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cultural Mosaic: Liveability, Typicality, Biodiversity*

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vivibilità, tipicità, biodiversità*

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THE VALUE OF THE USELESS IN THE URBAN LANDSCAPE OF SMALL ISLANDS

Grazia Napoli
University of Palermo

Abstract. *In the variety of the Italian landscape-cultural mosaic, the morphology of Favignana (Egadi Islands) is the outcome of the long-term relationship between natural environment and human actions that has drawn both natural and urban landscape. This relationship, that constitutes the Favignana's architectural and landscape heritage, is often denied or forgotten because of the transformations caused by a new demand of efficiency (usefulness?) in reference to an economic policy based on the tourism-related activities. In this case-study, the Analytic Network Process (ANP) has been applied to support the choice among alternative scenarios of urban renewal, to verify if the profitable use of the ground (usefulness) can be satisfied without giving up an aesthetical ideal (uselessness?).*

Keywords. *Multicriteria Analysis, ANP, Social Use Value, Urban Landscape.*

Introduction

This paper is mainly concerned with the MultiCriteria Analysis (MCA) that can be used to support managing the urban transformation in Favignana, one of the Egadi Islands (Italy). Favignana was chosen as a representative case study among the small islands of the Mediterranean sea, where there is a delicate balance between nature/artifice and social community/natural environment. This balance is now upset by deep modifications so that it has become crucial to re-establish a social communication on the basis of a "consensual linguistic dominion" (Luhmann, 1990). This paper analyzes the process which leads to the *acknowledgement of common social values* and to their organisation into a model for the evaluation of urban and architectural quality. The Analytic Network Process (ANP) (Saaty, 2005) is applied to the above theoretical frame to rank the different rehabilitation projects, which best meet the objective of preserving the local natural and cultural heritage.

General Issues and Evaluation Premises

Time and Transformation. The "morphology" of Favignana can be regarded as a system of signs which yields information about the dominant cultural models (usefulness and useless, values and anti-values). "Arenaria" (sandstone) quarrying activities shaped both the landscape and the cityscape. In fact, quarries are indeed the generating factor of the road system, of the building blocks, as well as of the architectural units (buildings). During the last decades, the growth of tourism-

related activities and the spread of new construction materials and techniques have caused a serious conflictual situation: transformation is necessary to meet new residential standards, yet the preservation of the cultural and architectural and environmental heritage has to be promoted. «Una descrizione di Zaira quale è oggi dovrebbe contenere tutto il passato di Zaira. Ma la città non dice il suo passato, lo contiene come le linee d'una mano, scritto negli spigoli delle vie, nelle griglie delle finestre [...] ogni segmento rigato a sua volta di graffi, seghettature, intagli, virgole» (Calvino, 1972, p. 18).

Transformation and Energy. Georgescu-Roegen (1971) and the “Ecological Economics” school introduced the concepts of entropy in their economic thought, picturing a world which tends to disorder. Studies about “dissipating structures” (Prigogine and Stengers 1981), however, have explained the existence of systems which develop by creating a new order from disorder. To make sure that the island of Favignana evolves towards more orderly forms, the social system should adopt a development model which, according to the entropy law, is founded on the sustainable use of the local natural and cultural resources. «Ora dirò come è fatta Ottavia, città-ragnatela. C'è un precipizio in mezzo a due montagne scoscese: la città è sul vuoto, legata alle due creste con funi e catene e passerelle [...] Sospesa sull'abisso, la vita degli abitanti d'Ottavia è meno incerta che in altre città. Sanno che più di tanto la rete non regge» (Calvino, 1972, p. 81).

Energy and information. The social use value of the cultural heritage is defined by Rizzo (1999) as the result of the creative combination of three surpluses: genealogical and ecological surplus, energetic and entropy surplus, scientific and cultural surplus. Such approach could assign to Favignana's architectural and environmental heritage a high social value since it represents an asset characterised by a low entropy impact (indeed its fruition is not destructive) and by a high, culturally and genealogically informative impact. To preserve this heritage, the social community should check on the quality of the environmental and urban transformations. «Una mappa di Smeraldina dovrebbe comprendere, segnati in inchiostri di diverso colore, tutti questi tracciati, solidi e liquidi, palesi e nascosti. Più difficile è fissare su carta le vie delle rondini, che tagliano l'aria sopra i tetti, [...] sovrastano da ogni punto dei loro sentieri d'aria tutti i punti della città» (Calvino, 1972, p. 95).

Information and Political Strategies. The local political sub system should define some sustainable development strategies based on a mutually shared system of values which involves: boosting low entropy activities, such as the fruition of the architectural, urban and environmental heritage, devising decision aid tools to choose the best planning actions, promoting actions for the renewal of the architectural heritage to enhance the social use values, as well as private, and market values. «È inutile stabilire se Zenobia sia da classificare tra le città felici o tra quelle infelici. Non è in queste due specie che ha senso dividere le città, ma in altre due: quelle che continuano attraverso gli anni e le mutazioni a dare forma ai desideri e quelle in cui i desideri o riescono a cancellare la città o ne sono cancellati» (Calvino, 1972, p. 42).

