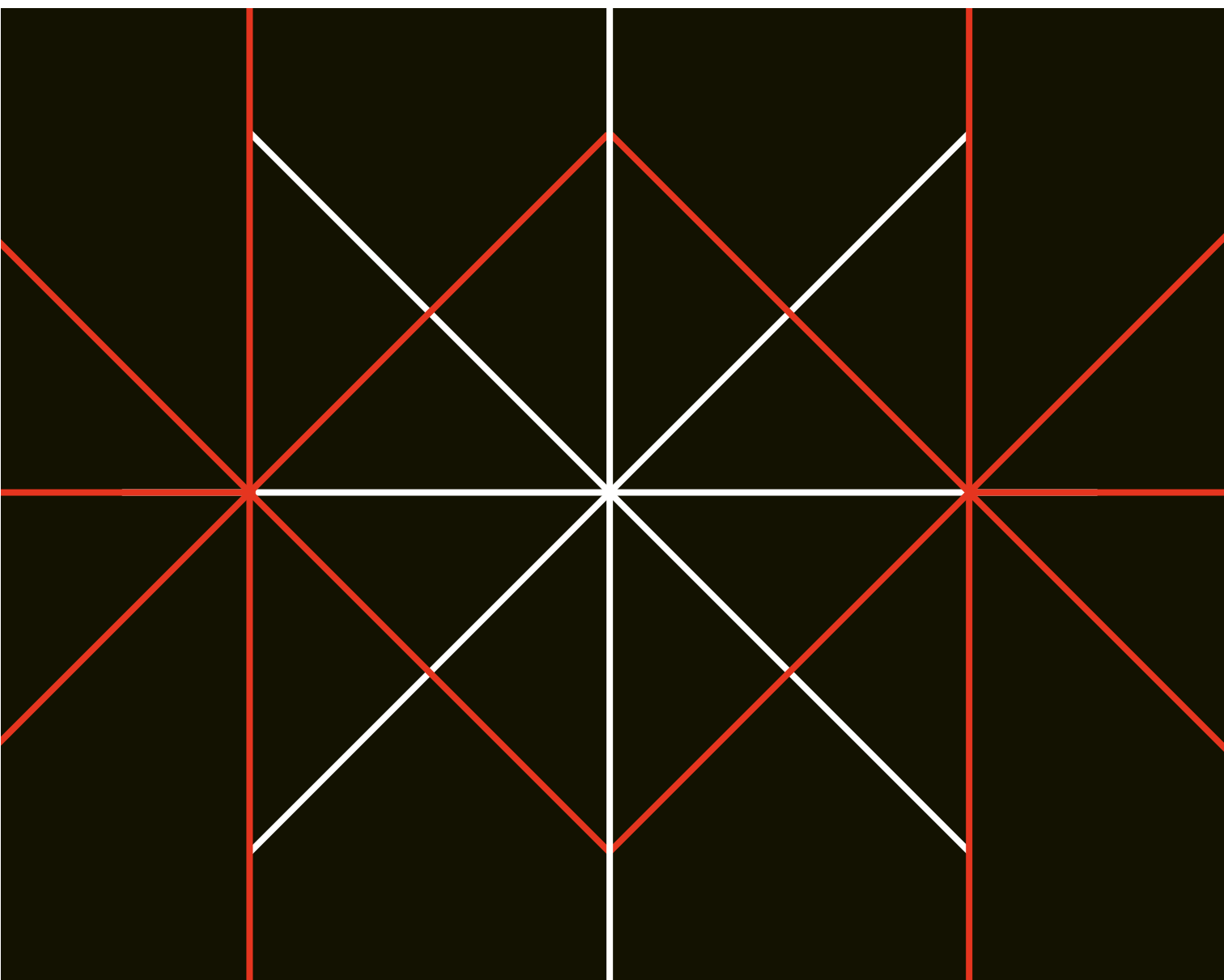
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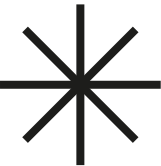
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SPACE

