

UNIVERSITY of Universities [UOU] in a post- pandemic future: And then, *what?*

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Back to “normality”. We cannot forget everything we have learnt during the pandemic... and how much we have achieved in the online teaching of architecture.

Although the COVID-19 put our learning spaces in crisis, even to the extent of closing universities, it also served Alicante University and a group of Erasmus partners to carry out a self-criticism and to promote a new model of what could be the “**University of Europe**”: a collaborative online teaching-space between international universities.

Last academic year, 2020/21, we proposed an idea of exchanging online workshops between our schools of architecture, a concept that we called **UNIVERSITY of Universities (UOU)**. We started with merely 6 workshops, but after just one semester 22 international universities were involved. Now, when this article is written the following academic year, we have grown up to 30 universities.

<https://uou.ua.es/>

Making use of an online learning platform, and contrary to emulate our former face-to-face teaching, our UOU Architecture Design Courses are structured following a series of workshops led by different international teachers every two weeks. Thus, our students have been working in international groups, obtaining new qualitative and quantitative results in what can be considered an authentic Intercultural tuition.

Moreover, due to the multiple universities involved, the offer of workshops is greater than the number of weeks in the academic semester. This means that students can choose between workshops according to their personal interests. For example, a student should choose 5 to 6 workshops out of 25 or 30 which are on offer. This is a revolutionary new situation for them, requiring them to be much more active and demands a responsibility of defining what kind of architects they want to be.

The immense benefit of this way of working, for both students and teachers, has already been explained in the introduction to the **UOUsj Issue #1** and

the quality of the results is public in our MOODLE platform:

UNIVERSITY of Universities / 1s 2020-21 ARCH

<https://moodle2019-20.ua.es/pensemonline/course/view.php?id=482>

UNIVERSITY of Universities / 2s 2020-21 ARCH + ARTS

<https://moodle2019-20.ua.es/pensemonline/course/view.php?id=502>

WHAT IS NEXT?

At last, when we can now go back to face-to-face on the campus. But what does that imply? Our faces are covered with masks, teaching takes place in cold classrooms with doors and windows open for ventilation, one-metre distance is maintained in crits and tutorials between teachers and students, which means the use of video projectors to see the projects. With this scenario a question is raised: shouldn't we have to redefine face-to-face teaching?

Even more, should we not have to reformulate the hybrid teaching, going beyond a temporary alternation between face-to-face and online teaching. In fact, it is necessary to redefine both, including online teaching to achieve a real integration.

We have now an opportunity to transform the 19th century classroom into a model for the 21st century. For this step, the UOU concept needs to make use of all its muscles and to organize a research symposium on redesigning the classroom. The participants would be our almost fifty UOU teachers already involved, followed by a series of workshops with our hundreds of students.

Specific aims of the proposed symposium and workshops

1. To research on hybrid teaching, redesigning both face-to-face and online pedagogy.

A new challenge for this growing consortium, the return to the classrooms by redesigning them, incorporating what

has been learnt during the pandemic in terms of knowledge transfer (technological advances and social and economic connection), and even to build a prototype classroom having the advantages of online facilities.

2. A series of intercultural workshops on classroom design for hybrid teaching.

A research seminar organized with different participating universities of diverse geographic locations. As a result of the seminar, a series of specialized experimentation workshops should be held with students enrolled in the international groups of Architecture Design Studio.

