

Naples, a case study. Rise and Fall of contemporary art as a factor in urban design regeneration

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Abstract

The design is often considered as the crossroads of different disciplines. The designer has therefore played an increasing role as coordinator of different skills, assembler of hybrid materials, and concepts to be combined in new configurations.

Historically, the city of Naples has presented a monumental heritage, of millenary origin, which represents a fundamental element of its urban identity. The paper aims to clarify the issues of a particular urban experience: the use of contemporary art as a decisive factor of the recent urban transformation of the city. That process, which went through the last fifteen years, has at present a disputed outcome. The city has been, since the nineties, the privileged ground testing of symbolic politics. Here the public strategy generates a series of actions, whose communicative factor has been taken from contemporary art. Public art, integration between architecture, visual arts and town planning, offer extraordinary opportunities, for the art of taking an active role in social and cultural dynamics, fueling the debate on the meaning of the public, on the relationship between ethics and aesthetics. At the same time this cultural policy, without a temperate design management, has paradoxically increased the distance between the creative elite and ordinary people.

KEYWORDS: urban art, public strategies, design process, mobility experience

Introduction- Public space and new identities

The concept of urban identity and the feeling of belonging that follows from it, has been historically linked to the physical dimension of the built space. Cultural and historical processes are set in the physical spaces of the city, giving rise to the urban fabric of our present, reaching to configure the Seduction of Place mentioned by Rykwert (Rykwert, 2000). In this sense, the city is at the same time, the place to build and to inhabit. The symbolic space coincides with the physical one. But in recent decades, something has changed.

The American philosopher John Dewey, already in the 1920s, proposed to think to the public space as a temporary aggregation of individuals that forms as an answer to a problem. Then what was experienced at times, tends gradually to assume a more complete and organized form, configured as a physical space. The pedagogical philosophy of Dewey is based on a conception of the experience as the primary relationship between man and environment, where man is not a passive spectator, but cooperates closely with its surroundings. The growth of the individual start from experience, in its social dimension. The individual is then integrated with his environment, reacts and acts on it. The educational experience and individual growth must therefore start from everyday life and social space in which the subject lives. It should not seem to much to take concepts developed in the 1920s, to reread the social uses of public space in contemporary cities, and the function that the artistic production can take in these processes. The same concepts of Dewey are at the root of recent formulations, such as those by Florian Haydn and Robert Temel (2006). For these authors the temporary use of space is what anticipates its capacity to become gradually public space. The public space, in this interpretation, comes from a constellation of individuals, situations and facilities, built and discarded repeatedly over time and space intentionally. The idea is that space is public at certain times and isn't in others, despite the use we make of the notion of public space, by reducing and standardizing it, into thinking that it may become such according to a clear desire for an architectural or urban design. In fact the reading of the city is no longer just that of the architect or town planner who plays with spaces and design on the basis of the most various needs, nor of that the historian that interprets urban space telling us of our past and our traditions. The real turning point in the way of thinking and represent space, according to Edward Soja (1996) starts at the beginning of 90's. In those years we witness to what he calls a "spatial turn". Soja brings these news to major changes affecting the economy and technology: the globalization and the advent of the Internet. Architecture and urbanism, disciplines that deal with space par excellence, were deeply influenced by this breakthrough offering new ways of approach to the subject. According to Soja, over the perceived practices of "Firstspace" and the concept space "Secondspace", exists the lived space: "Thirdspace". This third stage is the result of how the space perceived by the individual through the senses creates an image that should affect the way you relate to the individual with the space itself.

According to Haydn and Temel (2006) idea of public space could, therefore, be identified with an action, that of appropriation. The public space is practical use, not sanctioned by rules or regulations. It rewrites space boundaries that are often not congruent with the city built and defined. It occurs in places that have specific characteristics and do not show only a generic availability. The uses define contemporary public spaces. They have locations in which something, occasionally, is designed and built. Then you can keep traces of different intensity and duration. Possibly, you can add others (engaging in this with a repeatability and a duration not expected). The idea that these uses are mainly temporary is substantial. Of course, from distance, everything could be defined as temporary. It is to understand in what sense some uses may be temporary and reconfigure, with this character, the public places.