DASP Yearbook 2023





SPACE

SPACE

DASP Yearbook 2023

PhD in Architecture.
History and Project

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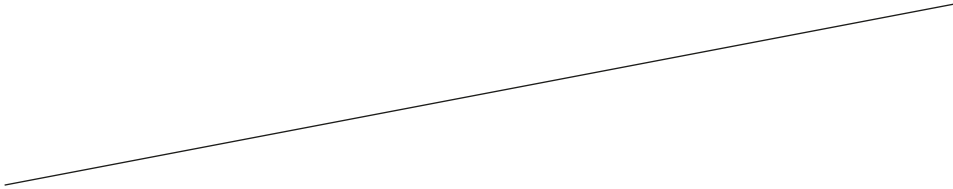
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INTRO- DUCTION

TORINO 10125. OUT OF THE DASP-HOME.*

AN INTRODUCTION

Marco Trisciuglio

*"But the designer does not usually construct a history with the rigor expected of a historian, and we expect the design to display other qualities of subjectivity as well. A design is also equivalent to a novel, convincing the user to suspend disbelief. Part-novelist, part-historian, the architect is 'the history man'. We expect a history or a novel to be written in words, but they can also be cast in concrete. An architectural book can be history and a novel, and so can a building"**.*

Jonathan Hill (Director of the PhD Architectural Design at UCL), 2014

The PhD Program in Architecture. History and Project (DASP) was born out of two long lasting traditions of doctoral level studies and research in the area of Architecture at Politecnico di Torino. The PhD Program programatically investigates the complexity of architectural cultures starting from the multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary interweaving between the history and the design of buildings, cities, territories. On the one hand, in fact, urban and architectural composition and technology of architecture favor an interpretation of the project as a tool for measuring the stratifications of theoretical elaborations, technical innovations and modifications of built environment. On the other hand, the historical disciplines for architecture and the city, far from a local vision and thanks to the cooperation with other histories (the economic, social, anthropological and aesthetic ones), trace paths that can be traveled by architects and urban planners, but also by other humanities scholars, such as philosophers and linguists. The intertwining of the two research traditions on which it was founded has thus made the DASP in recent years, precisely starting from these premises, the most advanced doctoral space in which to cultivate humanistic studies within the context of a technical European university as Politecnico di Torino is.

The activities of the DASP are characterized by a push towards internationalization, built starting from the vast network of scientific projects established by the members of its Council (named Collegio), which becomes fundamental both in the definition of new strategies in the architectural and urban fields (in the two areas of design and historiography) and to face the professional and working challenges that derive from it. The PhD Program shares the study objectives of numerous laboratories, centers and research groups based in the University (such as the China Room, the Future Urban Legacy Lab interdepartmental center, the Institute of Mountain Architecture and, more recently, the Construction History Group and the Transitional Morphologies Joint Research Unit): often the thesis proposals are built in agreement with these subjects or are open to the world of entrepreneurship and innovation, involving public administrations, companies, trade associations, non-profit organizations. Equipped with a teaching staff made up of over a third of teachers from other Italian universities and from foreign universities, alongside the Italian language the DASP has equally chosen (both in internal communication and in the didactic offer) the English language, considered as the lingua franca of scientific research.

Recognized by the Department of Architecture and Design DAD, in its Strategic Plan, as the joint instrument of third level learning and research training in the field of Architecture, the DASP is the main place where that fundamental (or "curiosity driven") research is cultivated which is useful for feeding apparatuses of knowledge and skills to be spent on applied (or "mission oriented") research and on participation in competitive challenges in the European research framework (nowadays Horizon Europe).

The main purpose of the DASP as a pedagogical institution remains that of research training, whatever the occupational and professional outlet that this specific training will allow for the PhD. The PhD in Architecture. History and Project provides PhD students with tools and methods to address and

resolve specific research questions related to design and historiography of buildings and their contexts (topographical, technical-constructive production, symbolic and socio-economic), of cities and their characteristics (of form, functioning, strategic role), of territories and their narratives (in the game of the processes of representation, interpretation, transformation). The DASP aims to keep this research training at a high level and with broad horizons of attention in order to make the skills acquired usable, also and above all, in fields of competencies that are not strictly and purely academic, in line with the profile of skills that today it is required, both in Italy and in Europe, from those who obtain the title of PhD.

