

LE OPPORTUNITÀ OLTRE LA CRISI

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FROM COMPLEX VALUES TO SITUATED MICRO - ACTIONS

1. Introduction and objectives

With this contribution we propose to illustrate the “state-of-the-art”, with reference to certain themes which are seen as crucial, in order to measure up with a new multidisciplinary approach and for project micro-actions with regard to historic centres which represent an important resource for our territories. These crucial points may be grouped together around various levels of problems which are firstly associated with the conservation of the identity of places in order to establish a prospect for development, but also with the processes of government by institutions and civil society.

The theme regarding the relationship between ancient and modern, between new forms of architecture and the pre-existing ones, between town and countryside, has already been in the spotlight for over a century with results that are, for the most part, associated with the sensibility of those who have worked variously in intellectual or manual terms.

Architects that operate in the European context have found themselves having to make some significant choices regarding the transmission of cultural heritage to future generations, with approaches that were focused on certain significant conceptual positions, also following the guidelines in national and international documents that over the course of the last century have enriched the cultural debate¹.

The widening of the concept of cultural heritage then led to various consequences, that is the introduction of a multidisciplinary approach, an

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¹ According to the remarks made by Giovanni Carbonara «...a serious and widespread attention to the relationship between old and new has still to be built and there is no certainty that anybody actually cares; there is also a lack of dialogue between culture and professional operativeness, there is a lack of an authentic social consciousness concerning the problem, substituted by an uncritical *mainstream approach* which is at times hysterically conservative and at other times regressive in roughly historicist terms (*benculturalismo*). Moreover, in this scenario, the economic mechanisms, regulations and procedures do not help, especially those formulated by the European Union». See the author's paper entitled *Antico e nuovo a confronto nel restauro*, at the *Cesare Brandi e l'architettura* Conference promoted by the *Fondazione Bruno Zevi*, Naples, 20 April 2007, pp.1-10.

increasing integration between cultural and environmental heritage, between movable and immovable assets, the association with strategies for sustainable development, the development of cultural tourism; the use of technologies that are always up-to-date and the definition of plans for the management of cultural heritage².

From such elements a pressing and more complicated need has emerged for the integration between the various disciplines which are concerned with conservation in the widest sense of the term in order to analyse and look in greater depth at some complex issues, including:

- the exceptional importance of the architectural heritage of minor historic centres and the consequent needs for conservation, with an evaluation regarding what can be conserved and what may be subjected to modification;
- the natural and environmental assets that should also be preserved and, if possible, made the most of;
- the need to define a policy of transformation that guides the processes of modification, through concrete actions that may provide benefits for the communities involved from an economic and management point of view and also in terms of a recovery for businesses in crisis.

This series of factors and others associated with them outline a problem in the reconstruction of identity, that has been hit by a crisis caused by many threats. Depopulation, the decline in businesses, the lack of employment, the dangerous nature of the places, the succession of "institutional solutions" which appear incapable of guaranteeing a sufficient level of governability to the system, are all critical elements, that need to be taken into account within the overall picture.

In brief, the issue that needs to be addressed relates to the characteristics that the construction process for a long-term strategy needs to assume, based on themes of social, economic and environmental acceptability in accordance with the current spontaneous tendencies, with the aim of guiding them and above all improving them. As will be seen, a part of this strategy has been tested out with the creation of participated models, which become fundamental in the action plan and that should be studied in line with the actual characteristics of the places and the communities that live in them.

The changes in situations bring to the foreground the need felt by the authorities and those who govern the territories to avail themselves of new and more appropriate instruments for dealing with the demands that are expressed at a local level. The complex nature of the problems means that the answers are sought

² A cultural asset is defined as 'tangible' when it is physically tangible and has a defined and stable form, whereas 'intangible' means something that is not physically tangible, such as a language or dialect, a traditional folklore event or a tradition. Over and above this generic definition, cultural assets have found more precise classifications over the years. In particular, a series of International Conventions have proceeded to define cultural assets, including the *Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in Armed Conflicts*, adopted at the Hague on 14 May 1954 and the *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, adopted in Paris on 17 October 2003.

outside the traditional instruments. One of the central, pressing requests that comes from the local inhabitants, is the possibility to take part in the re-qualification processes and, more in general, in the decision-making processes relating to urban transformation, aimed towards generating sustainable development, through a policy that is full of ideas and concrete actions.

It must be acknowledged that the role of the competent local authorities has undergone profound changes over the last fifteen years. Not only administrative functions but also those relating to planning have now become the responsibility of territorial-level institutions and the instruments required to implement policies for promoting the development of the territory have been transferred to them. The responsibility for programming investments in the territory passed down to the lower levels through the reforms which started in 1990 and continued with additional legislative regulations. The change from a system of derived financing to a system of pseudo-autonomous financing has modified the capacity for finding those resources needed to support the local economy, thereby creating, in the majority of cases, difficulties for the local communities. Therefore, a pressing need has arisen to raise the sense of responsibility of local administrators in containing public debt, through an efficient policy for planning actions in the territory and through the well-considered use of financing instruments.

