*"Io mi rendo sicuro, che appresso coloro, che
uederanno le sotto poste fabriche, e conoscono
quanto sia difficil cosa lo introdurre una usanza
nuoua, massimamente di fabricare, della
qual professione ciascuno si persuade saperne
la parte sua; io sarò tenuto molto auenturato,
hauendo ritrouato gentil'huomini di cosi nobile,
e generoso animo, & eccellente giudicio,
c'habbiano creduto alle mie ragioni, e si siano
partiti da quella inuecchiata usanza di fabricare
senza gratia, e senza bellezza alcuna; […]."*

Palladio 1570, II 4 (Cap. III)

"I am sure that they, who shall look upon the
Buildings I am going to give the draughts of in
this Book, and they, who know how hard it is
to introduce a new way, particularly into the Art
of Building (in which every one presumes to be
knowing) will think me very happy, that I have
met with Persons who were generous, judicious,
and reasonable enough to hear and approve my
Reasons; and afterwards to give over that old
way of Building, which is without any proportion
or grace at all: […]."

**Palladio / [Leoni (publisher)] 1742, SECOND
BOOK, 45 (Chap. III)**

Thorsten Bürklin and Martin Ebert

The Palladio Method
Introduction

Palladio's Method(s)

The essays in this volume explore the question of methodology
in Palladio's work. From the perspective of today, they ask
what might be gained for the current architectural and cultural
debate. Reflecting on Palladio's method(s) it should be stated
that we cannot talk about *the* Palladio method. There will be no
easy-to-understand formula. Rather one could identify *several*
Palladio methods. In any case, the inquiry demands scientific
precision and professional honesty, examining one's own goals,
purposes, and horizons for action.[1]

Short-sighted analogies with the present must be avoided. Even
if Palladio was a master of inventing images and applying a
copy-and-paste-method to his design, only a shallow view may
create simplistic parallels to today's situation. In our times of a

pervasive disregard for context, one can no longer even dream of binding narratives that go beyond the requirements of capitalism and societies' desire for spectacle and consumption.[2] Economic pressures and the struggle to gain visibility make it difficult to resist the temptation of using superficial analogies and an enticing imagery in an effort to legitimize contemporary architecture. Instead, when it comes to Palladio's methods, it is particularly significant that he did not simply copy pieces from the ancient repertoire. By assembling them into a theoretical edifice, he shaped the ideological and pragmatic space in which he designed and built. In this sense, Palladio is far from us – ideologically and practically.

The approach towards Palladio's methods needs to be justified through an expressed interest.[3] Yet, it would be inappropriate to expect a complete programmatic explanation from the onset. Rather, one should expect, in line with Gadamer's hermeneutics, that the theoretical and pragmatic horizon develops alongside the investigation of the subject as a whole: "He, who wants to understand a text always projects.[4]" The same is true for understanding architecture or an architectural method: The point is, through critical discourse, to create a theoretical context and to make the historical object accessible from a contemporary perspective.

Learning with the Past

We have to consider the legitimacy of the approach: would one do an injustice to Palladio's work or would it receive unfair or inappropriate treatment if we ask about his methods from today's perspective?

Palladio wrote about introducing "a new way" (una usanza nuoua)[5] by refering to an interpretation of Classic Roman architecture. In doing so, was he not himself plundering the ancient models for his own purpose?[6] And was he not downright radical when he "corrected" the facts found and recorded on site—in view of

the ancient ruins of Rome—with a look at an "ideal" classicism he was striving for?[7] As Manfredo Tafuri said, he took the liberty—"to 'de-historicize' and destroy the symbolic structure of language itself."[8]

Put simply:
Palladio appropriated antiquity—we are appropriating Palladio.

However, doubts remain about the legitimacy of the appropriation of history. At this point, we should mention a dispute that arose between Bruno Zevi and Manfredo Tafuri in 1964 on the occasion of the exhibition *Michelangelo architetto* in Rome.[9] Zevi was convinced that history could be employed to better understand the present since the question was raised about the relevance of Michelangelo's work for the modernist architectural discourse. In this context, Zevi, engaged with volumetric and spatial interpretations, asked students from the IUAV (Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia) to perform "critical plastics"[10], analyzing, for example, the Capitoline Square in Rome. Tafuri, however, argued that history should not be instrumentalized, that it cannot be understood as an imperative for action in the present.[11]

The dilemma lies in the fact that both positions are valid. After all, we can understand the intellectual, political, and economic setting that was underlying the construction of the Capitoline Square in sixteenth-century Rome only from a distance. In no way will we be able to appreciate the historic situation in the same way as Michelangelo's contemporaries did. Any appropriation from today's perspective is always an interpretation which leaves the traces of one's own interests like a genetic code on the placement of history.[12] And this is Tafuri's objection: an "original" view of Michelangelo or—in our case Palladio—remains inaccessible.