Here the word temporary means an intermediate situation between an ephemeral use (which exists only for a short period of time, without a trace) and a provisional one (which does not exclude an unexpected, longer duration). Effectively, the authors suggest to think about different ways in which the new temporary urban space design the urban quality in contemporary city: that light texture which becomes structure of knowledge and experience; through its occasional quality we learn and share, it promotes the contact of different social stakeholders.

The cultural production becomes a major driver of the economy of the cities. Culture, art, knowledge, experimentation and cultural consumption have now become important economic factors. All this is visible in the transformation of cities that are emptied of all production activities, going to replace the solid buildings of production, consumption and entertainment places. The city, in this sense, is today the capital of the symbolic. Under the impetus of this massive offensive the functions of urban places have changed. If before each of them maintained its own physiognomy and a role of trade, service, fun, now they have become hybrid sites, which often coexist, even temporarily with different functions. Transit sites that become art galleries, squares functionalized by the presence of temporary installations. But this does not mean solving the relationship between the citizen and the communication system as ephemeral act of consumption, rather it means realizing that the world is increasingly the message to dictate the rules of behavior. Already in 1964 McLuhan (1964) wrote: "in the new era of information and electrical production schedule, the same goods purchased more and more a character of information".

In cities we see the transition of the economy of production to the economy of services. This implies that, while before the goods could be transported without coming into direct physical contact with the productive and financial employees, in an economy dominated by services, the contact is essential. While the traditional town was mainly a town of work and living, the contemporary metropolis is increasingly a city of recreation and exchanges. In the cities the physical reality of the city and the fabric of relationships concentrate and establish the subject of public spaces. Between these two elements there is a game of references that don't mention them separately, physical forms and social forms inhabit one within the other, are into each other. Starting from these concepts, we can track down different paths around the art-related practices in urban and social dimension.

Naples between heritage and future

Every era has left a trace in Neapolitan territory, whose appeal is enhanced by a unique landscape and environment. This heritage is a fundamental part of the identity of the entire Mediterranean area: evidence from the pre-Hellenic civilization, to the Greek and the Roman one, gradually up to the most recent expressions of contemporary life. Restricting ourselves just to the major examples of this heritage, we can cite two of the best-known archaeological sites in the world: the sites of Herculaneum and Pompei, cities destroyed by the eruption of Vesuvio vulcan in 79 ad. To them we can ideally connect the Naples National Archaeological Museum, which houses one of the largest collections of Antiquities, with a rich collection of frescoes and mosaics, statues, precious and everyday objects. Bringing us closer to our times, yet the National Museum of Capodimonte, whose core is formed by the Farnese collection, with extraordinary masterpieces by Titian, Parmigianino, Carracci and a heritage rich in decorative arts, in addition to manufacturing, with the famous Bourbon porcelains and

nineteenth and sections of contemporary art. Other outstanding architectural structures and museums in Naples are represented by the Royal Palace, the Museum of Castel Nuovo, and the Certosa di San Martino Museum, Castel Sant 'Elmo, until new terms as a City of Science Exhibition, which, with its 12,000 square feet of exhibits, interactive displays and multimedia, games and curiosities of science and technology, represents the first Italian Science Center. The elements mentioned above help to compose the urban skyline (Moughtin, 1995), assuming the role of a collective symbol, something that represents the city, a collective element in which citizens can identify. There were a lot of specific projects referred to the city cultural patrimony and certainly the most important was the project "School adopts a monument" (V.V. A.A., 1999).

This is an educational project, aimed at students of primary and secondary schools, with the aim to promote a wider awareness of existing cultural heritage and of the need for its preservation and enhancement. It is an initiative, promoted by the city of Naples, aimed at the younger generations, school-age children. It involves schools of any level and order of the city and suburbs of Naples who receive in "adoption" by the competent authorities a monument placed in their urban district. Along three years the monument is studied, it spreads knowledge, promotes the protection and enjoyment, it is available to provide an extension service at public events of particular interest. The project concludes with a presentation by schools of a proposed enhancement. This is a project of lifelong learning through the knowledge and care of the monumental heritage of the city. A new model for recovery of physical assets of the city, through the knowledge of its historical memory carried through the leadership of schools. "The school adopts a monument" has the purpose of activating, through awareness of the importance of the cultural heritage of the city, a new sense of civic duty, and this for several reasons:

- the construction of a civic conscience and a lifelong education program aimed at respect for cultural heritage;
- the originality of the methodology that has allowed the model over the local and specific conditions of the city of Naples;
- for the dynamo effect that generated on social and economic impacts, triggering a process of growth for goods that would otherwise come out passively on the community.
- having opened the international market a product (the city's artistic heritage) that already existed but was not known or was abandoned;
- determining the affirmation of new skills related to the project;
- having triggered a more general and widespread promotion policy;

It is thus a happy meeting between the business culture (management of resources and their productive employment) and culture of the place (human resources and manufactured goods), between global dynamics and local identities. From this point of view the major outcomes, as well as from a practical point of view of preservation initiatives pursued, are related to the re-appropriation by the citizens with a strong stimulus to the feeling of belonging to the social community. The collective identity of the city of Naples in recent decades has evolved through a program which has contributed greatly, next to the memory of the past, to a new contemporary expression. In recent years exhibitions of international artists have been hosted, set in historic buildings or in outdoor public spaces. The whole historic city was involved in this process. The central Piazza del Plebiscito is the symbol that has housed a large annual outdoor installation. Since 1995, when the square was pedestrianised, the square has become the place of the city's main initiatives: concerts and

events, but most installations of contemporary art during the Christmas holidays. With this initiative the contemporary art is continually measured with popular audiences.

Symbolically the place where art is periodically prepared is the main city square, a space in which all citizens will recognize themselves. In this space they searched for a direct and unfiltered relationship with a wide audience, which appropriates the work or rejects it. In this way art comes from the places of her deputies to tradition, to collaborate actively in the formation of a new thought, understood as a cultural act, and training of a collective consciousness. The work which opened this initiative in 1995 was the mountain of salt by Palladino. It was an imposing sculpture, sized at great location in piazza del Plebiscito. The work was created through a series of symbolic elements: the cone-shaped volcano, referred to a salt which is the solid element of the sea. After Paladino, for fifteen years, prestigious artists intervened in the square. Kounellis who puts in place a long metal plate on which bright flames fueled by gas cylinders. Then Merz, Zorio and in 1999 a "conceptual" Paolini. In 2000 he returned to the urban dimension with a huge red pvc trumpet, signed by Kapoor, 32 metres high and long 51, which fills the space visually. Until last years with Richard Serra, Rebecca Horn, Jan Fabre. But the spread in public spaces in Naples of contemporary art, is not only in installations of Piazza del Plebiscito.

In the same Museum of Capodimonte there is a section devoted to contemporary art. International meetings held at Capodimonte, during the 1980s and 1990s were the starting point for the creation of this collection: in 1978 Alberto Burri had donated to the Museum the great black Cretto, derived from the blowing up texture of Caravaggio's paint works. The works of Merz, Kounellis, Kosuth and then those of Cucchi and Paladino, Alfano, Spalletti, Nitsch, Pistoletto, together with those of contemporary artists from Naples, have gradually increased this section, even more significant for a museum consisting mainly of collections of medieval and modern art.

In the 18th-century building called Palazzo Roccella, today there is the PAN (Palazzo delle Arti Napoli), which shows contemporary art through the activities of local galleries (almost 200 works). If you add the spaces of neoclassical Villa Pignatelli, the Palazzina Villa, Royal Palace and Maschio Angioino we have ten spaces for exhibitions of contemporary art. Another one is Donna Regina Palace, perhaps the principal one, the Museum MADRE. The Mother was opened in 2005 in a building on Settembrini, in the area San Lorenzo, that is not far from the Duomo and the monastery Santa Maria Donna Regina. It was purchased by the Region, using the European funds, in March 2004, together with the project of Álvaro Siza. 42 million was the cost of the entire operation to get about 8,000 square feet of Museum. A courtyard of about 500 square meters for large installations; the interior spaces are divided on four levels. Along with the Neapolitan artists, from Carlo Alfano to Francesco Clemente and Gianni Pisani, we find works by Kapoor, Kounellis, Richard Long, Rebecca Horn and all those invited, over the last decade, to write the history of piazza Plebiscito are represented by works purchased by the Museum (and some even donated). The Campania region has also bought (for a total of three and a half million euro gross) a considerable number of works representing the last fifty years of artistic research, by Lucio Fontana, Richard Hamilton, by Yves Klein at Anselm Kiefer, Piero Manzoni to Mario Merz and Giuseppe Penone. More than sixty artists make up the exhibition on the second floor for a total of approximately one hundred works.