Spacial Analisys and Knowledge

To assess the renewal of degraded urban areas and the preservation of architectural units, a decision aid model could be proposed to define intervention priorities. This model needs an extensive system of spacial knowledge to understand the ways architecture is designed and relates itself to the site (La Rocca, Leonardi and Napoli, 1995). Dwelling principles of residential buildings; construction systems and their rules have to be investigated by using the following means of investigation:

- A survey of urban and sub-urban building blocks exemplified in a chart collection of architectural elements, classified by form, material and production process; relations which occur between the environmental and architectural elements;
- An especially designed database, where quantity and quality information is collected and organised according to the specific criteria of the evaluating model.

The structure of the database is divided into three levels: Level 1 - Environmental Unit (a room); Level 2 - Residential Unit (a house, a flat); Level 3 - Architectural Unit (a building). Three different data sheets are prepared for each level to collect the data. It is worth specifying that the pieces of information contained in level n forms (e.g. residential unit) are obtained by combining a survey with the specific data for that level and the data pertaining to the lower level ($n-1$) (e.g. environmental unit). The above three levels are interrelated to create a database that can be easily stored, updated and consulted.

The Analytic Network Process and the Case Study

The Analytic Network Process (ANP) (Saaty, 2005, 2006) has been selected among many multicriteria models (Bouyssou, Marchant, Pirlot, Tsoukiàs and Vincke, 2006; Figueira, Greco and Ehrgott, 2005) because its holistic approach allows to explicit the relations among all the elements of a system and to solve several decision problems in the urban and land transformations (Bottero and Ferretti, 2011). The ANP methodology requires the development of a network that better delineates the decision problem, establishing the following: the Decision Maker's (DM) objective, the clusters (groups) of the nodes (elements) that define the aspects of the decision problem, and the alternatives. Furthermore, the relationships (feedback and dependences) within and between the clusters of the network elements are incorporated. Moreover, the ANP network is founded on pairwise comparison measurements according to a ratio scale expressed by the DM. In this case study, the decision problem concerns the definition of a ranking among alternative restoration projects for five "Architectural Unit" in a block of buildings (A.U.2, A.U.11, A.U.22, A.U.23, A.U.26), to reach the goal of maximizing the preservation of the Favignana's traditional architecture (Fig. 1). Ranking will be used to establish the financing

priority in case of limited public assets. The evaluation model, proposed for the “Architectural Unit” level (A.U.), is based on the collected data and analyzes the quality of a building, its formal and technical characteristics, its internal features (the residential units) and its external relations (with the building block and the quarry) as well as its economic characteristics. The A.U.’s projects are compared by referring to four principal criteria: environmental; architectural; technical; and economic-financial (Fig. 2). Altogether, there are 17 estimated elements using quantitative or qualitative indicators to facilitate the judgments of preference among the alternatives (Piantanakulchai, 2005).

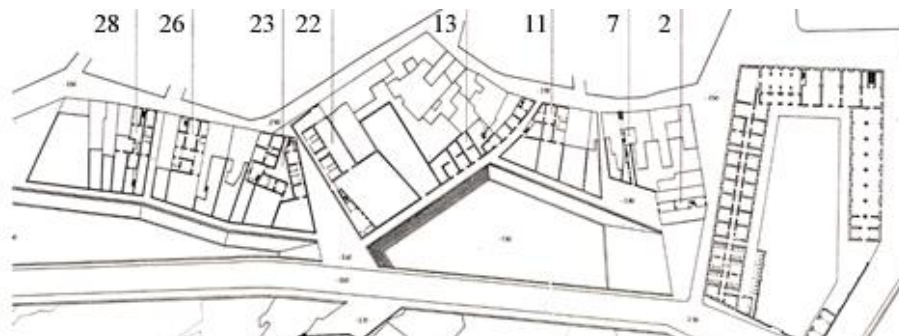


Figure 1. The Architectural Units involved in the renewal project of a building block