However, we can create viewports that bring to light individual aspects of the original that have relevance—for us—from our point of view. This is what Zevi was interested in. Even if the initial idea of the creation of a work of art or architecture did not anticipate later interpretations, these nevertheless belong to its reality. Like a child leaving home, the work detaches itself from its author and his intentions. As long as they are relevant, the possibilities of interpretation are basically inexhaustible—as Hans-Georg Gadamer put it.[13]

Whenever architectural history and theory is understood this way, then the consideration of the past is always a consideration of the present. Thus, it is quite legitimate to make use of historic resources for our reflection on architecture and our professional practice. Neither art, nor architecture or literature can be thought of without reference to what already exists. However—and here Tafuri is right—it would be naïve to believe that historical knowledge could simply be translated into action, i.e. into designing or planning. His objection probably was motivated by the concern that the works of the 16th century could be instrumentalized in the context of a capitalist process of exploitation. After all, subsequent developments in the art and tourism markets, mining the global treasures of cultural achievements, prove Tafuri right.[14]

Nevertheless, together with Bruno Zevi, one can also encounter history in another way that is neither about instrumentalization nor appropriation. Probably little is learned *from* history. Nevertheless, we can learn *with* it. We can let it tell us something that leads to critical reflection and perhaps even to questioning our own assumptions.[15] This is possible because themes such as simplicity, reduction, economy, representation, monumentality, and the use of materials—significant terms in Palladio's work—have always pervaded architectural endeavour and still do.

Even if we do not always realize it—as, for example, it is the case with grammatical structures of everyday language—, the tradition emanating from Palladio plays a significant role in the

development of European and Western-dominated discourse on architecture.[16] We all are part of history, or perhaps part of different or parallel histories. These, however, can only be understood from a present standpoint, or standpoints.[17] We do not have any other option than to look at the world from the present. And there is no independence from context, we can only act within it.

But precisely herein lies the creative potential of our objective, and profession—which brings us back to methodology. Our focus and field of action can be realigned if the context, i.e. the traditions in which we operate, are known. Yet, while in the past a canon formed a reliable framework, nowadays, the sometimes disparate and competing cultural, social, and political settings in which we live and work, confront us with the difficult task of securing reliable contexts.[18] Therefore, designing is more than just the creation of form. It includes understanding the world in which we live and act.

Beyond the Superficial

In recent decades, architects (like the rest of society) have been confronted with a number of dramatic challenges: Climate change, scarcity of resources, and economic pressure. Added to this comes a profound crisis in the reputation of architects in society, as planners are struggling with the values of design and construction, exploring what architectural culture could mean in the present.

In this light, dealing with Andrea Palladio may seem like escapism: there is comfort in the memory of an epoch in which the world was supposedly manageable and orderly; but that would be a fallacy. Palladio himself lived in difficult times. On December 10th, 1508—a few days after his birth[19]—, an armed alliance, the so-called League of Cambrai, was formed against Venice. It included the Holy Roman Empire of German Nations, the kingdoms of France and Hungary, the Crown of Aragon and the Papal States. In the following decades the dependence on

grain imports from the Ottoman Empire weighed heavily on the *Serenissima* and the Veneto.[20] Famines were the order of the day. As a result, parts of the Venetian nobility, with a long tradition in trading overseas, were now required to monitor the food production on the *terra ferma* (the mainland of Venice).[21]

International competition and wars, uncertainties in trading, shortage of food, plagues—sounds familiar? This is today's daily news, in a different guise! Moreover, the discovery of America, the reformation, and the *Sacco di Roma* were outstanding historical events that had an enormous impact on the societies of the 16th century. The European world was in crisis, and it would never be the same again.

In this context Palladio operated in various fields that went well beyond the creation of beautiful surfaces. He was engaged in the large-scale drainage of the marshlands of the *terra ferma* that allowed the subsequent exploitation of the newly created farmland. There he developed a new design for the typology of the Venetian villa, from where the nobility was able to control agriculture and trade, and where, at the same time, his clients found an appropriate place of representation.

