

Events

BAL – Beyond All Limits 2022

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The evocative venue of the Monumental Complex Real Belvedere of San Leucio in Caserta hosted, from the 11th to the 13th of May, the international conference *Beyond All Limits* promoted by the Department of Architecture and Industrial Design of the University 'Luigi Vanvitelli'. Two prestigious foreign partner universities were involved, namely the Faculty of Architecture of Cankaya University in Ankara and the Department of Architecture and Engineering of the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. Held in a hybrid mode, the conference allowed for a large number of remote participations by academics and researchers, mainly from foreign universities, underlining the significant international footprint that the conference, now in its second edition (the first was held in Ankara in 2019) has been pursuing since its inception.

The central theme of the conference, which ran through all the interventions in various ways, can be summed up in the word 'sustainability', in its broadest sense and thus in its many possible declinations and implementations in the fields of architecture, design, planning and technology. The subject of the interesting reflections that emerged from the conference was the concept of sustainability, starting from the well-established themes of the green economy,

the use of ecological resources and the production of environmentally friendly materials, and then inserted into the current international debate according to a multidisciplinary approach, proposed by the interpretation of the *New European Bauhaus*. The issues raised by the NEB project, originated with many ambitious goals, including rethinking contemporary lifestyles in search of 'beauty' and redefining possible strategies for living the future in an inclusive and sustainable manner, thus found their way into the 18 parallel sessions. In each of these, more than 110 presentations from 9 different countries were illustrated, in which participants proposed visions, approaches and strategies that aim to address today's wide-ranging challenges (not only environmental). There were many speeches that addressed some of the key points of the NEB project, including social issues such as accessibility, both physical and cultural, aimed at involving all categories of users; inclusion, understood as valuing diversity, the uniqueness of each person and the equality of all; and of course, sustainability, reiterating the now indispensable ecological approach to production and consumption. A horizon of reflection therefore, based on the ambition to create a new European Bauhaus, understood as a space of

co-creation in which architects, artists, students, engineers and designers work together. The parallel sessions thus gave substance to this transdisciplinary criterion, which invites us to recognize the multiplicity of dimensions of reality and which, in the context of the conference, contributed multiple insights thanks to the variety of viewpoints shared.

In fact, numerous disciplinary sectors were involved in a broad overview and a critical and multidisciplinary reading of the proposed themes. And precisely for this reason, the event benefited from the patronage, first and foremost, of the European Commission and the Ministry of Ecological Transition, which was joined by the Italian University Conference of Design (CUID) with the speech by Francesca Tosi, and many important scientific societies, including the Italian Society of Design (SID) with the presentation by Raimonda Riccini and the UID, thanks to the participation of President Francesca Fatta in the introductory session. In particular, Francesca Fatta's lecture immediately highlighted how it is necessary to go beyond the limits of one's own field in a vision of the project that is transdisciplinary, or rather, that aims to transcend regulatory and academic boundaries in favor of an articulated and complex vision of the project, which is what holds together

the spheres of architecture and design and which, in the case of the disciplines of representation, defines a project path that takes shape in drawing, image-making and visual communication.

The succession of plenary and parallel sessions was coordinated by the Conference Chairs, Claudio Gambardella (University of Campania 'Luigi Vanvitelli'), Pieter De Wilde (University of Strathclyde) and Timuçin Harputlugil (Çankaya University), who first introduced the two distinguished Keynote Speakers: Ezio Manzini, designer and Honorary Professor at the Politecnico di Milano, and Patrizia Ranzo, architect, designer and Full Professor of Industrial Design at the University of Campania 'Luigi Vanvitelli'.

Design infor complexity was the title of Professor Manzini's talk, which questioned the anthropocentric approach of designers, who perhaps underestimated the radical interdependencies that bind humanity to other earthly beings. Sustainability was translated in his speech into an approach that embraces the perspective according to which our actions are considered as part of a system, going beyond the idea of production in favor of the idea of generation, reorienting design towards the Earth and no longer only towards man. In Manzini's analysis, if design is to be considered as a process of sense-making, then the 'post-anthropocentric' approach could imagine actions capable of generating values beyond the human perspective and not as reactions against nature, but rather as inter-actions, with a view to building a common world that is truly shared by all living beings on Earth.

Patrizia Ranzo also proposed a reflection on the role of design, whose vision as a device for the production of reality would be simply reductive without starting from a speculative and critical



Fig. 1. Flyer of the event.

capacity; therefore, considering this approach, design is increasingly configured as an experimental and open laboratory, a place for the narration of technology in accessible forms, where each object becomes the start-up of the next. In her talk *Perpetuum mobile. Identity and value landscapes of contemporary design*, she turned her gaze to the digital and the need to design visions through which the project can take on meaning and transformative capacity in relation to emerging needs. Consequently, design workshops are imagined as places to explore the territories of what is possible with respect to social evolutions, 'beyond' technology, in which the true innovation to be sought is an innovation of meanings, requiring a critical and dialogic mind and attitude capable of producing visions within which it is truly possible to inhabit the world anew.

The speeches of the two Keynote Speakers clearly defined the trajectories of the conference, which, with its choice of the title *Beyond all limits*, invited us to open our eyes and minds beyond schemes, beyond obstacles, beyond a thought that has already been perpetuated and that perhaps has not always been successful. Significant, in

this sense, was the willingness of the organizers, particularly Claudio Gambardella, to involve young researchers with the freedom to express visionary ideas, but who were able to offer suggestions and key concepts for a sustainable vision of the future.

Special attention was paid to the universe of fashion and its complex relationship with sustainability. A roundtable, open to PhD students and under-30s, was dedicated to this topic, with a particularly innovative approach, which aimed, even more emphatically, to offer a contemporary look at the issues addressed in the conference. Participants produced videos, lasting a maximum of 5 minutes, on the theme *The Future of Sustainable Fashion*. This initiative, thanks to the scientific coordination of Professor Aguinaldo dos Santos (University of Paraná UFPR, Brazil), aimed to involve young researchers in a dynamic communicative mode, through which they could present a personal point of view, result of their individual research, through an expressive vehicle of great potential. The short films were presented during the May 12th Day and the roundtable, which followed the screenings, included a cross-questioning phase,

in which each participant presented issues or reflections on the videos, in a perspective of open and constructive discussion. The proposed narratives provided points of view related to the origins of different countries and cultures (in addition to Italy, contributions to the roundtable also came from Hungary and Brazil) putting on the table topics related to the value system underlying consumption and production in the fashion industry, the goal of reducing environmental impact through the use of sustainable materials, and upcycling and slow fashion strategies, which aim to subvert many current dynamics.

In conclusion, the days held in the beautiful setting of San Leucio, witnessed the significant contribution of illustrious exponents in the fields of architecture, design, engineering and urban planning, thanks to whom a comparison between different generations was made possible. The numerous participations of young people, PhD students and researchers, with solid roots and an eye to the future, put forward multiple points of view, for a vision of a sustainable world, in a theoretical, practical and ethical dimension, which truly aspires to go 'beyond all limits'.

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