Art and Mobility

The role of contemporary art in designing a new urban identity for the city of Naples, reaches its peak in the integration with the new Metropolitan mobility system. The frenetic movement has always connoted the city of Naples, but this is the first systematic attempt to convert it from an experience of stress and frustration into a form of quality of life. In this attempt we find out the concept that the city is essentially a place of exchange and mobility. This metropolitan mobility system owes its notoriety to the choice of commissioning to great artists the design of interior and exterior spaces of the stations, in order to swoop to make more attractive the use of public transport, to give impetus to the recovery of degraded areas and to offer some sort of "Mandatory Museum" in a population who previously never had occasions to contact contemporary art. What is happening in Naples, in fact, is not the prolongation of a line or the construction of a railway, but the implementation of a revolutionary transport system developed since 1994 as part of an integrated process with planning. The numbers are impressive: once expanded, existing rail lines will be interconnected, and after having built ex novo, 3 more metro lines should pass by, from 2 to 10, stations from 45 to 114, interchange nodes from 5 to 36, the population served by 25% to 70%. The new stations called "art Stations" opened progressively from 2001 till today, open a really new way in the world of urban infrastructure. The design of wide, comfortable space helps to make public transport more attractive. In addition, the participation of well known architects and designers to design the stations (by Aulenti, Mendini, Perrault, Botta, Fuksass, until Karim Rashid, whose station was inaugurated in 2011), and the introduction into and outside them of the same elements of art, sculpture, innovative materials, works of modern art, makes the new hill underground a unique example in the world of urban design. Interior and exterior spaces of the stations have welcomed, with artistic coordination by Bonito Oliva, over 180 works among the most prestigious contemporary authors, including Sol Lewitt, Palladino, being one of the most interesting examples of decentralized and distributed Museum on the entire urban area, a museum that is not an enclosed space, a place of concentration of works of art, but an open exhibition, for a dynamic enjoyment of artistic artifact.

Naples, more than any other Italian city, identified a powerful tool of urban transformation into mobility, a role that goes beyond the narrow limits of the traffic problems. If the high density (8,551 ab/kmq against 1,841 in Rome) and the complex orography of the city make it essential to offer a serious alternative to the use of the car, the design of the network no longer has anything to do with the trivial need to link the centre and peripheries. The primary objective is indeed to cancel the hierarchy between the historical centre of Naples and its surroundings, where small historical centers are welded to recent housing settlements. The whole economic system is trying to improve regional activities related to the use of this heritage, with particular attention to the resolution of the problem of mobility. This effort is occurring both from the infrastructure point of view, and the elaboration of strategies to introduce new services, creating a more effective integration between the cultural offer and the demand for easier mobility for the touristic and cultural offer. This complex project leads to integrate the infrastructure to a cultural project and it needs to develop specific solutions at various levels. In this context fits Campania Artec card, a tool that intends to act as a charter of services connected to the Museum and the cultural offer of the entire metropolitan area of Naples. The concept founded on Campania Artec card is that of designing a service that brings together two different physical resource plans that characterize the territorial capital: the natural, environmental, historical and cultural heritage, and with the availability of a transport infrastructure network. Through this relation is designed a service that helps to improve and to finalize the availability of mobility and provides an opportunity for an

unprecedented opportunity to experience enjoyment of the regional cultural heritage. With important distinctions to the fact that cultural heritage management follows different mechanisms of usual business management, the theme of the physical heritage and cultural territory is closely related to the relationship. In this sense, the Campania Artec card service can contribute to a proper program of urban management, it aims to create an original vision of cultural and economic role, through the identification of typical report values of its past (the artistic and environmental heritage), the ability to edit properly its identity with the contribution of existing experiences (art and contemporary project), and strategies of infrastructural transformation plan (mobility). Campania Artec card is an extension of Napoli arte-card, the first electronic charter aimed at facilitating the Italian use of cultural heritage that has been successfully tested in the course of 2002. Starting from this experience the service was gradually extended to the entire metropolitan area. The services offered include a complete and updated information on active cultural offers in the metropolitan area of Naples, access to museums, archeological sites and access to the entire network of regional public transport.