Palladio was the architectural figurehead of a (relatively small) group of noble men and intellectuals in northeast Italy—in Vicenza, in Venice, and in the surrounding countryside—who devoted themselves to the illusion of re-creating the life of Roman antiquity.[22] Thus, Palladio's hyper classicism, pitched against his time and the Mannerist tendencies coming from Rome, was aligned with an ideological horizon which—in a certain way—was already out of time, but could still be identified as a reasonable framework for thought and action. The frescoes in Villa Barbaro or Villa Emo, which anchored the manor houses as the ideological centers in an "antique" world, tell us about the yearning, but also of the futility to make these dreams a reality.[23]

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Palladio was guided by the conviction that he could make a significant contribution to cultural innovation. With his work, he gave the cities and the landscapes of the Veneto a distinctive face, one that is still present today. Palladio was a draughtsman and a designer, a mason and an engineer, an innovator and an image maker. He used a comprehensible architectural language, the grammar which he laid down in the *Quattro Libri*. Thus, he had developed an intellectual and creative horizon that served as a contextual framework for designing and for creatively shaping his world in his time. Perhaps, in this sense, one can speak of a Palladio method, or Palladio's methods. This is not about a dogmatism of design rules to be followed according to a fixed canon. If it were, one would neither understand the façades of the Palazzo Valmarana or the Loggia del Capitaniato in Vicenza nor the spatial structure of the church Il Redentore in Venice. Palladio had already introduced non-conformism himself.

Towards Process

This collection of essays looks at aspects of Palladio's work from a perspective of process. We want to understand the "how" and less the "what". But as we have established the interest in Palladio's methods from today's perspective, further questions arise, including, who asks these questions and what might be gained from exploring and, perhaps, answering them? What exactly can we learn from Palladio's methods, from discovering and understanding them?

When looking to the present and the future of architectural practice, there is little insight to be gained from a traditional formal approach: A symmetrical plan arrangement based on harmonic proportions rarely satisfies contemporary domestic requirements and, exceptions aside, there is little meaning in applying Palladian decoration to the front of a building. Today's society is less concerned with recreating a Roman world and more with an existential crisis of climate change and a fairer distribution of wealth.

Perhaps paradoxically, despite the interest in process, we still approach buildings from the front, or the outside. We need to start with what we see and examine the facts before our eyes. Layer-by-layer we want to dig deeper, explore the substance behind the image and examine a number of these process-related questions:

1. How was Palladio able to borrow fragments from antique architecture? How was antique architecture documented and then how did it become available as a repertoire for new architecture? As Palladio's works were created in the Veneto and not in Rome, it was not possible to copy pieces 1:1; they had to be translated from the ruin to then become available for builders to "reproduce" them hundreds of kilometres further north. How was this "visual quarry of references" created, transcribed and made available to Palladio and his contemporaries?

2. How did Palladio compose the reliefs in his façades?
   What are the patterns that he followed or the systems he used?

3. How was imagery applied to the inside of his villas?
   What does this imagery reflect and how did this change the spatial experience?

4. How were Palladio's buildings constructed?
   What methods did he use and how were they developed?

5. How do building and image relate, and how did the use of orthogonal projection predetermine the connection between internal spaces, structure and external appearance?

6. What does it mean to be an architect (in a Palladian sense)?

7. And what importance did ideological and zeitgeist aspects play in the introduction of "a new way" of building?

Studying the methodology behind the work rather than just the outcome will allow us to understand a variety of aspects of design and construction. It will help to compare the work of different architects independent of style and epoch, as well as to clarify the respective approach to solving problems.

So, the fundamental aim of this research is to begin to understand how Palladio may have worked and which processes he applied and how this can help us today to become more competent and effective with our own endeavours; whether this be designing buildings, explaining the background of historic action, or simply enjoying architecture more by understanding how it was conceived.

Endnotes

If not indicated otherwise, all translations are by the authors of the introduction.

1 See Bürklin 2013, 53.

2 See Debord 1992/1967; Baudrillard 1970.

3 This is an argument that goes beyond mere historical reflection.

4 Gadamer 1975/2004, 269. / Germ.: Gadamer 1960/1990, 271: „Wer einen Text verstehen will, vollzieht immer ein Entwerfen."

5 Palladio/[Leoni (publisher)] 1742, SECOND BOOK, 45 [Chap. III]; Palladio 1570, II 4 [Cap. III].

6 See Forssman 1965, 41: "[…]: Römische Größe in venezianische Form gegossen. Genau das muß Palladios eigenes Anliegen gewesen sein, nachdem er von seinem zweiten Romaufenthalt ins Veneto zurückgekehrt war." / Engl.: "Roman greatness in Venetian form. This must have been precisely Palladio's intention after he returned to the Veneto from his second stay in Rome."

7 Bruschi 1978, 21: "Perfino le complesse organizzazioni spazio-strutturali delle antiche terme, come è stato osservato, sono sottoposte ad un deciso processo di riduzione e di semplificazione." / Engl.: "Even the complex spatial-structural organizations of ancient baths, as has been noted, underwent a decisive process of reduction and simplification."—See also Bruschi 1978, 25: "Rifiuta nella sostanza la lezione spaziale dell'architettura imperiale e pure, in larga misura seppur ambiguamente, i suggerimenti non puramente linguistici dei cinquecentisti romani." / Engl.: "In essence, he rejects the spatial lesson of imperial architecture and also, to a large, although ambiguous, extent, the not purely linguistic suggestions of the Roman sixteenth-century."

