

CONSERVATION— RECONSTRUCTION

SMALL HISTORIC CENTRES
CONSERVATION IN THE MIDST OF CHANGE

Rodica Crisan
Donatella Fiorani
Loughlin Kealy
Stefano Francesco Musso
Editors



European
Association for
Architectural
Education

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EAAE
European Association for Architectural Education



ENHSA
European Network of Heads of Schools of Architecture



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Copy-editor and proof readers

Marta Acierno (French texts)

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This book presents the papers written by 62 participants following the 4th Workshop, organised by the Conservation Network of the European Association for Architectural Education and European Network of Heads of Schools of Architecture in 2013 in Italy.

The workshop was attended by 70 participants representing: Belgium, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Montenegro, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Turkey, United States of America, United Kingdom.

Scientific Committee

Rodica Crisan
Donatella Fiorani
Loughlin Kealy
Stefano Francesco Musso

Support to the organisation

Marta Acierno, Silvia Cutarelli, Adalgisa Donatelli, Francesca Geminiani, Barbara Malandra

with contributions from

Ganesh Poggi Madarena, Giovanni Tamburro, Fabiana Ratti, Paola Sannicandro, Serena Zulli

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AN INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE CONSERVATION THROUGH PRESERVATION AND ACCESSIBILITY

Renata Prescia

Università degli Studi di Palermo, Italy
renata.prescia@unipa.it

Background

Architectural heritage preservation in historic city centres cannot do without an analysis of their original layout, and of the subsequent changes and adaptations occurring in time due to different functional requirements, as well as to local natural phenomena and atmospheric events (earthquakes, pollution, anthropic damage).

Historic buildings have also been devastated by the lack of understanding of those phenomena, as exemplified by inadequate laws (e.g., L. 457/58), whose texts are outdated in the light of well-established notions on conservation. These can be defined, according to the subject matter, as:

- the ability to read through those historic transformations, highlighting their peculiarities and their evidential, figurative and material values (knowledge of traditional masonry);
- the ability to read through decay, i.e. the alteration in materials, and to identify precise resolution actions, ensuring compatibility;
- the ability to identify damaged parts, i.e. any alteration in the building structure and the relevant decisive interventions, in a synergy with the structural engineer, ensuring compatibility.

For those centres struck by the earthquake in the Abruzzo region, the local Universities of L'Aquila and Pescara as well the University of Catania are carrying out expert research and study, developing all the required fields of knowledge of the historical heritage, which are for the most part incorporated in Reconstruction Plans.¹

Yet the safety measures introduced into historic centres by means of appropriate preservation actions, despite being the necessary short-term goals, are not exhaustive. They do not guarantee liveability, and consequently, they are not enough to counteract the population's exodus towards larger cities. Uses are identified for the site as a whole, geared towards preserving its identity and guaranteeing its competitiveness. These determine uses for designated buildings, which in turn invoke the choice of technical actions.

Consequently, actions should be aimed at:

- reinforcing the existing population and their feeling of belonging (demolishing architectural barriers, facilitating mobility);
- attracting new inhabitants, possibly of different age brackets, and favouring the development of new activities (e.g., cultural tourism, agricultural micro-businesses, traditional craft businesses).

We suggest developing an integrated approach using interdisciplinary methods to tackle such a complex issue.

FIG. 1. The central place at Poggioreale vecchia (Photo: A. Mami).
FIG. 2. Ruin at Poggioreale vecchia (Photo: A. Mami).



1. The Integrated Method

Starting from the *European Charter of the Architectural Heritage* (1975), together with the Joint Declaration of Amsterdam, the principle of *integrated preservation* was sanctioned “as the result of the joint use of restoration technique and the search for appropriate functions”,² underlying the importance of bringing monumental heritage into mainstream social life.

Preserving the city’s heritage means to maintain social relationships and the wealth of the community, with the unavoidable constraint of respecting its prevailing and unique historic and aesthetic values.