The DASP PhD gets in fact the competencies to become a researcher at universities and at research institutions (either public or private, either Italian or foreign) in the fields of history and documentation of architecture and cities, of buildings' design processes management, of infrastructures and urban spaces design, of control and development of technologies and especially construction techniques, working in the domain of abstract and applied sciences in the main fields of design and technological innovation. The future of the PhDs foresees a career as a researcher and teacher, as a manager in national or international public bodies, in all those sectors responsible for architectural quality, the enhancement of the historical heritage, the address of urban and territorial transformations, because of them having the necessary skills to also deal with the organization and promotion of cultural events and the management of complex design processes at various scales. The PhD training allows access to the liberal professions in architecture, where high quality skills are required, but also the ability to critically analyze phenomena and decision-making processes, and also in other parallel fields, such as urban and territorial planning, the management of capitalization phenomena and specialized publishing.

The objectives of the DASP are clarified in the accreditation document, compiled every year by Coordinator upon request of the Italian Ministry of University and Research and made available to the Academic Board and DASP PhD students. The same objectives are part of the introductory report that Coordinator and Council hold every year on a date located between the first two weeks of November to welcome the new members (Opening Day): it is an occasion that is not only formal, but which serves to better define, by periodically refining it, the scientific and educational agenda of the PhD in Architecture.

The identity of the DASP is also made explicit on the two doctoral websites: the official one on the Politecnico di Torino platform (<https://www.polito.it/didattica/dottorato-di-ricerca-e-scuola-di-specialization/active-courses/architecture-history-and-design/research-themes>), and the one external to the university system, traditionally self-managed by PhD students (<https://daspstudents.org>). Today, this DASP Yearbook is added to those communication tools, as the first result of a passionate initiative by DASP PhD students, once more interested in socializing the content of their researches and offering it to the widest possible comparison, cultivating the precise project of building a scientific community ready to face future challenges.

Even out of the comfort zone of their physical headquarters DASP-Home (at Istituto Galileo Ferraris), Torino 10125.

* The text of this introduction is taken from the document *Proposal for the accreditation of doctorates - a.y. 2023/2024*, presented to the Italian Ministry of University and Research on June 5th, 2023.

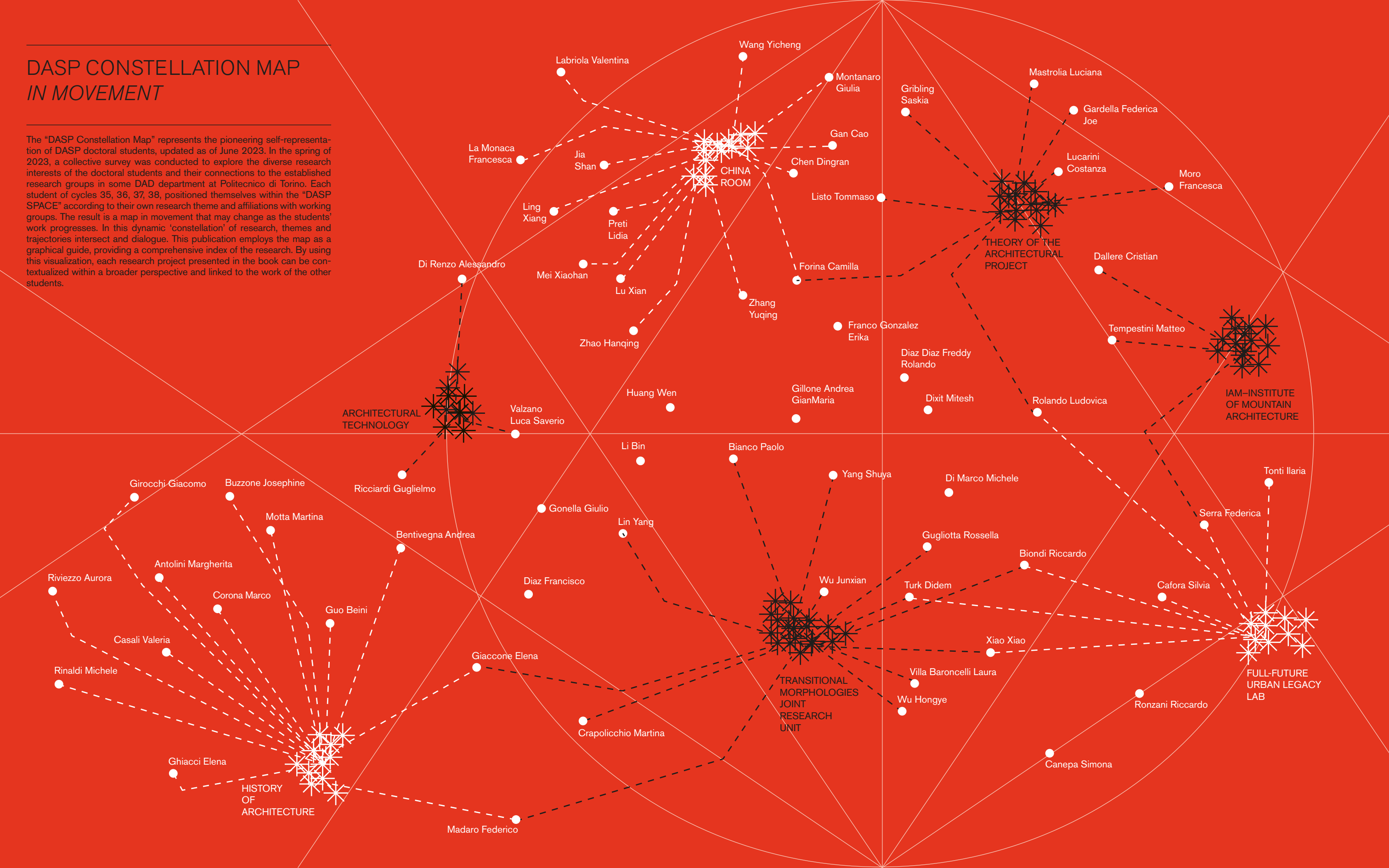
** Jonathan Hill, *History by Design*, in Ian Borden, Murray Fraser and Barbara Penner (eds), *Forty Ways To Think About Architecture. Architectural history and theory today*, John Wiley and Sons Ltd, London 2014, p. 166.



