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Launching Colloquy of

« Heritage and Beyond »

a publication on the contribution of the Council of Europe
Framework Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society
(Faro Convention)

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Creative cities: preservation and production for next generations

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Creative cities: preservation and production for next generations

The lens of sustainability enables us to focus beyond the usual horizon and to look at the burden that will be left to future generations because of our actions today.

Through this lens we are revising those aspects of our behaviour which threaten the fragile beauty of European landscape, which generate environmental degradation, which increase territorial consumption, which waste precious energetic sources, in search of the balance between stimulating economic development (economics), social equity (equity), respect for the environment (ecology), and the specificity of actions (cultural diversity) which underlies the current definition of the concept of sustainability.

Today we will wear the lens of sustainability and look at the relations between architecture creativity and cultural heritage values.

First of all we will focus on the relations between creativity and architectural quality. As we have seen in the Italian White Paper, creativity is a fundamental input for the production of culture, a way of pursuing objectives with socially shared values, and not an end in itself.

Creativity conceived as pure formal innovation, not on a human scale nor respectful of the needs of users' lives, gives rise to unlivable architecture. Every day we see congested chaotic cities in which services are inadequate, movements difficult, and the environment neglected to such an extent that it undermines the health of city-dwellers.

To encourage sustainable architecture, we cannot simply limit the issue to measuring energy savings in building practice or the use of renewable sources of energy, although they do contribute considerably to reducing energy requirements and harmful emissions.

We have to encourage architectural creativity which doesn't pursue a development model based on extreme competition and continuous growth in consumption but aims to raise the quality of life in a context of social equality and respect for the environment. To achieve these goals we can look at heritage collective values as a source of good practices, learn lessons from the past from the quality of tomorrow.

Cultural heritage and landscape values are an enormous capital for the society. They testify the creative genius, social development and imaginative and spiritual vitality of humanity.

Like natural and energy resources, like economic goods traded by the market and therefore measured and expressed in monetary terms, those values are the wealth of a country, primary and essential resources to protect and transmit to future generations.

But those values are not simply attached to past heritage, they are a primary source of creative inspiration for contemporary artists, architects and planners. The identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation of those values is a source of inputs for the harmonious insertion of new architecture in historical, landscape, social and environmental contexts. *See a new stadium in Siena (New municipal stadium Borgovecchio, Isola d'Arbia, Siena (IT) – 2008 arch. Iotti + Pavarani Architetti Marazzi Architetti). An example of harmonic insertion of quality architecture that provides value added to a local area, instead of subtracting it, a value that can be enhanced for future generations.*

This project confronts the theme of the insertion of a large sporting infrastructure in a highly sensitive environmental context. Architectural form is derived from the lines of force present in the landscape, and buried in the ground.

Creative towns and cities: the ongoing debate on sustainable urban development is focused on new competitive factors: the quality of urban infrastructure and the interaction between culture and industry as means to improve the quality of life and the well-being of the population. Those cities are perceived as forward-looking, vital and open to change, and capable of attracting investments, intellectual resources and advanced functions.

But in this concept there is an important factor missing: the presence of places or buildings conceived as shared civic heritage. In the Renaissance inhabitants were linked together by horizontal rather than strictly hierarchical bonds, and people worked for common goods. As an example they taxed themselves to pay for the building of the city walls or elegant urban squares as they were motivated by their sense of belonging and local pride. And today the square, the towers, the city walls, the surrounding landscape, are still conceived as “civic heritage”. The quality of the places in which we live, work, trade or relax in our leisure time is a “social capital”, a shared civic heritage, something towards which both the collective and the individual feel a sense of responsibility.

Only the creative cities where “civicness” is nurtured, reach the goal of the improvement of the quality of life and the well-being of the population, which greatly depends on the cultural and social values: the presence of services, of a sufficient amount of green spaces and places for meeting, social relations and services, the proportioning of spaces on a human scale, the harmonious inclusion of built areas in the landscape, rigorously professional building methods in making stable and enduring, constructions, the use of safe materials for human health and the abatement of harmful emissions in the atmosphere.

