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Scritti di **Marco Baccarelli, Alberto Clementi, Angela Colucci, Carlotta Fioretti, Luca Gaeta, Jukka Heinonen, Agim Kërçuku e Paolo Romanò, Jacopo Larena Faccini, Francesca Mattei, Lorenzo Mizzau, Nausicaa Pezzoni, Emma Puerari**
| Libri di **Ruben Baiocco / Filippo Barbera / Mattia Bertin / Francesco Curci, Enrico Formato e Federico Zanfi / Alessandro De Magistris e Aurora Scotti / Andrea Membretti, Ingrid Kofler e Pier Paolo Viazzo / Agostino Petrillo / Carlo Pisano / Richard Sennett / Antonio Tosi / Trausti Valsson**

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(ibidem) è curato da:
Luca Gaeta (Coordinamento)
Laura Pierantoni (Relazioni editoriali)
Silvia Gugu (Comunicazione)
Mattia Bertin, Francesco Curci e Marco Milini (Redazione)
Alice Buoli, Giulia Fini e Cecilia Saibene (*Planum. The Journal of Urbanism*),
con la collaborazione di Carlotta Fioretti

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palo della pubblica illuminazione 'affogato' in un cordone dunale
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all'indirizzo email: planum.ibidem.2017@gmail.com

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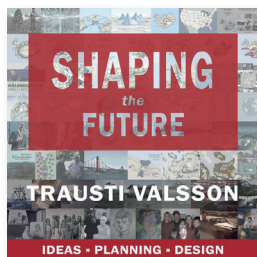
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Come accade di solito, i libri recensiti in questo numero di (ibidem) toccano svariati argomenti. Tra questi, l'abusivismo edilizio può dirsi il *primus inter pares*. Ne discute appassionatamente Alberto Clementi leggendo *Territori dell'abusivismo*. Ne mostrano alcuni aspetti inconfondibili tanto la copertina quanto il reportage fotografico dalla costa salentina, a cura di Agim Enver Kërçuku e Paolo Romanò. Quando il morbo italico del condono edilizio contagia il legislatore, come di recente per Ischia, oppure quando tragici eventi climatici fanno strage dentro abitazioni costruite in luoghi insicuri, come a Casteldaccia, ai cittadini rispettosi delle regole non rimane altro sentimento che lo sconforto. Il condono edilizio comunica chiaro il messaggio che leggi e regolamenti per l'uso del suolo si possono violare quasi impunemente, perché quel che oggi è una violazione del diritto potrebbe domani non esserlo più con il disbrigo di una pratica amministrativa e il pagamento di una sanzione. La morte di chi abita dentro case che non dovrebbero sorgere là dove sono fa sentire come insufficiente la vigilanza di chi è preposto alla sicurezza del territorio.

La libertà di domicilio è un bene costituzionale che tuttavia non può e non deve entrare in contrasto con la salute pubblica e il rispetto delle leggi su cui si fonda la convivenza civile. Lo *ius aedificandi* è connaturale alla proprietà del suolo, tuttavia non si può esercitarlo in contrasto con quel reale patto di cittadinanza che è il piano urbanistico. Oltre le ragioni della tecnica, oltre i calcoli e le previsioni del rischio ambientale – che nei piani trovano ancora poco spazio –, l'abusivismo nega alla luce del sole l'idea che una collettività possa darsi regole per l'uso del suolo e che tali regole siano degne di rispetto perché patrimonio comune dei cittadini.

Jukka Heinonen

Autobiography of a Planner and Visionary



Trausti Valsson
Shaping the Future.
Ideas-Planning-Design
 Fjölvi Publishers, Reykjavík 2017
 pp. 216, \$39.95

Shaping the Future is an autobiography and a ‘professional testament’ of Trausti Valsson (born in Reykjavík, Iceland, in 1946), a long-time planning professor at the University of Iceland, societal activist on planning issues and a man with strong opinions and future visions. The book tells the life-story of the author since his early childhood until his retirement at the age of 70. It is an interesting compilation of architectural and planning history of modern times as well as of the opinions, aims and personal maturation of the author.

Growing up to become a planner and an academic

The first half of the book tells the story of an active man with numerous and strong opinions, trying to find his place in a rapidly changing society. It describes the author’s journey from the small and disconnected island-state Iceland, to Berlin for education, and then to Berkeley, California, for doctoral studies, to become an environmental planning specialist. This part of the book is an inspiring reading for anyone interested in architecture and city planning, as Trausti Valsson does not hesitate to express his thoughts about the develop-

ments in these fields and the paradigms that have shaped these disciplines. Whether one accepts his views or opposes them, *Shaping the Future* does not leave one cold or thoughtless. The perspective is mostly international, and hence fit for global audiences. Many global professionals are mentioned by name as the author credits or criticizes them for what they have accomplished in their professional fields or for their roles in his life.

