

The 'Quartiere game'¹

When teaching corresponds to reality

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Abstract: The Quartiere Game, the brief essay by Vieri Quilici, narrates a didactic experience he conducted within the Faculty of Architecture in Rome focused precisely on the Anagnina project by Quaroni's group, immediately following its preparation. The role playing game acted out by other students, other professors and young teaching assistants was highly successful. Quilici proposed simulating the implementation of the project through the elaboration by students, in groups or as individuals, of the planned architectural projects.

Keywords: teaching and design, role playing game, urban design.

It is the academic year 1985-86: a discussion is being held on the teaching approach to adopt for Design in the first years of the Architecture programme; some reckon we should just continue to pursue the basic rules of *Composition*, while others think teaching should involve an open debate with the real world of building and city planning. These are the years when the topic of *complexity*, in situations and in decision-making processes, was gaining a foothold, a topic which was part of the general feeling of disorientation that typified the academic world at the time, uncertain whether to continue following the post-1968 path of 'innovation', or to go back to a somewhat unlikely form of 'restoration'. Those who held that, from a strictly didactic viewpoint, the most effective teaching approach was that of *full-immersion*, rather than a graded step-by-step learning process, from the simpler and more elementary ideas to the more difficult and/or more specialised, were bound to opt for a confrontational approach and first-hand experimentation. For anyone determined to pursue this choice, why not try out a method whose area of application was where complexity reigned in initial conditions of uncertainty? Why not see if the method of gaming simulation would work with regard to design; it had recently

1. This was the title of the Architectural Composition Course II held in Rome in the academic year 1985-86, of which I was in charge, with the teaching support of Armando Sichenze and Francesco Ghio as assistant. "Gioco del Quartiere" could be translated into the english Neighbourhood Game'.

been applied to fields like economic planning, but why should it not also be beneficial to the domain of knowledge and the imagination? In fact we have here just such an application presented in a concise form, in which the Anagnina housing district project became the subject of an exercise that had its origins in its own *governing principles*, which are also influenced by a classically-oriented concept of the urban fabric that has a significant educational dimension for any potential project managers or constructors, represented here by the students themselves in simulations of various professional roles.

It has been already ten years since state universities accustomed us to handling *large numbers*, and the 'Neighbourhood Game' seemed like the best way to involve an entire 'class' of three hundred students in the second year of Architectural Composition. It allowed us to experiment with a course made up of separate design points which in a real-life situation would follow each other in a series of 'jumps' at different scales, but in the simulation could take the form of a sequence of transitions that were more compactly consistent. And also more effective for learning.

Applying the method and carrying out the Game thus became a learning experience but also one where the learning resulted from *experimentation*, which for once, exceptionally (as anyone, student or teacher, recalls), one could say was a great success. Passing through various stages of work carried out in groups whose members progressively decreased in number, down to single individuals (cf. the captions to the illustrations), each student by the end of the year (the composition courses were not yet divided by semester) had successfully created his own building design.

A strange fate thus befell the real project for the Anagnina district, designed by Quaroni and his Group; it would not have been achieved by using *ancient* constraints which only by hindsight were discovered to still exist on the ground there; it would have happened thanks to the fresh creative imaginations of three hundred young students. Maybe the very strangeness of this fact would not have displeased Ludovico, who always appreciated a good joke.

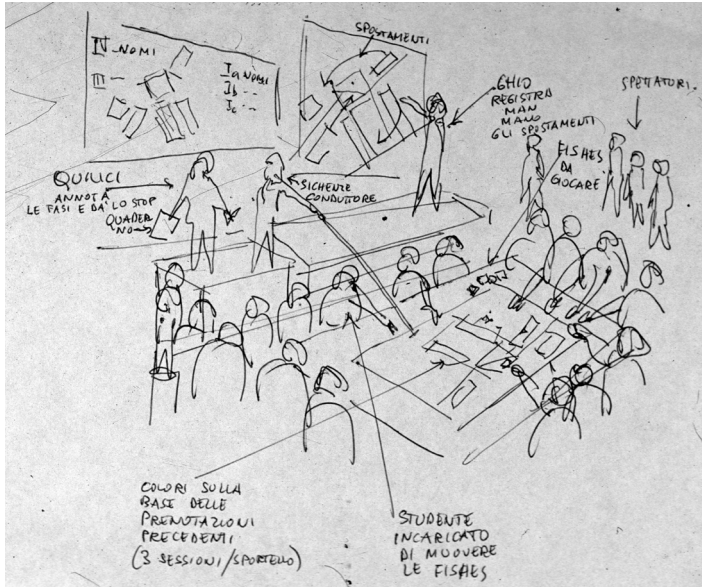


Fig.1. The negotiation of the 'assignments' is managed during a plenary session

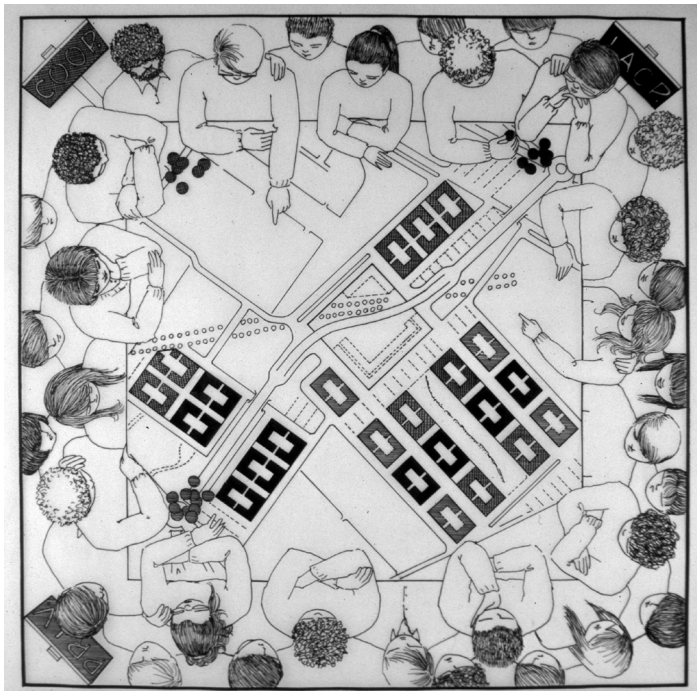


Fig.2. The comparison among the Groups is organised around the 'desk'

