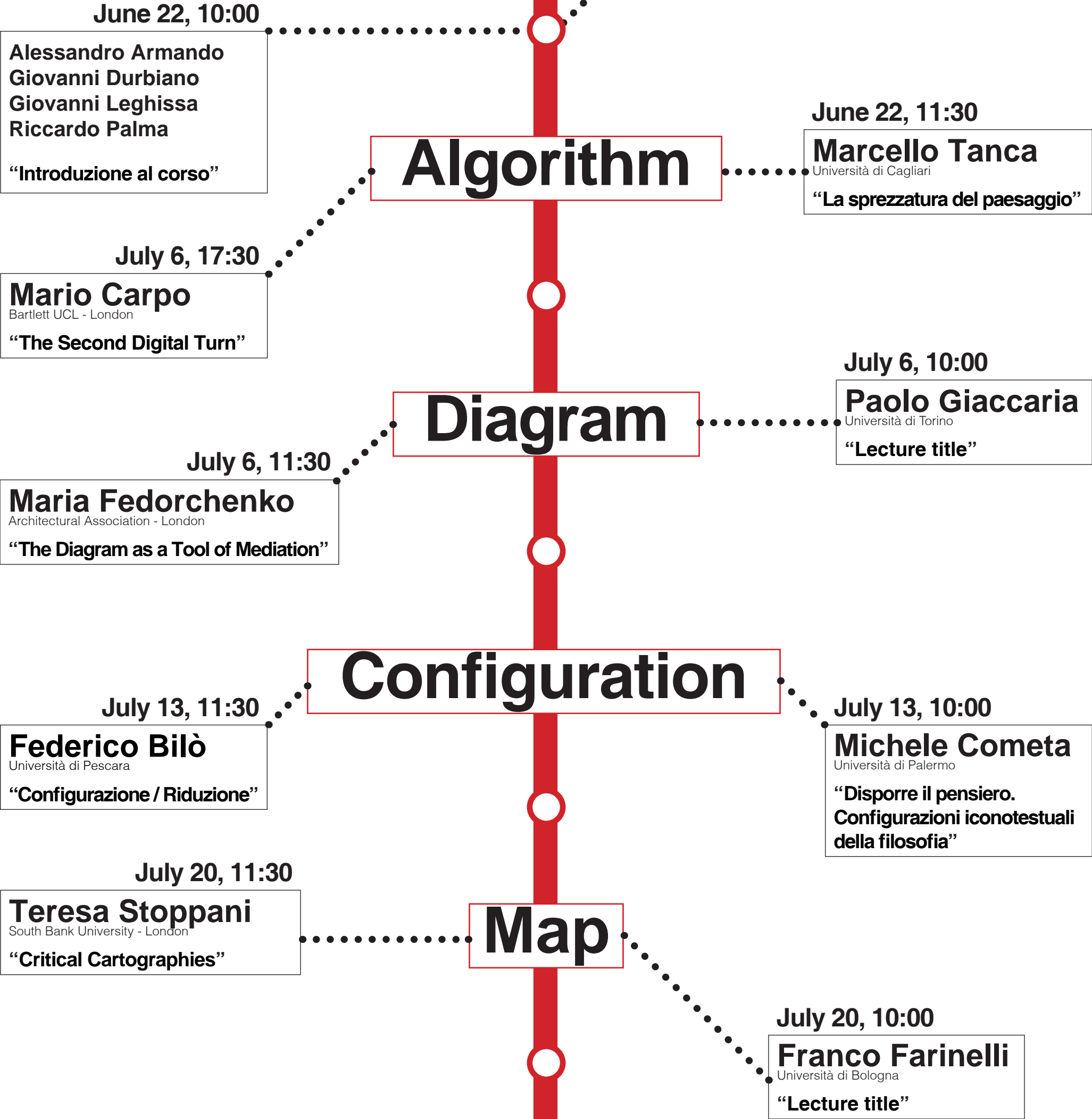


Excellence course

June - July 2018  
Sala della Caccia  
Castello del Valentino, Viale Mattioli 39 - Torino

Towards a  
philosophical-  
architectural dictionary

Schema



The course is part of an interdisciplinary research whose general theme concerns the relationship between architecture and philosophy. The research involves a collaboration between the Ph.D. course in 'Architecture, History and Design' of the Politecnico di Torino and the magazine of philosophical studies of the University of Turin 'Philosophy Kitchen'. The premise of this collaborative research is that exchanges between architecture and philosophy can be developed on the basis of concepts that belong to the theoretical apparatus of both disciplines, even if the meaning such disciplines provide of these concepts might be different.