The kind of model that one may conjecture on a theoretical level, must, therefore, be capable of identifying the list of activities that in an aggregate way respond holistically to the needs of a territory and can determine local strategic planning choices, since every territorial reality is depository of those special characteristics that make it unique. On the other hand, it becomes essential to provide the local players with elements and ingredients of a model of territorial marketing capable of interpreting the strategic expectations and making the «what to do» and «how to do» explicit in order to pursue these objectives and satisfy the most pressing needs.

It has now become accepted that within a particular territory it is possible, within a well-defined scenario, to plan differentiated actions which have an effect on the local economy and social cohesion, through differentiated instruments and with the simultaneous participation of the various levels of players involved. The development model does not conceive that the relationship between the process of convergence and the process of integration is a one-way relationship. The mainstay of the model is the sustainability³ of the processes in the various forms that it is

³ For a definition of *sustainability* one needs to look at the various aspects that make up the meaning of the word. The sustainability system could be identified as: - *cultural sustainability*, which relates to the identity levels of the territory and of the collective memory embedded in its places and represented by the physical signs of cultural heritage; - *economic sustainability*, which allows the effectiveness of the development actions to be verified within the framework of identifying public policies requiring implementation in order to conserve and enhance its resources (cultural resources in particular); - *institutional sustainability*, which relates to the compatibility of the territorial policies with the fundamental principles of the democratic rules of the state (it is not by chance that the

possible to find them in. In other words, the existence and reinforcement of visions of development that are shared among local entities may allow positive development mechanisms to be triggered off and a widespread impact to be produced on territorial scales, where the objectives of cohesion, convergence and integration have not been achieved. Planning economic development in a territorial area nowadays requires a profound reflection not only on the methods to be applied, but also, and above all, on the very objectives of the planning process, which must take into account the more general economic scenario.

Creating development means, in brief, reasoning with an all-round view of things so as to consider every strategically important aspect, including:

- the collecting of requests from the territory, including various kinds of stakeholders, representing the various categories found in the reference area;
- transforming these requests into sustainable projects that can therefore be implemented;
- identifying the sources and procedures for obtaining funding.

The role of territorial marketing allows quality to be included in the development model, which should be based specifically on the joint planning of services and investments for the community and its enterprises, viewed as social and economic assets, but also allows the planning skills to be directed towards serving the production system which can only develop effectively if it is set in a planning framework which lays appropriate foundations for the overall growth and development of the territory, and also allows the creation of urban quality through building work, restoration and improvements, using existing structures and spaces, as well as guaranteeing social harmony and security. Through territorial marketing, therefore, we can establish a series of unified and collective activities, aimed in the medium-to-long term at promoting and developing the existing businesses in the territory, and also activities representing the opportunities that the institutional, entrepreneurial, social and economic context offers to potential initiatives capable of being included in a coherent manner with regard to the endogenous variables that characterise and distinguish the territorial environment at the centre of the action.

We cannot lose sight of one of the fundamental elements of a place: its identity in terms of memory. The word 'memory' (from the Latin word 'memor') indicates a collection of psychic activities that allow you to fix and recall perceptions into your consciousness or unconsciousness and therefore to reproduce notions, behaviours and experiences lived in the past. It is, therefore, a process linked to the genesis of a modification through which a certain effect persists and becomes susceptible to

majority of European constitutions dedicate special attention to the relationships between the State and cultural heritage policies); it also relates to verifying the efficiency in managing the plan actions, i.e. the existence of administrative structures capable of implementing the plan; - *social sustainability*, which relates to the procedures for social entities to take part in development and is performed by agreeing on the choices together.

re-appearance during the course of further occasions, to reproducing in one's mind past states of consciousness (images, sensations and notions) and to being able to recognise them as such and to position them in time and space. There is a collective memory, that derives from history, and a personal memory, which represents a wealth of inestimable value. But there is also a memory associated with places, the land, culture and traditions, which undoubtedly needs to be conserved as it represents an added value for society.

Therefore having recourse to *memory* to define an identity which may become a key to development, is a valuable element for the territory. The relationship which is established with the past is not only that classic one regarding philological knowledge and the citing of historical sources, but rather one used to organise one's memory through subjective means which, affected by meanings and visual recalls of one's own past, plays a central role in understanding facts and in the idea-creating process.

Memory, therefore, intervenes in the idea-creating process in various ways establishing a particular dependency relationship between meanings, recalls and reminiscences and, in some way, conditions a person's thinking. It is thought that memory in architecture must know how to mediate between what actually was and what might be in the prospect of an ongoing and inevitable development in the human condition; therefore, it is important to evaluate how the individual relates to history and to the memory of the places in the project-making process.

If memory represents the tool for verifying the relations which preside over every archetype of reality, then, on this point, one can build architecture as a cultural phenomenon. In order to understand the reasons that are circumstantial to each single act or thought, one needs an in-depth reflection that leads one to make assessment choices with regard to the item which must be safeguarded.

