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Layered Morphologies and Latent Structures

Reading, Decoding and Rewriting to Enhance Historic Rurban Landscape

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- A fully illustrated critical study of layered morphologies that examines the coevolutionary nature of architecture and settlements in Fenghuang (Shaanxi), China

The concept of Layered Morphologies is a theoretical and methodological approach that investigates the coevolutionary nature of architecture and settlements, to propose an organic and integrated approach to their reading, protection and design enhancement. Transcending some usual spatial ontologies and operating across interdisciplinary fields, it promotes a renewed notion of built heritage as historicised architecture, and landscape as a structure of structures, where any act of modification should start from recognising pre-existing signs, typo-morphological structures, and writing of the ground and formal orders. Advancing critical-theoretical propositions while verifying their operational value in the case study of Fenghuang (Shaanxi) – a famous historic and cultural town in China – the methodology reveals a new reading and the potential underlying of Chinese settlements forms. Architectural and urban-rural design projects are not the colonisation of a void (a *tabula rasa*) but rather an understanding and interpretation of an existing text with its erasures and absences (*tabula plena*), which also presents the principles for future writings.

Laura A. Pezzetti, M. Arch PhD, is associate professor of Architectural Design and Urban Composition at Politecnico di Milano, where she also serves as Chair of Architecture and Urban Design in ABC PhD board, Double Master Degrees coordinator with Chinese Universities, and Delegate for International Relationship with Tsinghua University. Since 2015, she has directed with prof. LIU Kecheng the yearly Heritage-Led Design Workshop in Xi'an. Her research and design activities in both Italy and China focus on the layered construction of architectural and urban form with specific reference to historic sites, contexts in transformation, public buildings and spaces. Her theoretical research and design has been published internationally and discussed in conferences and exhibitions.

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