A design theorist, societal activist, and radical visionary

The second half of the book concentrates predominantly on the professional career of the author as the first professor of planning at the University of Iceland, a design theorist as he describes himself, an activist in local planning and societal development and a visionary with bold and original future visions for his country. This part of the book will certainly raise much interest and polemic in the political and planning spheres in Iceland, particularly in the capital region. Again, Valsson does not bother to hide his opinions or to be polite; he talks openly about whom he found good to work with or doing the right things, as well as whom he saw as an obstacle to the right kind of development. This part can be seen as a sort of a ‘professional testament’, which lays out what might have otherwise been left unsaid and straightens what may have been misunderstood or left unnoticed. This is all relayed through the story of a man who was enthusiastic about his views on the planning and development of his country. Thus, it is an interesting overview of the development that occurred in Iceland as well as a provocative opinion piece of a man who is highly respected in his community, but who has not withheld expressing views different from the mainstream and thus ended up in numerous professional confrontations. Quoting the book: «cities and buildings are much more mundane and ugly in our modern times than they were earlier» (p. 145); «an architecture modernism led



to cold, inhuman buildings and cities. The impact of this architecture has in many places been very bad and has led to alienation and crimes» (p. 36); «all these issues had become prominent in Europe about five years earlier and it was terrible that we were realising a plan in this modernistic spirit after other nations had learned, from bad experience, how terrible such planning was» (p. 55).

Still shaping the future

In his book, Trausti Valsson describes several big thoughts and initiatives which are yet to materialize, but potentially in the future will carry his name as (one of) the first proponents. Maybe the most important among these is his idea about a country plan for Iceland, which he has for long proposed as the highest hierarchy level of planning for Iceland (applicable to other countries as well). He also presents a suggestion for such a plan – that is to make the currently uninhabited highland areas and particularly the geographic center of the country the new Capital city of the country with good road connections to all the main directions. He describes the history of this proposal from early interest to disappointments regarding the implementation of this higher level of planning and executing certain accepted parts of his plan. The future will tell if his vision of Iceland comes true.

Another example of his visionary thinking relates to the ever-growing global problem of the climate change. Again, he does not follow the mainstream, but says that we should accept that the world is changing and concentrate on thinking what it means to us – particularly in the field of planning. He presents his thoughts on a global-level planning approach to climate change adaptation. In his vision the world's 'gravity center' moves towards the global North where the majority of the landmass lie, and of which vast new areas become habitable along with warming climate – whereas in the current sphere of human settlements many regions become uninhabitable. Ultimately, in his vision the North Pole becomes the center point of the globe. Again, the future will reveal if his vision holds.

A story of an academic

Along with all else, *Shaping the Future* describes the academic career of Trausti Valsson from the first

steps to his impact on planning education in Iceland. He summarizes his books and gives an overview on his main academic articles, making this a sourcebook for an interested reader to further information about the issues he brings up. The reader also gets to see inside a man who is eager about learning new things and adapting himself and his work to the changes in the surrounding society and the world.

Thinking on several levels

The book moves back and forth among several levels, from small details related to the family, the work and thoughts of the author, all the way to global problems and their potential solutions. He can first discuss the importance of ornaments in creating beautiful cities, or the academic evaluation system at the University of Iceland and then jump to discussing the development of architecture, or how the global warming will shape the world. This randomness seems like his aim and a deliberate choice, and increases the appeal of the book.

Strong visual expression

Shaping the Future is a visual piece in addition to its textual content. In the book, Valsson describes how he works on his book writing, beginning from a structure, continuing with visualizations and only afterwards producing the actual text. This is apparent in the book, where each page has its own illustrations: photos, drawings, sketches, figures, plans, etc. These certainly add to the attractiveness of the book and appeal to readers with a visual approach.

Conclusion

Shaping the Future tells the life story of a man with a great desire to understand the world and learn about it – who sometimes draws too early his strong conclusions, but then sometimes, he also envisions very early what actually happens much later. It is an interesting autobiography that goes beyond the life description of an individual, placing the development of planning and human settlement design within the context of the modern world history. How Trausti Valsson puts it, «writing the book – as a whole – had the goal to create an overview of what is most influential in shaping our environment and our future» (p. 191).