In order to do that, the support of public opinion is necessary, together with the raising of awareness of protection issues, including by means of a better targeted educational system. Indeed, the biggest obstacle to preservation does not lie within its technical process, but in the loss of spiritual values for most people, who exclusively aim at attaining material wealth rather than the ‘joy of living’, which is instead the outcome of the satisfaction of spiritual needs. In modern cities, man has given up his responsibilities, and has delegated to politicians the decisions on his house, his environment, his whole life.³ Now the time has come for him to take his responsibilities back and participate. The protagonists of this process can only be – broadly speaking – the inhabitants themselves, who make the first choice, i.e. to abandon the site and move elsewhere or to reconstruct on site.

Notwithstanding the singular cultural matrix of restoration, we must also acknowledge that its operational scope cannot extend indefinitely, as has hitherto been the case (historic centre, landscape, modern architecture), invoking in the process the value of tools devised for single architectural works or, to an even greater degree, for the moveable works of art.

Today, in order to preserve historic centres, landscapes or peripheral areas, one cannot simply draw up guidelines for preservation and recovery handbooks, nor codes of practice. These tools are necessary, even unavoidable, yet they are not exhaustive. Cultural policies need to be implemented that cannot simply be left in the hands of policy-makers, but that need to be shared and ‘negotiated’ between the scientific and administrative communities.

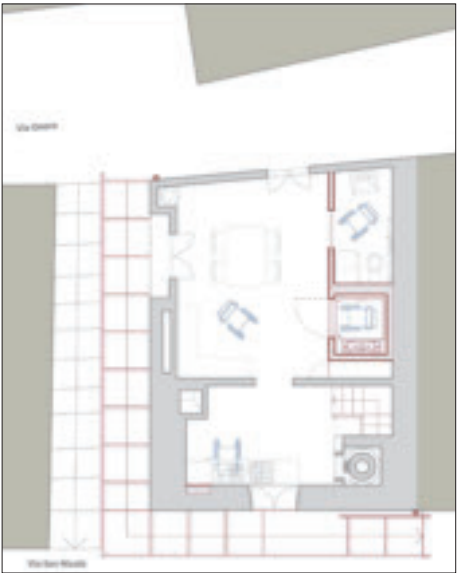
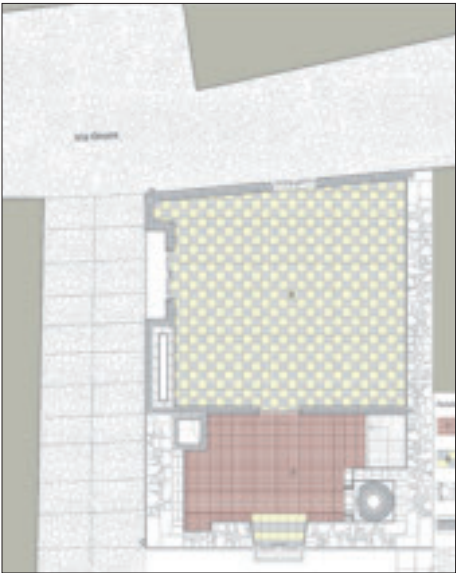
Policies must be the result of a dialectic-dialogic path through various requirements, for which the culture of restoration culture has been training since its very origins, in the complex resolution of the dialectic between the historic and the artistic perspective that has reached its peak in the universal concretisation given by Cesare Brandi.

But in the most recent past, from the 1980s to today, the dialectics have multiplied, since preservation has had to address other requirements: innovation, safety, accessibility, use, etc... Perhaps in this spasmodic search for a balance between two extremes, the preservation/innovation dialectic can be considered subordinate, especially when considering centres that are figuratively and structurally authentic, such as Castelveccchio. Traditionally, this dialectic has been part of the activities of architects, but it has to extend beyond the realm of definitions. It has to encompass the provision of good answers to concrete questions of building use: steep flights of stairs, access to upper floors, lifts, accessibility provisions, utilities, technological networks and so on.

