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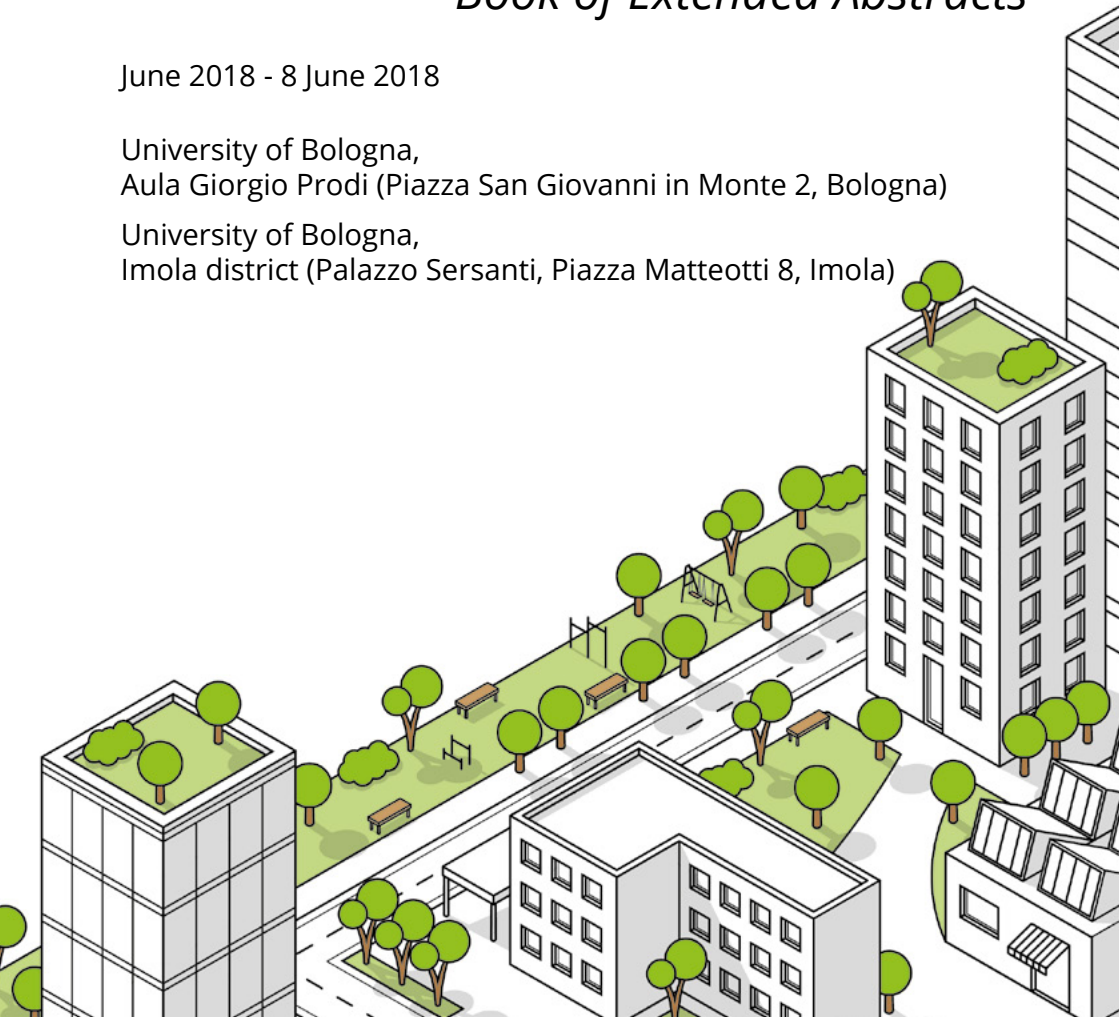
Healthy landscapes: green, regeneration, safety

Book of Extended Abstracts

June 2018 - 8 June 2018

University of Bologna,
Aula Giorgio Prodi (Piazza San Giovanni in Monte 2, Bologna)

University of Bologna,
Imola district (Palazzo Sersanti, Piazza Matteotti 8, Imola)



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green, regeneration, safety**

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6 June 2018 - 8 June 2018

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June 6

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SESSION I - Healthy landscapes: projects and impacts