**The goal is practical: to write a lemma** that can provide operational guidance to practitioners of both disciplines. Hence, to introduce other words and to produce other lemmas as well as schema. In this first attempt, coincidences, misunderstandings, overlaps will be constitutive facts of a map that will trace the semantic regions of the word "schema" in a hyper textual form.

**We think that a direct dialogue between architects and philosophers is not useful.** Rather, we propose that guests invited to the course can separately stage their own interpretation of the word "schema". Only afterwards, the spectators will attempt to write - thus to produce a map - this lemma. If interpretations are thought of as landscapes, the lemma is conceived as a map.

#### The 'schema' in architecture

The use of schema has great relevance in architectural design and its techniques of representation. In particular, the schema allows the translation of design issues, expressed by the program, into architectural figures. For instance, the schema is applied to the representation of structural statics, as well as to architectural typologies, or flows that cross through buildings. The schema also appears as a way to expose the architectural characters of the Landform, thus as a medium that allows the translation of a place from the map to figures in order to propose site-oriented design solutions. Diagram, map, algorithm, configuration, are therefore only several of the possible variations of the schema as it is used in architecture. For these reasons, the schematization is presented as a specific form of architectural thought whose different methods and techniques are grounded in topology. On the other hand, architectural design shares the use of schema with a wide spectrum of disciplines. In fact, although in a different way, all disciplines operate through schematizations, despite their outcomes are usually depicted through the primacy of contents. The interaction between architecture and other disciplines is characterized by an extensive use of schema that allow a spatial visualization of their respective contents. The schema traces the limit beyond which a discipline reveals a latent architectural component. In this sense, the schema displays the architectural dimension of thought. Therefore, considering this scenario, the seminar proposes to survey the territory of the schema in the two disciplines of architecture and philosophy, in order to describe the main technical-discursive forms that make the notion of scheme operative and to write the lemma schema in view of its practical use in architectural design.

**There are words that belong to both the worlds of architects and philosophers.** Among these, the word "schema" is chosen in view of a philosophical-architectural dictionary, which is not supposed to be completed one day, as this might be impossible. Rather, what interests us is to solicit the meaning of these words starting from two points of view that do not necessarily coincide each other, or even diverge, but that are surely intertwined. In order to make the discussion on such a broad theme more articulated, we decided to divide the term schema in four subsections - Algorithm, Configuration, Diagram, and Map - indicating each one a particular practical application of "schema". These applications will be analysed with a transdisciplinary approach focusing on the different practical needs they absolve.

**The interpretations will be performed by 4 architects and 4 philosophers**, invited to present their operational declination of the concept of "schema". They will speak divided into pairs, one after the other over the course of 4 days. PhD students and teachers - together with guests who, in the meantime, have become active spectators - will organize a seminar discussion at the end of each day. During the four meetings, doctoral candidates will try to write their own lemma on the basis of the results of the seminar. During the final day, the lemmas will be compared and discussed, perhaps also performed through practical exercises that will test their effectiveness. Finally, all participants will collaborate to translate the lemma into a hypertext.

#### The 'schema' in philosophy

The concept of schema may be included among the most complex and obscure notions conceived by the Western philosophical thought. Even if it sounds a familiar term, widely used in everyday conversations, a more careful analysis reveals its nature of cut-off concept, representing, by means of its ambiguity, a border line between the domain of meaning and what is subtracted from it. Coming from the Greek schêma, it indicates the conventional model, simplified compared to the more complex reality of a problem, a phenomenon, an object, a mechanism or a process that we are used to employ as means of understanding of the surrounding world. Therefore, not surprisingly it shares the common root with the term sêch-ein, future form of both verbs "to have" and "to own". Interpreted in such way, the notion of schema assumes a crucial epistemological role, presenting itself as a place of intersection, as well as of synthesis, of activities like knowing, representing, organizing and consequently manipulating, shaping and creating. As a sort of porous membrane, its catalyst function aims to put into communication mind and world through a mutual exchange of bewilderment and reconfiguration. It is perhaps no coincidence that the term appears for the first time in the Western thought in the context of the atomist philosophy of Democritus and Epicurus to define the multiple shapes assumed by the latest components of reality, up to Kant who situates in the tangled theory of «schematism» exactly the mediation point between sensitivity and categories of the intellect. For that elusive nature, the schema reveals itself as the ideal object for a seminar reflection between architecture and philosophy intended to provide new conceptual and, above all, operational instruments to those who will make the design of what will be their main activity.