Conclusions

Naples is an exemplary case of urban design, where historical, infrastructural and cultural aspects are integrated. This systemic operation involves the city simultaneously, in its physical, social and symbolic dimension. A key aspect of this process, which tends to change the identity of the city of Naples is the experience. Experience is the priority relationship between man and environment, in which the growth of the same individual develops through integration with its environment and social space in which the individual lives. This premise has created the need for a model in which aspects of urban infrastructure must be integrated with social uses of the public space. This is what the city of Naples is trying to make, by introducing new uses of public spaces mostly related to the contemporary artistic expression. This concept that infrastructure needs to incorporate a cultural project, needs, for its fulfillment, to develop specific solutions to various levels. In this framework we find solutions related to product-systems such as card services, which tend to integrate the museum and cultural heritage of the entire metropolitan area with the mobility. Although among many executive and economic obstacles, this complex program of urban renaissance, is finally coming to fruition.

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This paper represents a common work by all the two authors. Nonetheless Alfonso Morone wrote the Cap. 1_ Public space and new identities and the 3_ Art and Mobility. Pietro Nunziante wrote the Cap. 2_Naples between heritage and future and the Cap.4 Conclusions.



Figure 1 Mimmo Paladino – Montagna di sale 1995



Figure 2 Richard Serra – Naples 2003



Figure 3 Anish Kapoor- Naples 2001



Figure 4 Mimmo Paladino- Cavallo 2006 (Museo Madre roof)

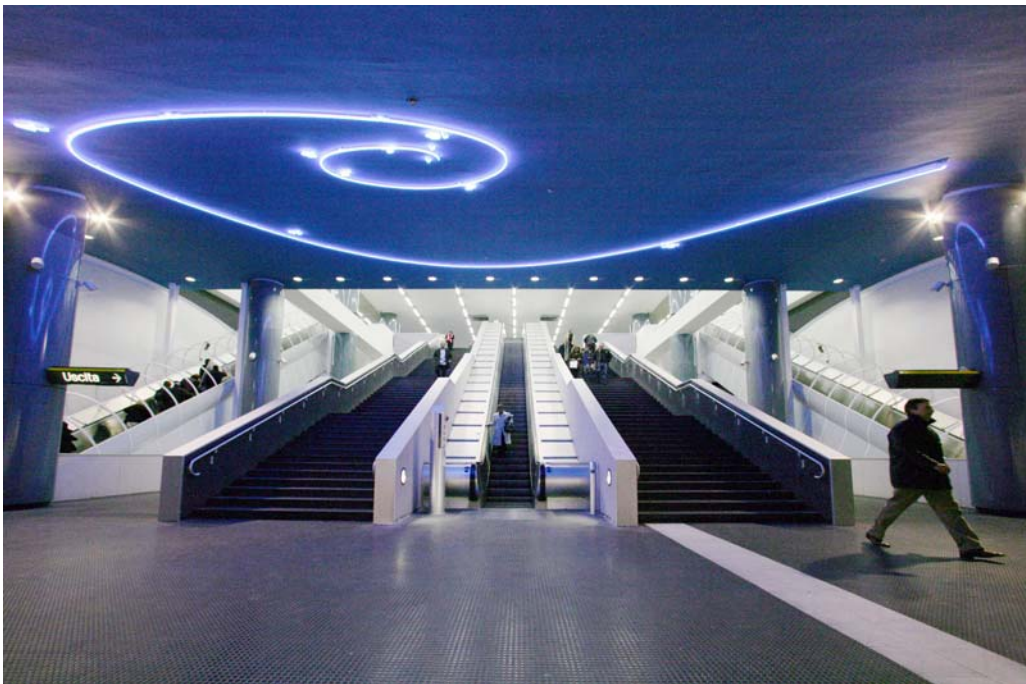


Figure 5 Mario Merz (Piazza Vanvitelli Subway station)



Figure 6 Karim Rashid (University Subway station)