Keynote lectures

- Living in the landscape: health as a project, *Juan Manuel Palerm Salazar* p. 12
- Urban Green Space Interventions and Health, a review of impacts and effectiveness, *Srdan Matic* p. 20
- Welfare landscapes revisited: Legacy and possible futures of green open spaces in Danish post-war social housing estates, *Anne Tietjen* p. 21

SESSION II - Healthy landscapes, healthy societies

Invited lectures

- Landscape and Social Sustainability as indicators for a healthy society, *Shelley Egoz* p. 23
- Gardens for seniors: relationship between the gardens characteristics and their usage in a pilot study in 3 Italian nursing homes, *Giulio Senes, Natalia Fumagalli, Cristina Ferrara* p. 25

Oral presentations

- Innovative and cross-cutting urban strategies for well-being. The renovation of public spaces in the widespread areas of Sapienza University in Rome, *Alessandra Capuano* p. 32
- All about the ‘wow factor’? The relationships between aesthetics, restorative effect and perceived biodiversity in designed urban planting, *Helen Hoyle, James Hitchmough, Anna Jorgensen* p. 40

Peri-urban Green Infrastructure. The overview of recent European studies, <i>Xenia Abramovich</i>	p. 46
Assessing relevant knowledge related to the types and characteristics of urban green & blue spaces having a significant impact on human mental health and well-being, <i>Maria Beatrice Andreucci, Barbara Livoreil, Agnieszka O. Guizzo, Sjerp de Vries, Annamaria Lammel, Alessio Russo, Liz O'Brien, Zoe Davies, Julie Glanville, Hans Keune, Melissa R. Marselle, Roy Remmen, Hanna Wood</i>	p. 55
A Structured listening method to retrofit an urban park evaluating the urban green system, <i>Maria Elena Menconi, David Grohmann</i>	p. 61
Space to nature. De-sealing policies and Transferable development rights, <i>Fulvio Adobati, Emanuele Garda</i>	p. 67
Healthy landscape design in the agricultural fringe of the cities, <i>Bruna Di Palma, Maddalena Verrillo</i>	p. 72

June 7

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SESSION III – Environmental health and people's landscapes

Keynote lectures

Healthy people need a sound relationship to landscape, <i>Bas Pedroli</i>	p. 79
The health benefits of urban green spaces, <i>Andrew C K Lee</i>	p. 81

Invited lectures

The evolution of landscapes: The human factor in a transfrontier case study in Karelia (Finland/Russia), <i>Juanjo Galan Vivas, Felix Bourgeau</i>	p. 84
Living the City-Landscape. Environmental health, regulation and urban design, <i>Margherita Vanore, Massimo Triches</i>	p. 90

SESSION IV - Built system and urban regeneration

Oral presentations

Integrated planning and design of summer baths (natural baths and natural swimming-pools) in the urban space – potentials for a sustainable urban development, *Christine Fuhrmann* p.103

From productive sites to healthy landscapes production, *Elisa Baldin* p. 109

Bringing Health into Housing: A European Approach to the Design of Post-War Dwellings in Maryland, *Selena Bagnara Milan* p. 114

Guidelines for Urban and Territorial Regeneration: Landscape Design as Therapeutic Device, *Maria Lodovica Delendi* p. 120

The Tagus Estuary: from barrier of the riveredge city towards its strongest binder, *Caterina Anastasia* p. 129

SESSION V – Green systems and wellbeing

Keynote lectures

Are natural environments really good for your health and wellbeing? What does the evidence say, and why do we need it?, *Benedict W. Wheeler* p. 136

Lyon’s “green strategy”, from urban planning to sustainable green spaces conception, *Magali Rogel* p. 137

Invited lectures

Community gardens as healing tools for patients with eating disorders, *David Grohmann, Cristian Corvaglia, Maria Elena Menconi* p. 140

Comparing ecological networks in peri-urban landscapes: an application to Italy, *Andrea De Montis, Amedeo Ganciu, Matteo Cabras, Antonietta Bardi, Valentina Peddio, Maurizio Mulas* p. 145