3. A final presentation of the space designs for the 21st century hybrid classroom.

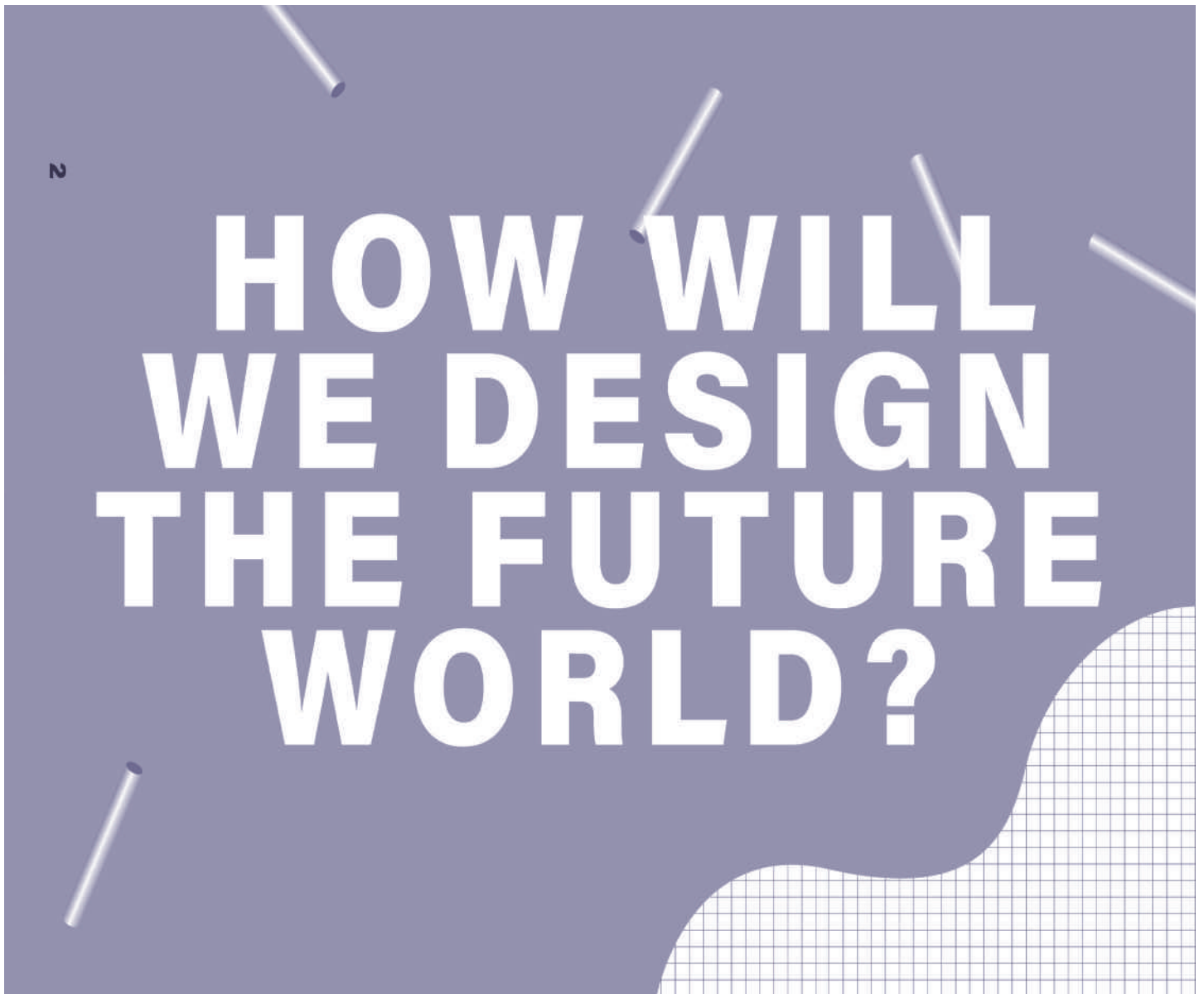
Through workshops, exhibitions and publications, the research will conclude with the construction of the exportable pilot project to other studies and universities.

Informative publications on the teaching methodology and results, as well as an itinerant exhibition between European architecture schools, will give a social visibility to the project. An explanatory dossier of the research, carried out in preparatory meetings for each workshop, will serve as a manifesto and be illustrated with the projects of their respective workshops.

Other teaching aims of **UNIVERSITY of Universities** are:

4. To promote a type of a teacher-training based on exchange and reflection.

5. To set up specialized research groups on teaching that encourage synergies with research and knowledge transfer. For this, it is necessary to create, promote and reflect on good teaching practices that contribute to the development of educational environments and formats around educational innovation and quality.



6. To implement research projects in innovation and development of experiences and educational actions related to techniques, methods, concepts, environments, formats, analysis, design, elaboration and experimentation, implementation of strategies and values, methodology, evaluation, and educational quality processes. It is about exploring and proposing actions that make university teaching and learning processes rethought from an innovative perspective, a real process of design identical to the design of architecture.

7. To improve the practice of innovation and research activities, their strength and consolidation in a collaborative culture of reflection, dialogue, and development of proposals.

8. To encourage collaboration

between students and teachers from different areas, degrees, and universities.

Foreseen impact, results, and sustainability of the proposal: UOU MASTER.

A unique opportunity has arisen for the UOU partners to lead a hybrid teaching class proposal in European universities thanks to the intensity of the international teaching and sustainable online way of teaching.

The impact on students is tremendous and currently there is a potential of more than a thousand students enrolled at UOU.

Every month new European and non-European schools of architecture wish to participate in this innovative teaching project.

A new **Master of ARCHITECTURE INTERCULTURAL STUDIES** at Alicante University (Spain) is a direct result from this international collaboration, born with the aim of defining and addressing the themes of contemporary architecture and society.

For this master's degree, students are expected to carry out 25 online workshops, of which two are compulsory, and others to be chosen from those on offer. Each workshop highlights a specific topic from a series directed by the professors at the **UNIVERSITY of Universities**.

The main aim of this Master's degree is to provide knowledge and tools for architects and researchers who aim to develop new perspectives in the field of contemporary architecture, such as:

RESEARCH BY DESIGN

COMMONS

COMMUNITY BASED DESIGN

VISUAL ART

ACTIVATION OF PUBLIC SPACES

DWELLING

DIGITAL FABRICATION

GEO-URBANISM RADICAL CRITICISM

TACTICAL URBANISM

HERITAGE

TEACHING

Academics and experts will accompany the students in the development of their individual projects.

