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## M. Coppola “Le indagini tipologiche in architettura. Leggere il costruito con metodi non strumentali”

*M. Coppola, Le indagini tipologiche in architettura. Leggere il costruito con metodi non strumentali, Carocci, Roma 2018, 191 pp.*

Talking about “typologies” in a publication focused on ancient and medieval architecture is not a forgone consideration. Indeed in some research areas the idea of “type” has recently been considered as an outdated methodological issue, no longer acceptable in the historical investigation practices and material culture studies. Often typology has been considered an outdated approach for understanding ancient architecture. Based on anthropological or geographical assumptions, it is no longer considered as a suitable and modern way of understanding historical buildings. This assumption applies as much to the history of architecture, as well as to Art History. Conversely, archeologists continue to use typologies for their own research, including studies focused on traditional topics such as the classification and studying of pottery finds from field excavations, or ‘younger’ themes such as the classifications of the construction techniques in Building Archaeology.

In this context, the book by Michele Coppola, *Le indagini tipologiche in architettura. Leggere il costruito con metodi non strumentali*, represents an important accomplishment in the dialogue and interaction between different disciplines such as Architecture and Archeology. The author starts from some considerations about university education in the School of Architecture which, he says, is increasingly oriented towards the approach regarding new buildings and the design/drawing as an expression of individual creative flair. The analytical approach geared towards a



deep understanding of artifacts and existing buildings is nowadays more and more upstaged. For this reason, the author proposes a procedure that, after the definition of the “Type” and its different variations in various subjects, reaches the final formulation of an effective methodology.

In Michele Coppola’s work a very strong influence of archeology in its methodological approach appears, not only in a declination of the type chronologically speaking (chronotypology, in fact), but also in a deep knowledge of stratigraphy applied to heritage buildings, both in their potential and in their limits.

The author appropriately cites the main scholars and researchers of these topics in archeological studies (such as Gian Pietro Brogiolo, Francesco Doglioni, Tiziano Mannoni and Roberto Parenti) as well as those who first defined the historical themes related to the architectural production, to the archeology of production and to the finishing of construction materials (Giovanna Bianchi, Aurora Cagnana, Enrico Giannichedda, Anna Boato and Anna Decri and many others). The archaeological and stratigraphic method, moreover, is declined not only in terms of the knowledge of a building, but also according to the possible conservation and restoration projects.

The book is organized in five chapters - after the introduction - which follows a strong and well-articulated logical approach: 1) *Leggere per conoscere - l'indagine architettonica non distruttiva e non strumentale*, 2) *Tipo e archeologia - lo studio dei manufatti*, 3) *Il tipo in architettura*, 4) *Tipologia applicata al costruito - proposte attuali*, 5) *Percorsi di metodo*.

The historical introductions and contextualizations the author has provided as the first paragraph of each chapter are very useful parts of the book. They support the solid (and commendable) theoretical apparatus on which his critical approach is based and are useful for a better definition of the author’s cultural profile.

After the definition of the variety of “types” in architecture, the author goes beyond the simple analysis and goes into the problem of the interpretation of “typology”: the types as defined in the study become real tools for extending a systematic approach to larger case studies. Beyond the limited case study of a single monument, typology may be used to investigate and understand larger architectural complexes or entire villages. This approach and methodology bring the architectural analysis debate in the same direction and onto the same research topics as archeology and building archeology when applied to the study and management of historic landscapes.

In conclusion, the book by Michele Coppola represents an excellent meeting point between different study experiences that share a common objective, that is the historic building itself and its materiality. This approach to historical architectural investigation allows us to interpret ancient buildings not only as monuments but also as real documents.