SESSION VI - Urban planning and health

Oral presentations

- Private Green Space in urban housing: How important is it for a sustainable living?, *Lei Gao, Katinka H. Evensen, Kostas Mouratidis, Mina De Marino, Grete Patil* p. 152
- Urban regeneration for safer cities: eco-cultural strategies as a tool to enhance urban resilience to risk, *Marialuce Stanganelli, Carlo Gerundo* p. 157
- Creating healthy landscapes: urban strategies to improve the quality of life, *Chiara Camaioni, Ilaria Odoguardi* p. 164
- The landscape planning which optimal tool for a healthy landscape, *Luca Di Giovanni* p. 171
- Landscapes of cohabitation, *Claudio Zanirato* p. 179
- Environmental educational potentials in school grounds, Budapest (Hungary), *Jákli Eszter* p. 183
- Adaptive design through nature-based technologies and solutions: an innovative process characterising urban regeneration, *Maria Beatrice Andreucci, Silvia Coccolo, Dimitra Theochari, Emanuele Naboni* p. 189
- Ergonomic Urbanisms: therapeutic or preventive regeneration process?, *Gennaro Rossi* p. 194
- Horticultural therapy for Children with Autism Spectrum Disorders: a pilot study to evaluate the benefits on stress through salivary cortisol measurement, *Natalia Fumagalli, Roberto Rovelli, Gaia Paparella, Giorgia Boscaini, Giulio Senes* p. 200

June 8

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SESSION VII – Green, health and education

Keynote lectures

Green Health - Contribution of green and open space in public health and wellbeing, *David Miller* p. 208

Invited lectures

Water, ground and green systems as re-educational factors to the qualitative sustainability, *Rita Occhiuto* p. 215

Regenerating the Barbaña, Ourense's foundational river, *Cristóbal Crespo González, Felipe Peña Pereda, Cristina García Fontán, Emilio Rodríguez Blanco, Juan Ignacio Prieto López, Óscar Pedrós Fernández, Jesús Conde García* p. 223

SESSION VIII – Green/blue infrastructures and ecosystem services

Oral presentations

Attractive, climate-adapted and sustainable? Public perception of non-native planting in the designed urban landscape, *Helen Hoyle, James Hitchmough, Anna Jorgensen* p. 230

Economic development and biodiversity in new ecosystems, *Alessandro Ceregato, Riccardo Pirazzoli* p. 236

Measuring landscape fragmentation in the European context: a comparative approach, *Andrea De Montis, Vittorio Serra, Antonio Ledda* p. 242

Multilevel Green Governance in Lyon, *Anna Laura Palazzo, Maria Beatrice Andreucci* p. 247

Tourism cycling routes within the national plan for sustainable mobility: an opportunity to improve and develop 'fair and inclusive well-being', *Maria Rita Schirru* p. 253

Between nature and artifice. San Rocco Valley in Naples as health landscape, *Pasquale Miano, Adriana Bernieri, Francesca Coppolino* p. 259

Coastal landscape regeneration: a framework from northern Adriatic, *Leonardo Filesi, Luisa Cattozzo, Andrea Fiduccia, Leonardo Marotta* p. 265

Co-benefits of urban green stormwater infrastructure: Urban green infrastructure involving stormwater management and public health benefits, *Bhavna Mishra* p. 272

The effect of initiatives and community involvements influence on riverside landscape, *Takahiro Yamazaki* p. 279

SESSION IX - Green spaces and health promotion

Keynote lecture

Environment and health promotion in urban areas, *Margherita Ferrante, Maria Fiore, Antonio Cristaldi, Chiara Copat, Alfina Grasso, Pietro Zuccarello, Gea Oliveri Conti* p. 286

Invited lectures

The synergy between urban green spaces and a healthy city: state of the art and review of the available literature evidence, *Davide Gori* p. 288

The role of ICT in public open spaces: the Cyber-Cardeto park, *Andrea Galli, Ernesto Marcheggiani, Eva Savina Malinverni, Roberto Pierdicca, Carlos Smaniotto Costa* p. 291

SESSION X - Healthy landscapes and socio-ecological aspects

Oral presentations

River management: an opportunity to implement landscape policies, *Romina D'Ascanio, Anna Laura Palazzo, Maria Beatrice Andreucci* p. 298