ASSESSMENT

There is a continuous assessment system:

- In the online part, the student is assessed through the presentation of outputs and participation in classes (including tutorials).

- In the face-to-face part, the assessment is through attending tutorials, preparing the FINAL MASTER PROJECT (FMP) and its presentation.

The Master course culminates with the FMP. It is carried out over 2 months at the University of Alicante and co-directed between a tutor from the University of Alicante (face to face) and a tutor selected by the student from the UOU teachers abroad (online).

SCHEDULE

- End of September to the end of March: Online mode, weekly streaming sessions as group tutorials where students and academics participate.

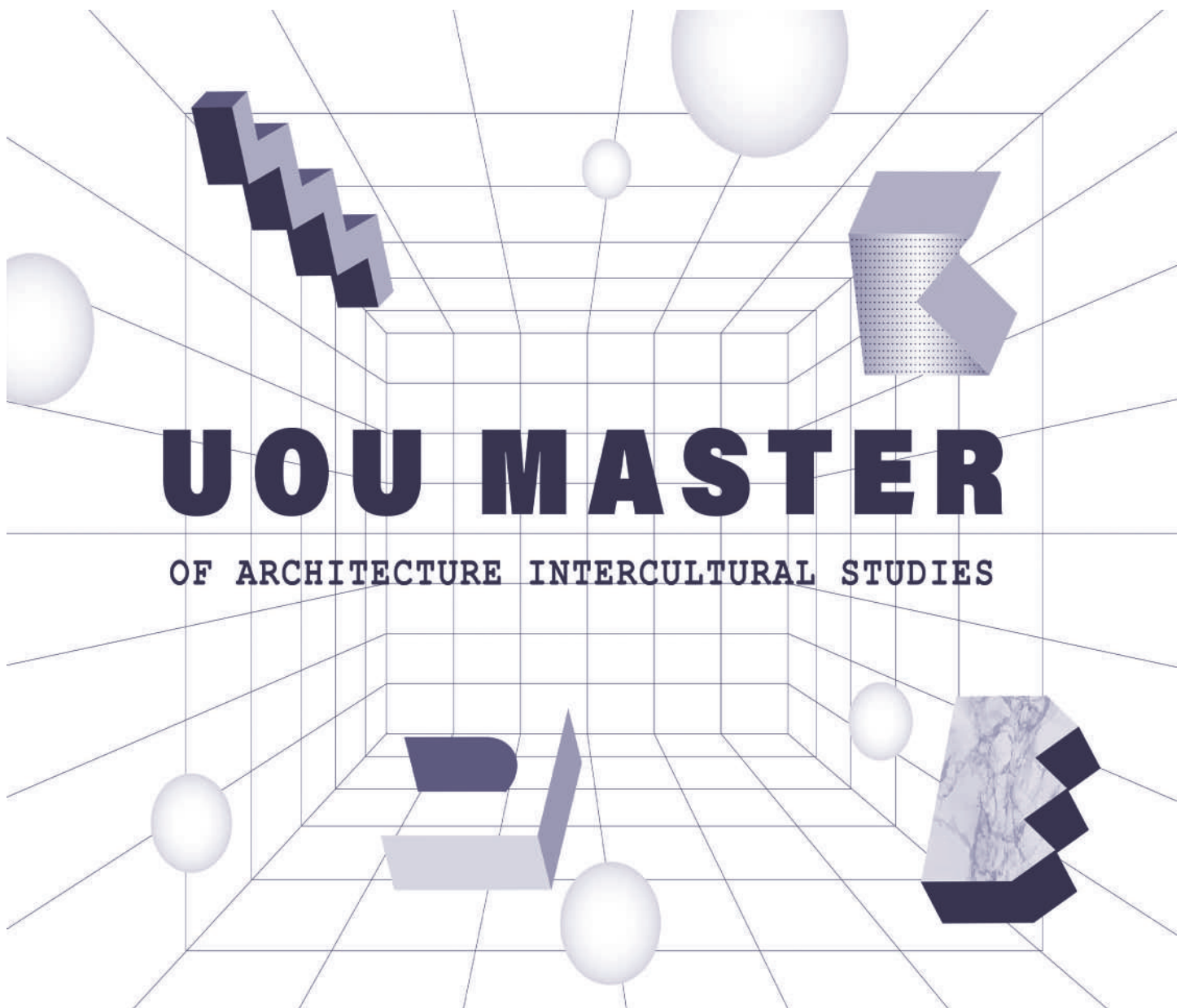
- Beginning of April to the end of May: Daily face-to-face mode, Monday to Friday, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

PLACE

On-line classes + FMP face to face at the University of Alicante (UA).

More information on the MASTER IN ARCHITECTURE INTERCULTURAL STUDIES UOU:

<https://web.ua.es/en/continua/ua-studies-catalogue/summary-sheet.html?plan=9345>



UOU MASTER

OF ARCHITECTURE INTERCULTURAL STUDIES