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Workshop 10 Building in the Traditional Context

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**INNOVER DANS LA TRADITION : UNE METHODE.
"Innovate in Tradition: a method"**

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ABSTRACT:

Serge Santelli, an architect who has enormously practised in many Muslim and Arabic countries announced in the eighties that every architect who might be working in countries of Muslim or Arabic tradition would be obliged to choose one of three alternatives that will face him. To Work in the universal style and to create buildings similar to many others that might be found anywhere else, to copy the traditional architectural forms as found without any variation or to reinterpret them in solutions of actuality that would bring another dimension to the concerned environments.

This paper shows the limitations of each of these paradigms and tries putting the basis of a new approach, which instead of favouring the imitation of the older configurations ending up with frozen copies from the past, will tend to extract ideas and processes that will enable the actual designer, to find new solutions in the light of new contextual and environmental variables.

This approach situates itself at the opposite of the actual object-oriented methodologies. It proposes a process-oriented methodology that learns from past situations possible solutions for new ones.

To do that we propose a démarche which considers all the situations, the ancient and new ones, as indecomposable complex systems that should be conjunctively and diachronically modelised through a constructive epistemology.

The paper begins by putting the theoretical fundamentals of the démarche. It explains the chosen epistemological context and exposes its paradigmatic consequences. Then it explains how should be built a learning situation, how could be defined a learning-project, and how could be formulated its finalities and goals. After what, it gives the methods necessary to learn from past situations the kind of knowledge that could be re-usable in new ones.

The present paper examines equally the innovation question and tries to find how should it be achieved through the proposed methodology.

Finally to give an example, it takes as a depart a type of vernacular Saharan human settlements in Algeria, called «Ksours», which have survived for centuries and are today disappearing under growing urbanisation and human neglect, to define a learning situation that consists in learning from these past models some solutions to conceive present Saharan towns. It defines a learning project and using the proposed method, it shows how it becomes possible to build a new kind of knowledge that could be re-usable in different innovative manners in the new project-situation.

Key words:

Constructive epistemology – Process – Process-oriented Methodology – Paradigm – System – Complexity – Model – Innovation.