8 Tafuri 1969, 127: "Essa [la tipologia; the editors] non è più usata come struttura invariante di soluzioni particolari […], bensì, all'opposto, come risultato di un'articolazione tendenzialmente infinita di 'soluzioni' grammaticali ripetibili. Ma tale scelta comporta una conseguenza ricca di significati. Per poter usare davvero liberamente il lessico classicista e gli apporti delle fonti contemporanee, è infatti necessario compiere una distruzione concettuale: bisognerà disarticolare tutti i nessi sintattici interni al linguaggio e alle tipologie assunte come fonti e, conseguentemente, compromettere i significati simbolici ad esse connessi. Bisognerà compiere, in altre parole, l'operazione inversa a quella, preliminare, dello scavo filologico, procedendo a 'de-storicizzare' e a distruggere la struttura simbolica del linguaggio stesso." / Engl.: "It [la tipologia; the editors] is no longer used as an invariant structure of particular solutions […], but, on the contrary, as the result of a tendentially infinite articulation of repeatable grammatical 'solutions'. But such a choice carries a sequel that is rich in meaning. In fact, in order to really use classicist vocabulary and the contributions of contemporary sources freely, conceptual destruction is necessary: it will be necessary to disarticulate all the syntactic connections internal to the language and typologies assumed as sources and, consequently, to compromise the symbolic meanings attached to them. It will be necessary to perform, in other words, the reverse operation to that, preliminary, of philological excavation, by proceeding to 'de-historicize' and destroy the symbolic structure of language itself."—See Bürklin 2019, 88–89.

9 The exhibition was curated by Paolo Portoghesi and Bruno Zevi; see Leach 2013, 501.

10 See Biraghi 2019, 50.

11 See Leach 2013; Biraghi 2019, 50–52.

12 See Gadamer 1960/1990, 289: "Bei den Geisteswissenschaften ist vielmehr das Forschungsinteresse, das sich der Überlieferung zuwendet, durch die jeweilige Gegenwart und ihre Interessen in besonderer Weise motiviert." / Engl.: Gadamer 1975/2004, 285: "Rather, in the human sciences the particular research questions concerning tradition that we are interested in pursuing are motivated in a special way by the present and its interests."

13 Gadamer 1960/1990, 379: "Geschichtliche Überlieferung kann nur so verstanden werden, daß die grundsätzliche Formbestimmung durch den Fortgang der Dinge mitgedacht wird, und ebenso weiß der Philologe, der es mit dichterischen oder philosophischen Texten zu tun hat, um deren Unausschöpf-barkeit." / Engl.: Gadamer 1975/2004, 366: "Historical tradition can be understood only as something always in the process of being defined by the course of events. Similarly, the philologist dealing with poetic or philosophical texts knows that they are inexhaustible."

14 Palladio's architecture has become an important offer on the tourism market.

15 See Gadamer 1960/1990, 273: "*Die hermeneutische Aufgabe geht von selbst in eine sachliche Frage-stellung über* und ist von dieser immer schon mitbestimmt. [...]. Wer einen Text verstehen will, ist viel-mehr bereit, sich von ihm etwas sagen zu lassen." / Engl.: Gadamer 1975/2004, 271: "*The hermeneuti-cal task becomes of itself a questioning of things* and is always in part so defined. [...]. Rather, a person trying to understand a text is prepared for it to tell him something."

16 This is not about the role of architecture of Classicism and Palladianism in the context of representation and exercise of power of European and North American colonial rule; see Nightingale 2012, esp. 79–88, 218–224. As important as this aspect is: the use of architecture (and urban planning) as an instrument of domination is not limited to historical styles. The so-called classical or international modernism was also used in this sense; see Bader 2009; Mattioli 2009.

17 See Gadamer 1960/1990, 281: "In Wahrheit gehört die Geschichte nicht uns, sondern wir gehören ihr." / Engl.: Gadamer 1975/2004, 285: "In fact history does not belong to us; we belong to it."—The disloca-tions of Peter Eisenman (see Eisenman 1995, 145–150, Die blaue Linie) in particular are based on the concept of *locus*.

18 See *Mille plateaux* from Gille Deleuze and Felix Guattari (Deleuze/Guattari 1980).

19 See Beltramini 2008a, 4.

20 See Beltramini/Burns (eds.) 2008, 236.

21 See Holberton 1990, 3–14, 162.

22 One can think of the architectural staging apparatus built under the direction of Giangiorgio Trissino on the occasion of the entry of Bishop Niccolò Ridolfi into Vicenza in 1543. Andrea Palladio planned a neo-classical mock architecture that covered the house façades along the processional route. See Barbieri 1997, 57.

23 See Holberton 1990, 164–178; Bentmann/Müller 1992, 51–59.