DASP CONSTELLATION MAP

IN MOVEMENT

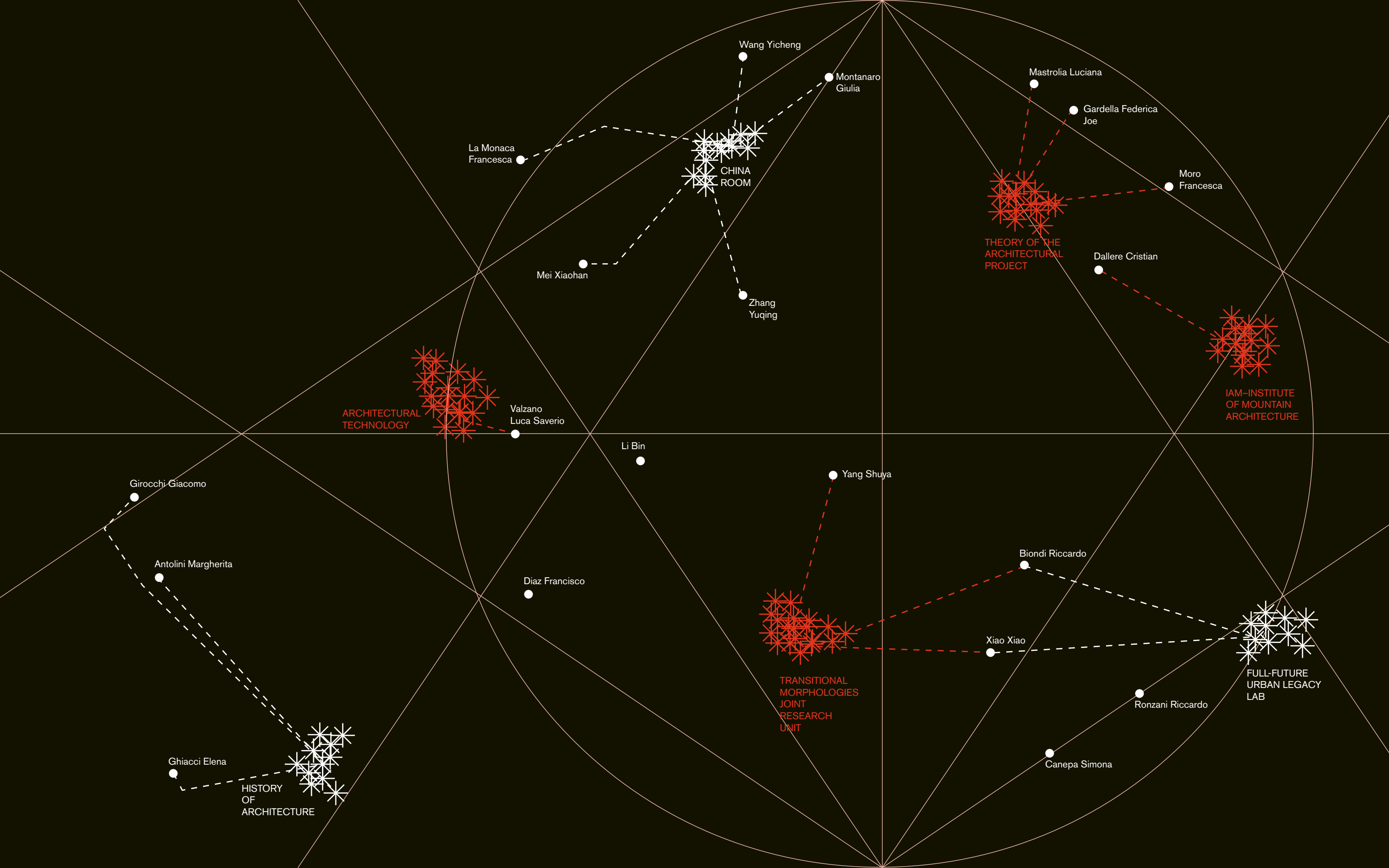
The “DASP Constellation Map” represents the pioneering self-representation of DASP doctoral students, updated as of June 2023. In the spring of 2023, a collective survey was conducted to explore the diverse research interests of the doctoral students and their connections to the established research groups in some DAD department at Politecnico di Torino. Each student of cycles 35, 36, 37, 38, positioned themselves within the “DASP SPACE” according to their own research theme and affiliations with working groups. The result is a map in movement that may change as the students' work progresses. In this dynamic 'constellation' of research, themes and trajectories intersect and dialogue. This publication employs the map as a graphical guide, providing a comprehensive index of the research. By using this visualization, each research project presented in the book can be contextualized within a broader perspective and linked to the work of the other students.