Greater knowledge of the cultural values of a historic centre represents a reason for which the project aims to find inter-connections between the awareness of the past and new identities. Architecture is the highest form of memory transfer and this is why every effort needs to be made to guarantee its permanency. It is important to develop a match of strategies, oriented towards innovation in planning, technological and management terms within the sphere of processes for the re-qualification and development of the architectural, urban and territorial heritage.

The overall vision, to be aimed for, needs to be shared by the local players in order to allow virtuous development mechanisms to be triggered and to produce a widespread impact on a territorial and local scale. Programming economic development in an area requires, therefore, serious planning in making choices, which need to be shared by those who live in that context and who may contribute towards the definition of the planning objectives, directed towards the conservation and enhancement of the characteristic, identificatory assets.

In the contemporary planning culture, the theme of conservation, in general, and of restoration⁴, in particular, has become a nagging professional problem and an obsessive abstract requirement. In this sense, restoration work and improvements to existing buildings may play a fundamental role with the power of attraction they always exert when the building site is taken down and the asset, about which a myriad of values can be read, is returned to its community. The conservation of architectural heritage is a fundamental aspect in the current society since, despite it being an essential element for man's memory, it is often threatened by dangers from ignorance, abandonment and neglect.

In this framework, one hopes that there will be an increase in conservation work and improvements to historic centres, not only through direct intervention works such as restorations, but also by promoting the interest of citizens towards their own historical memories and facilitating their sense of awareness and re-discovery. These are the essential requirements in the process of forming a sense of belonging, which fosters an attitude towards preservation.

The identity of a place is created not only with its history, its traditions, its flavours, its colours, its characteristics and with its intrinsic contents, but also with its "expendability". Identity is, therefore, also a reflection in the mirror and is the image that materialises around a name, a landscape, or which is created in the mind to evoke an image.

The cultural force that is acknowledged to the historical, architectural, town-planning and landscape heritage requires a project to attempt to match the constraints and comparisons provided by the inheritance of past works. Thus, the comparison with what existed previously and the respect for values undoubtedly lead to a limitation in expressive aspirations, which needs to be read as a stimulus towards contemporary creation.

It is about this conflict, that is not resolvable only with regulatory rules or simple operating procedures, that scholars in various disciplines are holding a debate, after being called to reason on the complex destinies which nowadays mark the concepts of social and disciplinary memory, historical and monumental heritage, policies on preservation and cultural assets, in the broadest sense of the term.

⁴ In this case, *restoration* means those activities performed to prolong the conservation of the physical processes to which artistic consistency and transmission are entrusted. The practice of restoration is formed within the sphere of an extremely complex history concerning the relationships between man and his manufactured articles, which acquire an aesthetic value. It comes as no surprise that the relations between men and their works are varied, with the changes in tastes and sensibilities, and so much so that each era has fostered its own conception of the meaning of conservation. For a definition, see Torsello B. P. (2005), *Che cos'è il restauro? Nove studiosi a confronto*, Marsilio, Venezia, 2005.

In the current situation of difficulties, it is important to assess the opportunities by applying new tools to make the most of the territory⁵.

The economic decline of certain historically important territories, the lack of economic synergies that may drive private individuals to intervene and the absence of a territorial planning system capable of concentrating ideas and resources - instead of squandering energies and creating conflicts - are a few of the problematic issues that need to be addressed and resolved. In particular, there are three issues which appear worthy of being looked at again in greater depth: the possibility of extending economic and management strategies from the enterprise to territorial contexts, the clarification about which tools to apply to the territory and, above all, to the historic centres, and the definition of the substantial and characterising contribution from various disciplines in studying and managing the transformation processes.

The search for optimum solutions to these problems has made it increasingly obvious that there is a need to use techniques and procedures for analysing and enhancing the historical contexts which take account of the necessary interdisciplinary nature of the issues to be addressed.

Committing oneself to creating value for a territory, a town, a historic village, a settlement of men and objects through a complex strategy means arousing the whole community to measure itself with an ongoing review of the notions and practices in politics, democracy, culture and technical procedures. In more explicit terms, what is required is a political horizon which is oriented towards the construction of a conscious community; a horizon of democracy, capable of integrating representational forms with decision-making forms, thereby reconstructing a lost sense of community; a horizon in procedures and, above all, in planning, capable of being enriched by new, and often unexpected, know-how resulting from uncommon interactions between "areas of knowledge".

2. Intangible values as the basis for actions to enhance the value of urban spaces: the case of Aliano in the Val d'Agri - movement and multiculturalism

Western culture has shown over the centuries that it knows how to generate imagination capable of becoming the reference point for quite different cultures and peoples. It has involved stratifying intellectual richness and meeting different cultures, assuming their assumptions in an original form and then transforming them into original visions of the world. In brief: constructing a cultural vision of

⁵ One starts to talk about territorial marketing because the territory implements exchange dynamics with regard to its own current and potential users, and, in the capacity of "public asset", which is not oriented towards profit and will not have the sole objective of economic growth, but will also sustain a broader and more composite aim of creating public value and raising the quality of life for the resident population. See: Moore M., (1995), *Creating public value: strategic management in government*, Harvard UP, Cambridge - London, pp.67-84.