



**Abstract of Research Project**  
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**RESEARCH PROJECT** (max 3 pages):

*Genius Loci. The contextualism as an archetypal principle of architectural composition for the enhancement of the relationship between artifice and nature*

*Introduction and state of the art*

The concept of *Genius Loci* transversely crosses the entire history of architecture, anchoring its roots in the classic idea of the sacredness of places, found in both Latin and Greek culture. But still, the question "what is the *Genius Loci*?" finds no exhaustive answers. The aim of this research is to investigate its meaning, starting from the Latin genesis of this locution and ranging over multidisciplinary fields such as literature, philosophy and religion up to its declination in the architectural field.

Therefore the research on the state of the art is decisive, it will start from the historical investigation with reference to the latin *Genius*, patron deity of a place, also recognizable in the ancient Greece in the figure of the *Daimon*, a spirit present in each human being whose purpose is to help people fulfill their destiny.

Then the study of the spirit of the place will continue, going through the whole history of human thought up to Martin Heidegger's observations on living, in the analysis of contextualism in the architectural field, starting with the book "*Genius loci. Paesaggio ambiente architettura*" of Christian Norberg-Schulz in which is introduced the concept of place intended as "...a totality made up of concrete things having material substance, shape, texture and colour". Together these things determinate an "*environmental character which is the essence of place*".

In this context, as the *oikistes* of the ancient Greek, the architect in the contemporary world must know how to interpret omens, signs, narratives and semiologies suggested by the places in order to define design criteria in accordance with the *Genius Loci*.

*Research objectives*

Regarding such strategy, the hope is that the study of environmental resources, socio-cultural and architectural characteristics that characterize a territory, can reconnect mankind to his habitat without giving up to the features of the contemporary life.

*Methodology*

On this, it is fundamental the study of contemporary architecture and of the projects in which the spirit of the place takes shape. Some good instances are represented by the contemporary architecture of Wang Shu, respectful of local tradition, and by the T-Studio project, *Dao Viet Eco-city*, in Ha Long Bay in Vietnam, where



it is unthinkable to design an anonymous city, with anonymous houses, impersonal streets and parks; indeed the city must enhance the features of the landscape and respect the local building traditions.

Mentioning Martin Heidegger "*The essence of building work is to make people dwell*" and people live where they manage to give a meaning to a place, orienting in it and identifying with it. For this purpose, the contextual architecture proves to be sensitive to the ways in which it fits in a specific place, protecting its local atmosphere and the identity marks that distinguish it.

So the main compositional scope is to transmit character and individuality to buildings and places, establishing a relationship between locality and building requirements that goes beyond architectural typologies and general principles.

#### *Expected results*

The aim of the research is therefore to explain the analytical and compositional principles finalized to combine the project with the place, minimizing the risks of rejection. After an in-depth historical and state of the art analysis, a codification of the design method is carried out, capable of both establishing the relationship between architecture and *Genius loci* with an interdisciplinary approach, and recovering the innovative values tied to tradition.

In this sense, in a future perspective, the *Genius loci* can manifest itself as a possible spatial and architectural configurator indeed, actually, one of the problems that causes the separation between architecture and people is the design of "*non-places*", areas without identity, indifferent to the place where they are inserted.

Starting from the statement of Alvaro Siza: "*Tradition is a challenge to innovation*", the aim of this research is to find answers to a fundamental question: can exist an innovative architecture linked to tradition and context?

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