Co-designing sustainable energy transition in rural landscapes: p. 304

- reducing carbon footprint and safeguarding landscape democracy and ecosystem services, *Paolo Picchi, Davide Geneletti, Simone Verzandvoort, Annemieke Smit, Kees Hendriks, Sven Stremke*
- Urban regeneration and socio-ecological systems: rethink purpose through the green infrastructure approach, *Maria Beatrice Andreucci, Sergio Malcevschi, Andrea Tartaglia* p. 313
- The Agricultural heritage landscape protection. The FAO GIAHS program, *Mauro Agnoletti* p. 318
- An approach to estimate the effect of land management and fire on pollinator communities in the semi-natural habitats of the Pistoia valley, *Simone Marini, Anna Camilla Moonen* p. 320
- The design of a kindergarden green area: from guidelines to executive project, *Isabella Trondoli, Marcella Minelli, Maria Eva Giorgioni* p. 329
- New technologies for the landscape setting: immersive views, *Gabriele Garnero, Enrico Fabrizio, Valeria Minucciani* p. 334
- Extreme Heat Events, Urban Landscape, and Human Health, *Chia-Tsung Yeh, Tsai-Yun Liu* p. 340
- Healthy landscapes: green, regeneration, safety. DARDO Working waterlines a new ecological hydraulic inhabitable connection, *Michele Ugolini, Stefania Varvaro, Caterina Gallizioli, Lavinia Dondi* p. 345

New technologies for the landscape setting: immersive views

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Abstract

Visibility analyses are no more aimed at spot investigations, but have become an instrument within the planning and authorization process of local authorities, allowing to check design alternatives in an interactive way. However, today more innovative tools allow a greater immersion and the possibility, not only for the designer, but also for citizens, to realize the implications in terms of visual design of new developments and choices.

The new Mixed Reality (MR) approach, where virtual objects are superimposed to reality through glasses or other devices that allow direct viewing of both what surrounds the observer and of the virtual images seems to have the greater potential to be applied for landscape settings analysis since it is possible to directly observe (virtual) project objects and entities into a (real) environment. Some preliminary investigations in this area are presented in this work.

Keywords: Mixed reality; Virtual scene; Observer

Introduction

Through visibility analysis, it is possible to give designers and stakeholders tools that can be used to verify the impacts of what is being planned and to estimate the landscape setting of new developments. Therefore, visibility analyses have recently become not simply an instrument aimed at spot investigations, but also an instrument that enters the planning and authorization process, allowing both the designer and the landscape authorization authorities to check design alternatives in an interactive way.

At the same time, web-based visualization technologies that present dynamic

virtual environment have gaining attention in many land-related fields, as VR (virtual reality) provides the user with a sense of being surrounded by real world (Jamei et al., 2017). As a matter of fact, since 2011, researchers in the landscape and planning sector became aware of the fact that virtual environment games may be used as a source of information for players, researchers and decision-makers (Bishop, 2011), to elicit environmental preferences and judgments, explore human decision making processes, and support public multi-disciplinary decision-making. What seemed visionary in 2011, has quickly become reality since there has been a rapid grow of virtual and augmented reality also in the 3D landscape visualization (Lovett et al., 2015).

Various applications of VR to the design of cities have been done with regards to pedestrian thermal comfort, audio-visual design of an urban public spaces (Echevarria Sanchez, 2017), urban sound environments (Jiang, 2018), smart transportations, cognitive psychology and behaviour in architectural and urban design, personal health and well being (Boulos et al., 2017).

Materials and methods

In fact, today more innovative tools allow a greater immersion and the possibility, not only for the designer, but also for citizens, to realize the implications in terms of visual design of new developments and choices.

To this regard, various techniques can be used (see Figure 1).

In the AR (Augmented Reality) information concerning real existing objects is conveyed to the final user through portable instruments that are directed towards the areas of interest (Minucciani & Garnero, 2017). It is therefore an overlay of computer generated content on the real world, but the computer generated content and the real-world content are not able to respond to one another.

In the VR (Virtual Reality) an immersive, purely virtual scene is displayed, thus alienating the observer from the real world (George et al., 2017);

Contrarily, in the MR (Mixed Reality) virtual objects, for example projected entities, are superimposed to reality through glasses or other devices that allow direct viewing of both what surrounds the observer and of the virtual images (Ohta & Tamura, 2014). It is therefore an overlay of synthetic content that is anchored to and interacts with objects in the real world and in real time.