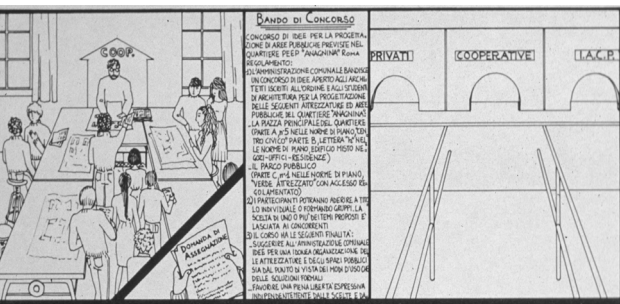
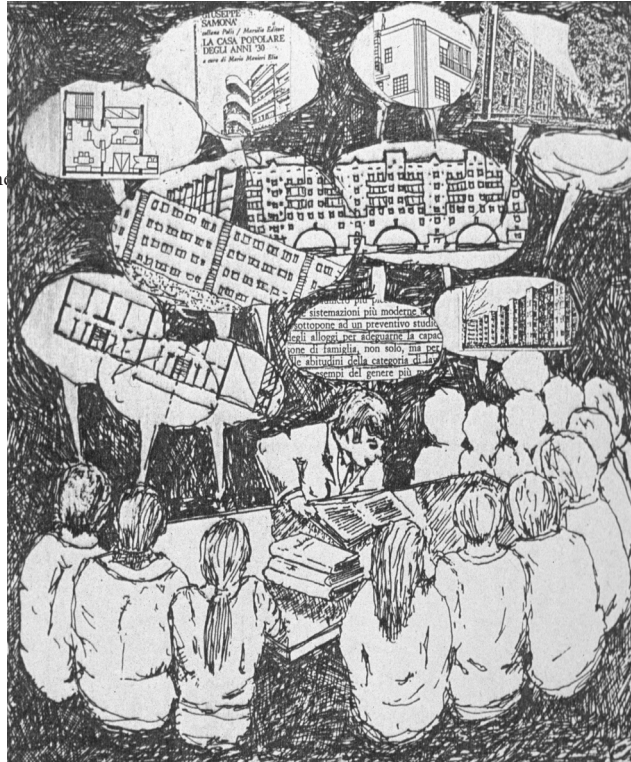


Fig.3 | Fig.4
Fig.5 | Fig.6

Fig.3. The agreements for the localization of the 'Users Groups' are dealt also through informal routes

Fig.4. There is a discussion concerning the 'Progetti utenza'

Fig.5. Consultancies at 'Sportelli'- participation to the competition- the use of the Mail systems for reclamations

Fig.6. The individual work is closed for each participant with a personal diary

Fig.7. The final mosaic 'Anagnina Game'

Fig.8. 14-1-'86, Micara and Del Maro are present at the Course on the 'Quartiere Game'



Fig.8

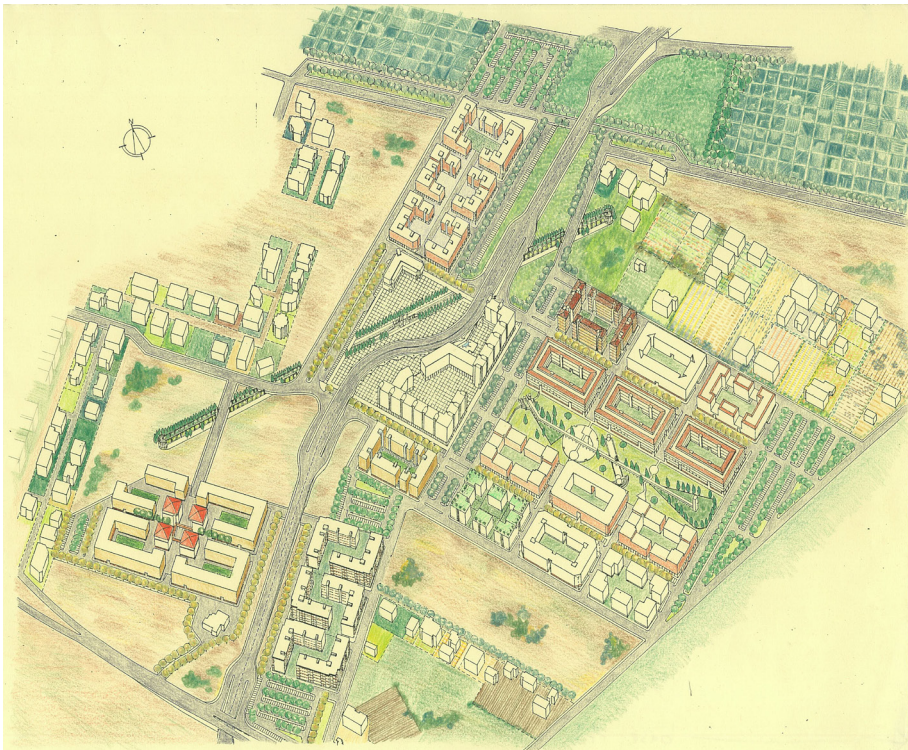


Fig.7