The image is a painting of Ambrogio Lorenzetti, Effects of Good Government on Town, 1337-1340, Sala della Pace, Town Hall, Siena

Another lesson from the past. The concept of proportioning of spaces on a human scale. But the “ideal” man of Renaissance is seen today in a different light. As life expectancy rises and modern medicine has increased the survival rate of those with significant injuries, illnesses and birth defects, there is a growing interest in the design of products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialized design. This is the intent of universal design philosophy: to simplify life for everyone by making products, communications, and the built environment more usable by as many people as possible at little or no extra cost and benefits people of all ages and abilities.

The seven Principles of Universal Design are:

- *Equitable use*
- *Flexibility in use*

- *Simple and intuitive*
- *Perceptible information*
- *Tolerance for error*
- *Low physical effort*
- *Size and space for approach and use*

The Principles of Universal Design, Version 2.0. Raleigh, NC: North Carolina State University.” http://www.design.ncsu.edu/cud/about_ud/udprinciples.htm
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Quality architecture is a living organism in a living environment. Sustainable architecture is much more than smart technology and energy-saving devices or solar panel. It means first of all to tune the building to local climate and look at the tectonics of energy use and use principles such as conservation of resources, use of local materials, effective ventilation and the way the shape of a building responds to climate are embodied in the design of these structures. Architectural heritage testify building design traditions which have been developed in direct relation to local climatic and geographic factors. Because of the shortage of resources, traditional building practices have tended intuitively, through trial and error, towards economically and environmentally optimal solutions. The experience gained in relationship with historic architecture helps to benchmark those solutions devised by architects who could not rely on any of today’s energy sources. Moreover, restoration of historic architecture to be handed down to the future generations, as opposed to constructing new buildings, involve less waste of energy , land use and natural resources.

The example of Casa Joras (Parco del Pollino, Calabria (IT) – 2007 arch. Lacasasullalbero) is a good metaphor of the relations between architecture and environment, as building in a tree means building in a living organism

The human dimension. Social ecology, fundamental to the wellbeing of a community and its citizens, is an important theme that underlies architectural production, usually constructed with minimal budgets to meet social or humanitarian objectives. Sustainable design can help to create a sustainable way of living within a community. Through its own particular way of expressing values, architecture can stimulate and influence social life, as decisions and innovations at design level may affect the kind of society produced. The quality of architecture must accompany us throughout the day and facilitate an encounter with others, transforming built space into an instrument of mediation between diversities.

The project garden - arena al Tempio (San Michele di Ganzaria, Catania (IT) – 2005 arch. Marco Navarra_NOWA) is a vast open-air Cavea overlooking a valley in Sicily used during the summer for special events and performances, an illegal waste dumps is cleaned up and transformed into gardens that filter and collect rainwater to be reused for the maintenance and irrigation of urban gardens

Intercultural dialogue has always been a source of primary inspiration. Architecture creativity express the identity of places and people who inhabit them, the essence of local cultural identity, the wisdom of rural vernacular building practices or the environmental attunement and local cultural traditions, as well new creations are originated from the encounter of different cultures and the dialogue between different civilisations.

The image shows the Zisa in Palermo, 12th century, summer residence for the Norman kings clearly inspired by Moorish architecture. The name Zisa itself derives from the Arab term al-Azîz, meaning "noble", "glorious", "magnificent".

Val di Cornia, an example of creative key to economic conversion found in the identifying values of the population. Improving the quality of life of its inhabitants, thanks to a sustainable development model based on the cultural and environmental values and on the territory's identity characters as the basis for its social economical reconversion, made necessary after the crisis of the steelwork industry in the decade between 1980 to 1990 (<http://www.parchivaldicornia.it/index.php?lang=eng>)

As said in the renaissance, the best solutions are born on the shoulders of giants, where you can see a wider horizon, towards the history, the values of territory and context. A quality architecture that is not simply respectful of landscape but adds values to the territory, which will be transmitted to future generations enriched. A good architecture aware of having come into being at the interface between society and built reality, and therefore knows that decisions and innovations at design level affect the kind of society produced. A new architecture which seems always to have accompanied us, different but familiar, a novelty that generate wellbeing, and therefore we are perfectly at ease with it. *Image shows Cedalion standing on the shoulders of Orion in a painting of Nicolas Poussin, Blind Orion Searching for the Rising Sun, 1658, Oil on canvas, Metropolitan Museum of Art.*