2. Networking

In this historical period, the central issues are ‘networking’ and ‘sustainable development’, whose characteristics are wealth, social balance and a healthy environment (Char-

FIG. 3. Historic centre of S. Mauro Castelverde in the mountains of Madonie, Sicily (Image: Google Earth).
FIG. 4. Survey of historic building at S. Mauro Castelverde (E. Caleca, degree certificate in Restauro Recupero Riquilificazione dell' Architettura, Università di Palermo, rel. proff. A. Mami, R. Prescia, A.A. 2011-12).
FIG. 5. Residence for people with disabilities; project at S. Mauro Castelverde (E. Caleca, cit.).



ter of Leipzig 2007). From this perspective, after the urbanisation race that characterised the second half of the 20th century, we are today witnessing a return to living in small centres, and the recovery of certain traditional activities such as craftsmanship or agriculture. The goal is the *smart city*, and every small centre, including Castelvechio, has to aim at becoming one.

'Networking' consists first of all in the choice to be identified not only as an individual centre, but also as part of a broader territory, such as a geographical park (the Madonie Mountains Park), an area of a territory struck by an Act of God (the area of the crater in Aquila, the Irpinia region), or as a thematic park (the villages of the Grecanic area, etc.). Therefore, networking finds its application in the ability to run and plan such a territory, and eventually in the ability to promote it, to attract visitors, to create one's website and to enter the channels of the computer search in order to take part in globalisation.

As a consequence, the search for the 'defining character' of each single site becomes of secondary importance, since its original intended use is reconfirmed: the residential use in its different forms (from private, to hotel-city, to diffused museum) and opportunities for repopulation are found in the larger area of the defined territory, a natural mix of urban and rural elements. This can happen only if the third industrial revolution – within which we now live – the information society revolution, is accepted, by putting technological innovation at the service of transformation as the 'way of communicating'. It can represent a concrete possibility of giving a response to our cities, and of guaranteeing at the same time the recovery of history and of urban values.⁴ Of course, these processes cannot be immediate and need a rather long time, first of all to culturally re-educate the community, and then to become aware of the processes of change.

A positive example is the recently established 'Museum and Natural Network of the Belice Area', thanks to a pool of associations in the Belice area of Sicily. This network has stemmed out of the awareness that identity in every place or small centre has the opportunity to grow stronger only in a system integrated on the territorial scale, which, starting from single communities, gives a consistent reading of history, of art and of material culture – thus enabling its knowledge, preservation and enhancement. Established in March 2012 (www.retemusealebicina.it), it networks almost all villages in Belice, which suddenly became known worldwide after the disastrous earthquake of 1968 that caused, out of 14 struck centres, four new foundations, seven duplications and three reconstructions on site.⁵

Among the newly founded centres, two in particular stand out for their attitude towards the tragedy experienced: Gibellina, which has looked for a new identity around the theme of art sublimed in the will to cover the ruins of the old village in a casting of white cement, i.e. the much debated work of the *Cretto* by Alberto Burri (1981) that has given Sicily the first evidence of Land Art; Poggioreale, which only now, 40 years after the earthquake, has addressed the issue of the old and abandoned city centre and begun its recovery. Starting from the involvement of the Regional Restoration Centre, which drew up a Charter of the Risks of the Inhabited Area, and a following Charter of Values, approved in 2010 by the citizens, the municipality has started a preliminary recovery project that has the goal to set up a 'place for well-living',⁶ together with other initiatives such as serving as location for movie events or as a training centre for experts (Figs. 1-2).

Another positive example is the 'Madonie – Termini Networked Cities' project, comprising a single grouping of 29 municipalities of the Sicilian interior around the Madonie

mountains, most of them already pooled by the Parco Naturalistico delle Madonie (established in 1989).⁷ The new entity, which covers some 2,000 m² and contains some 130,000 inhabitants, already counts an annual tourist flow of a million visitors. It has produced an Integrated Territorial Development Plan (Piano Integrato di Sviluppo Territoriale, PIST) that is shaping the development of the territory according to the new sustainable guidelines and has met with ever-growing approval, both in terms of international tourists attracted by nature and landscape values and by the historical-artistic tourists. Additionally in terms of returning populations, it is reversing the trend for young people towards migration.