002



XXXVII
CYCLE



THE DUTCH MYTHS. IMAGERIES OF ARCHITECTURAL CULTURE OF THE NETHERLANDS IN POSTWAR ITALY (19XX-1980)



Elena Ghiacci

Cycle
37° - PoliTo Grant

Year
2021 - 2024

Supervisors
Gaia Caramellino

Research Group
History of Architecture

The research aims to understand the peculiarities of the critical fortune of the Dutch architectural culture in Italy during the thirty years that followed the Second World War, reconstructing the different narratives that Italian historians, critics, and intellectuals contributed to affirm. This context represents a fertile ground for theoretical-critical production in the design field, whose protagonists, often referring to international experiences, constructed imageries to legitimize certain positions through architecture periodicals and cultural events.

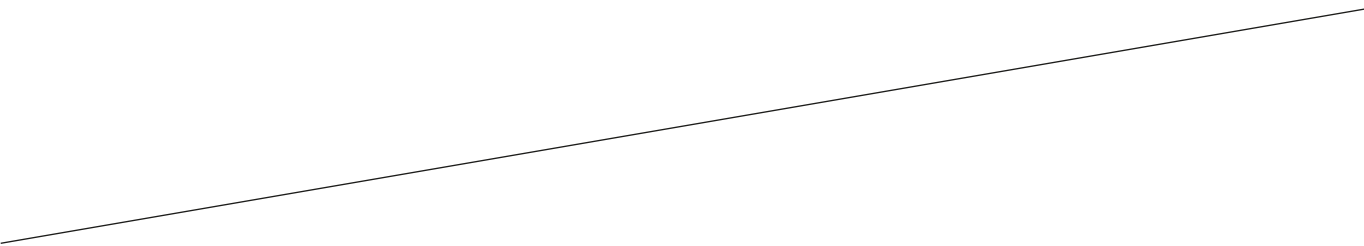
While intersecting multiple keys of interpretation, the study chooses to use the myth paradigm as its main interpretative slant, the outcomes of which can be identified in the context it proposes to explore.