In a MR experience computer-generated objects are visibly obscured by real objects in the physical environment. In other words, MR can be seen as a subset of AR, but not all AR is MR.

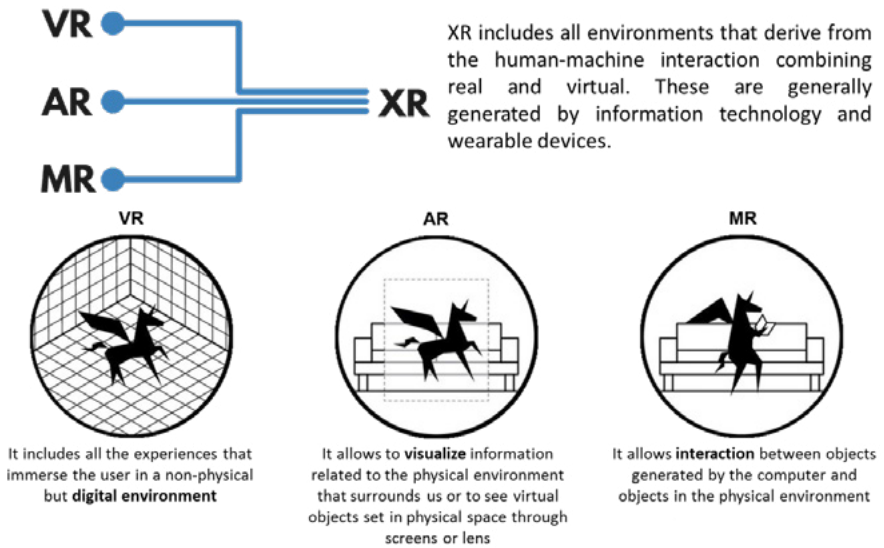


Figure 1. Main differences between VR, AR and MR.

It is precisely these latest technologies that have the greater potential, at the moment, both in terms of technical works (e.g. in case of underground networks and infrastructures), but above all, from the point of view of the landscape analysis and setting, in which it is possible to directly observe project objects and entities.

There are various possibilities for using MR in the fields of planning, landscape and cultural heritage. Hereinafter some examples:

- it is possible to insert an element designed within a real context, in order to evaluate in an immediate and immersive way, what are the visual and functional interactions of the proposed new development in relation to the pre-existing ones;
- the above can also be used in relation to possible participatory decision-making processes, in which citizens can be called to express their opinion not following the examination of graphic representations,

but seeing directly and in place the outcome of the design, through technologies that, although complex, allow for immediate interactions;

- in the cultural heritage field, it is possible to insert in the real and current environment architectural features and buildings that have been moved or destroyed: the virtual modeling of an object, carried out from historical information or, in the event that the object has only been moved, performed through photogrammetric modeling with the production of point clouds, allows to insert the missing object in the context for which it was born, thus giving the visitor the possibility to evaluate the realistic insertion.

Results and discussion

To give an example and a practical application of the use of MR in a design and planning stage, in Figure 2, an example of a virtual reality realized by some of the Authors of this work is provided. It was done to verify the design of a new pavilion and new trees within a green public space in Turin.



Figure 2. Example of MR visualization for design: frame of the immersive video of a new pavilion into a urban square garden.

In this case study, for the model of the pavilion and the trees, models available on specialized open datasets on the net were used, and were placed inside a

green area belonging to District 2 of the City of Turin. Once the projected objects were anchored to the surrounding reality through a special QR Code, the observer can freely move around the park, verifying in the simplest way, i.e. walking and watching, the effects of the insertion of the project in the pre-existing reality.

In this application, the open source Unity software tool was used as a graphic engine, while the Microsoft HoloLens glasses were used as display device, whose features are easily available on the net.

Conclusions

XR applications are widely spreading in many fields, from gaming to science. The main features of the MR applied to design and planning into spatial problems were summarized in this work. A simple example of application was realized in order to verify the feasibility and the potential of the proposed approach for the design of new architectural objects into real existing green spaces.

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