Castelbuono, Petralia Soprana, Petralia Sottana and Caltavuturo have organised a calendar of events around these values: for instance, Gagini's Itinerary, the Parco Avventure (trekking, mountain-biking, etc.) and rural itineraries, which require a significant workforce.⁸

Being aware, once again, that there can be no preservation without development (Figs. 3-5).⁹

Notes

¹ Ceradini, A., Salvatori, A., Alaggio, R., Scarsella, C., 1993. "Tipologie strutturali dei centri storici dell'Abruzzo aquilano", in *Atti ARCO I convegno*. Rome. 585-594 (centro campione di S. Stefano di Sessanio); Bartolomucci, C., Donatelli, A., 2012. "La conservazione nei centri storici minori abruzzesi colpiti dal sisma del 2009: esigenze di riuso e questioni di conservazione", in *Atti del 28° Convegno internazionale "Scienza e beni culturali, La conservazione del patrimonio architettonico all'aperto: superfici, strutture, finiture e contesti"* (Bressanone 10-13 July 2012), Padua; Varagnoli, C., 2013. "I piani di ricostruzione dopo il sisma del 2009 in Abruzzo e le istanze del restauro", in Aveta, A., Di Stefano, M. eds., *Di Stefano, R., Filosofia della conservazione e prassi del restauro*, Naples. 257-262.

² It determines a new step forward after the shift from passive to active preservation as per the Venice Charter (art. 5) on the issue of use.

³ Di Stefano, R., 1979. *Il recupero dei valori*. Naples, 2-5; and again in Di Stefano, R., 1994. "L'autenticità dei valori", in *Restauro* 129, 131. Also, Salvatore Boscarino used to say that "the heart of the matter is not the degradation or decay of physical structures, but it is upstream, and it is there where the action is needed; on the decreased interest towards things, on the economic, social and cultural decline of the inhabitants": Boscarino, S., 1994. "Petralia Soprana tra conservazione e sviluppo", in Boscarino, S., Federico, A., Giuffrida, S., Prescia, R., Rizzo, F. eds., *Petralia Soprana. Ipotesi di restauro urbano e studi di analisi multicriteriale*. Palermo, 9-10.

⁴ Gurrieri, F., Beguinot, C., 1993. "Dalla paralisi urbana al recupero 'intelligente' della città antica (città cablata e recupero edilizio)", in Gurrieri, F., *Restauro e città*, Florence. See the case of the medieval centre of Colletta di Castelbianco (SV), abandoned after

the earthquake of 1887, whose recovery project led by Arch. Giancarlo De Carlo and presented in 1984 is today a success case. Restoration took place with the respect towards materials and towards original technique, and the transformation of the village into a telematics centre.

⁵ Boscarino, S., Prescia, R. eds., 1992. *Il restauro di necessità*, Milan. For a state-of the art analysis of the Belice region, cf. Badami, A., Picone, M., Schilleci, F., 2008. *Città nell'emergenza. Progettare e costruire tra Gibellina e lo Zen*, Palermo; Nobile, M. R., Sutura, D. eds., 2012. *Catastrofi e dinamiche di inurbamento contemporaneo. Città nuove e contesto*, Palermo.

⁶ Cronache Parlamentari siciliane, 2, 30.1.2011. The task was assigned to Arch. Lelio Oriano Di Zio, with Antonietta Di Clemente. He is the one who has taken care of the recovery of the historic centre of S. Stefano di Sessanio in Abruzzo, with initial positive results.

⁷ Please see www.sosvima.it; www.parcodellemadonie.it.

⁸ Prescia, R. ed. 2011. *Il patrimonio delle pietre a secco in Sicilia. L'esperienza Grundtvig 2008-10*, Palermo; Trapani, V., Vesco, M. I. ed. 2013. *Madonie, Madonie. Divagazioni sull'habitat contemporaneo*, Palermo, in A.A. 2011-12 in the Faculty of Architecture of the University of Palermo, researchers of all disciplines constituted a laboratory on the historic centre of S. Mauro Castelverde. Mami, A., 2013. "Centri storici e smart town. I centri minori come laboratori di nuova residenzialità sostenibile", in Castagneto, F., Fiore, V., *Recupero Valorizzazione Manutenzione nei centri storici. Un tavolo di confronto interdisciplinare*. Syracuse. 250-253.

⁹ Albanese, A., Prescia, R., Giuffrida, S., 2011. "Approccio valutativo ed ortoprassi del restauro per un centro storico siciliano", in *Territori* 5. Bologna. 45-70.