The research work takes part in the broader strand of study concerning the circulation of ideas, models, theories, and knowledge in the field of architecture and urbanism between different geographical contexts during the 20th century, problematizing their various interpretations and questioning their limits in the specific case. Starting from the moments of tension and crisis that favor or condition the relationship between contexts, the study observes the stratification of trajectories and timeframes inherent to it; it pays particular attention to the role of criticism, as an active filter of information, and considers a plurality of vectors such as exhibitions, privileged occasions for encounters between cultures and vehicle for diplomatic messages, periodicals and trade publications,

sites for the representation of imaginaries and a vector for ideologies.

From a publicist and archival study, it emerges how Italian architects, urban planners, and historians analyzed, deconstructed, and manipulated the Dutch scenario according to three strands of debate: artistic avant-garde, urban design, and historiography - which can be considered a meta-level that intersects the first two throughout the considered timeframe. Through a critical analysis it is possible to ascertain recurring imageries of The Netherlands, addressed both to a specialized audience and to a generalist one. These myths are nourished over the years by the adoption of cultural and socio-economic policies, reflecting a bipolarity in the themes of interest; if the critical fortune of *De Stijl*, although closely linked to the architectural question, can be traced back to the current of research for the re-evaluation of the experience of the first European avant-garde motivated by solid cultural investment, the reflection on urban design and on historiography are instead supported by operational intentions and research in the socio-economic sphere.

The first part of the thesis will introduce the general topic, its timeframe, questions and methodologies of research. It will investigate the definition of myth and its implications, and propose historiography as the major interpretative frame focusing on the role of historians and critics in the construction of imageries. The second part proposes to deepen some of the emerged myths produced by Ita-



lian critics: “The Avant-garde Holland”, theatre of the achievement of a parallel social and artistic modernity, “The planner Holland”, whose experience is described in Ernesto Nathan Rogers’ “Casabella Continuità” and Giovanni Astengo’s “Urbanistica” from theoretical and institutional points of view, and “The Welfare State”, determined by the success of a new social ideal of architecture promoted by Aldo van Eyck, Jaap Bakema and Johannes van den Broek.

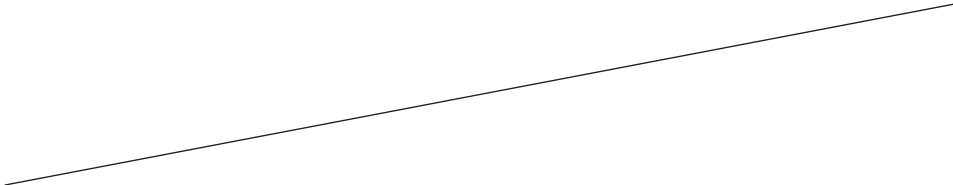
The narrative of each myth is conveyed by specific chronologies, which derive from a selection of publications or events that contributed to establishing every imagery. If it is difficult to pinpoint a common beginning in the construction of the multiple narratives, it is possible to identify in 1980 a precise moment of caesura concerning the themes of the debate on architecture dealt with previously. That year for the first time, Rem Koolhaas was invited to participate in the Venice Biennale, entitled by Paolo Portoghesi “The Presence of the Past”. Inaugurating a heated debate on Postmodernism and establishing itself on the international scene, the exhibition marks a radical change in the issues of architecture and its role. The victory of US-style neo-liberalism pushes the discipline towards a global market perspective, leading to a progressive loss of the social value it has assumed in the post-war period in favor of a consumerist design vision.

Precisely in a context that suggests a synchronic vision of history, Koolhaas places himself in apparent discontinuity with the past, seeking new principles to guide the discipline and moving away from the tradition of his own country. Therefore, the image of Dutch architectural culture that emerges departs from what Italian historians and critics had observed with great interest up until the leaden years, generating the consolidation of a new myth: “The Paradise of the project”, a liberal country with a young generation of designers on the rise, that would reach its peak in what Bart Lootsma will

define in 2000 as *SuperDutch*.

Problematizing the concept of myth, its formation, audience, and purposes, the research aims to understand how cultural identities that emerged in one context are absorbed, hybridized, or misunderstood in a second, through what means and for what reasons. By tracing the narratives of the imageries of Dutch culture, which were constructed in post-World War II Italy, and by identifying key-role moments and figures, the study interrogates their thresholds and temporal gaps, posing questions of continuity and discontinuity with antecedent experiences.

Lastly, the work aims to understand the specificity of the critical fortune of the Dutch case in Italy, contributing to the prominence of architecture as a medium that favors the exchange between cultural identities and a place of contact between different theoretical and design positions through the mediating role of criticism.



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