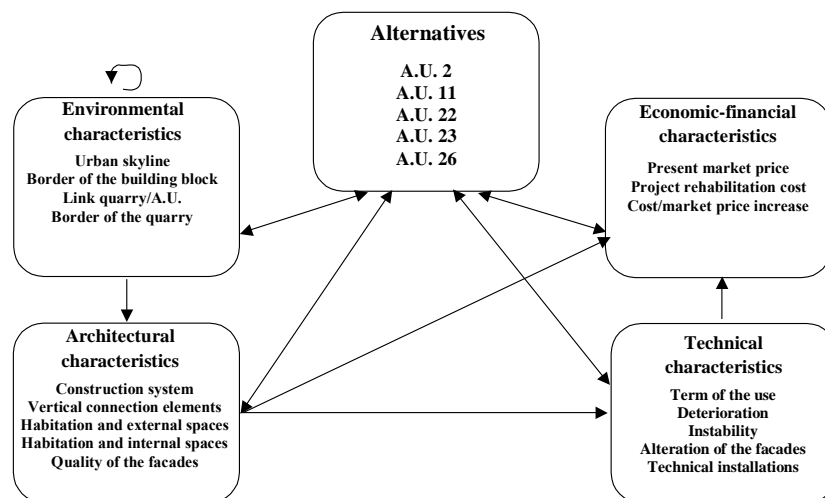


Figure 2. The ANP model

After this stage, pairwise comparisons are made by the DM/experts to express their judgments on the elements in accordance with another element of the system to establish their relative importance. In this model, some of the elements are technical or economic and can be quantified by a group of experts who act as public administration consultants. Many others are of a complex technical and political or political and cultural nature and can be controversial. For example, in order to assess the elements called “Vertical connection elements”, described by complex quality indicators (Fig. 3), it is deemed necessary to verify if the local social system considers its complexity useful or useless, thus giving it a positive or negative value.

The judgments, expressed in the Saaty's fundamental scale (ratio scale of 1-9), are filled in the paired comparison matrix that gives a supermatrix (unweighed supermatrix) that is multiplied by the vector of the weights of the clusters (weighed supermatrix) and then it is raised to a limiting power to obtain the “limit supermatrix”. A column of this last matrix represents the final priority vector¹.

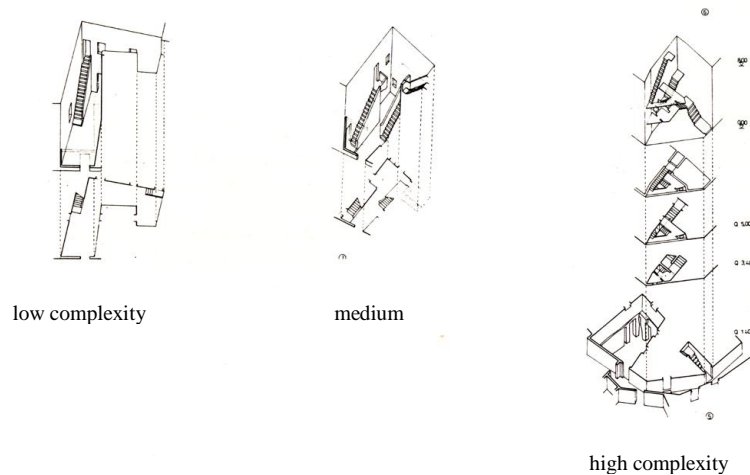


Figure 3. Complexity of the vertical connection elements

The data are processed by adopting two systems of weights (Tab. 1). The system of weights *A* is corresponding to the social use values which give great importance to the “Architectural Characteristics” and “Environmental characteristics” clusters for which it is assumed that this type of elements are not just useful, but essential for a real social welfare, and that a mere economic utilitarianism must be overcome. While the system of weights *B* gives the most importance to the “Technical characteristics” and “Economic-financial characteristics” clusters. The resulting local and global priorities are illustrated in Table 2. According to the ranking *A*, A.U.22 is the best alternative, while according to the ranking *B*, A.U.11 becomes the best project. The results in Tables 2 show the positions of the alternatives are affected by the variation of the system of weights. However they are quite stable, namely for A.U.23, A.U.26 and A.U.2 (among the worst), beside A.U.11 and A.U.22 (among the best) have inverted their positions (because of the little gap between the two projects' values).

¹ The data were processed using the software available in the website www.superdecision.com.

Table 1.

Weights of the clusters – System A and B				
Clusters	Weights A		Weights B	
	normalized	ideal	normalized	ideal
Environmental characteristics	0,33	0,65	0,05	0,07
Architectural characteristics	0,50	1,00	0,05	0,07
Technological characteristics	0,04	0,07	0,25	0,38
Economic-financial characteristics	0,13	0,26	0,65	1,00

Table 2.

Rankings of the alternative projects						
Ranking A				Ranking B		
	Name	Ideals	Normals	Name	Ideals	Normals
1	A.U. 22	1.00	0.35	A.U. 11	1.00	0.36
2	A.U. 11	0.97	0.34	A.U. 22	0.97	0.35
3	A.U. 23	0.58	0.20	A.U. 23	0.48	0.17
4	A.U. 26	0.24	0.08	A.U. 26	0.22	0.08
5	A.U. 2	0.10	0.03	A.U. 2	0.10	0.04

Summary

Devising a multicriteria evaluation model (ANP) applied to Favignana's traditional architecture can be regarded as a demonstration of how such kind of models could play a crucial role in any political and economic decision making process that has to be founded on the acknowledge of the usefulness/uselessness of the architectural and landscape heritage. In this case study, the ANP model compares five alternative restoration projects and defines the rankings which will be used to establish the financial priority in case of limited public assets. The ranking can change according to the systems of weights expressing the social use values accepted by the local community according, or not according, to the Heidegger's thought (2000) 'the greatest usefulness is the uselessness' (which considers the usefulness in its salvific meaning since is what makes a man a man) or to Ordine (2013), who states that if we allow the gratuitous to come to an end -thus renouncing to the generating strenght of the uselessness- we will obtain a forgetful community which will lose the meaning of itself and of life.

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