

Lecture Notes in Civil Engineering

Giuseppe Amoruso *Editor*

Putting Tradition into Practice: Heritage, Place and Design

Proceedings of 5th INTBAU International
Annual Event


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Editor

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Putting Tradition into Practice

Enhancing Not-Outstanding Cultural Landscapes in a European Perspective: A Challenge for Digitization

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Italy, like Europe, is marked by the presence of areas, placed in different geographical zones, but with similar characteristics in abandonment or trends in the housing surplus, and in a state of incipient decay. These areas are often characterized by a rich history of anthropic elements of widespread cultural heritage, although intangible, which developed the many local identities.

In order to regenerate such areas, the paper asks which possibility is now providing digitization, considering not only translating analog information into digital copies (texts, images, drawings, maps, data sets, funds audio/video, etc.) but above all looking carefully at manifold solutions able to cope a growing demand for social inclusion expressed through cultural heritage.

The aim is to better focus new digitizing potentialities in regenerating not-outstanding cultural heritage in a European perspective.

The 5th Intbau International Annual Event calls to take in consideration the close relationship between heritage and places and also invites to put tradition in practice.

What does it mean this when we are talking about cultural landscapes? And in a more specific way, when we focusing our attention on so called “not-outstanding” landscapes, which represent at the same time legacy of past times and maybe nowadays new economic resources for people in a tourism perspective.

A while ago, working in a scholars’ group in my department, here in the Politecnico di Milano, in order to answer a call from EU about *Emergence and transmission of European Cultural heritage*, I considered that Italy, like Europe, is marked by the presence of areas, placed in different geographical zones, but with similar characteristics in abandonment or trends in the housing surplus, and in a state of incipient decay.

I argued that often these areas are characterized by a rich history of anthropic elements of widespread cultural heritage, although intangible, which developed the many local identities from which Europe is made.

Last summer the earthquake in Central Italy drew dramatically our attention on a lot of villages already were in a very difficult situation from economy and population points of view, so adding new heavy troubles in the previous condition.

As particularly concerns Italy, in order to better focus problems related to so called identity places even so abandoned places, I wish to quote Antonella Tarpino’s approach, well explained in her books and mostly in *Spaesati* [8] where she proposes a kind of “new Grand Tour” along the Italian peninsula, showing a huge change in the Italian

landscape. The image outlined by Emilio Sereni in “*History of the Italian agricultural landscape*” [7], utilizing iconography and cartography to represent both tangible and intangible values, as result of good government in our territories, where communities have been long recognized themselves, doesn’t ever exist; now we have to cope a totally different condition, as a lot of cultural landscapes become places of disorientation - as well Antonella Tarpino says in the book- “displaced places” (“*spaesati*”), where people become more and more “without country”, “without land” [8].

At the same time this book talks about a kind of culture of resistance in territories threatened by the rubble in a imploded development, a resistance to defend both in the North and in the South, the landscape that has being taken place over time, as the story continues to be inside to our range of experience: the ancient traces of the past are in fact till now perceived as a common good. Tarpino deals specifically with vulnerable areas on the borders, she looks at them as survived worlds in slow movement that, precisely because of contamination between memory and expectations of the future, may realize the basis for good policy practices.

The “borders” reveal the hybrid mixture, the empty and full, too full of our country: so the aim is telling the ruins before they become rubble and that’s the reason of a travel *a rebours* along the peninsula, among our history’s legacy.

Places full of collective memories and empty today, due a lack of people and production activities, due a development without strategies, where territorial contexts were definitively altered by industrial boom, which completely displaced the inhabitants, also causing heavy imbalances in the urban and regional planning.

The travel along Italy begins in the mountains, starting from Paraloup, an abandoned village close to Cuneo, a place of resistance to Nazis in the past; then the trip goes on in the other chapters dedicated to specific Italian geographic places, *Towards the East, Along the River Po, Center and beyond, The delicate plateau, Far South, The Mediterranean down, In Rome, The other ruins and memory*.

A unique goal could bring together all these “disorientation places” along such a imaginary route: to grasp why these so called places’ in the borders’ territories are so “weak”, even so for this reason they are probably open to new and possible ways of life: in short here another challenge could be possible, a challenge maybe full of traps and pitfalls, but revealing a new and diverse future for abandoned places.

Such a long quotation for the book *Spaesati* [8] is a way to introduce the main issue in this paper, in other words the aim is how we can look in a new way at these not outstanding cultural landscapes and how we can imagine a future not only for them but for all us.

In the very beginning I told that Italy is similar to Europe in this respect, even so, in different European contexts, due to territorial, economic and social peculiarities, the ways, conditions and reasons to abandon are dissimilar. Also the policies of regeneration and valorization are various. However it’s possible to state that till now is missing an organic overview, an analysis of initiatives to systemize and compare them and to evaluate the results.

At moment what may be useful mention are the EU policies carried on in order to reconnect people, territories and heritage not only at local level but in a European perspective.

In general EU considers heritage as matter of cohesion, to be conscious of legacy of past in both ways, tangible and intangible, should lead to a new and better Europe.

The document *Communication from the European Commission, "Towards an integrated approach to Cultural Heritage for Europe"*, [9] encouraged a vision of the heritage addressed to share values and promote social cohesion; this text, considers heritage as capable in producing social cohesion and integration, regenerating neglected or abandoned areas, creating there new jobs, definitively generating shared understanding and a new idea of community.

So policies able to re-connect people to heritage and landscape is the way to strengthen awareness and responsibility about places; at the same time new opportunities both for young and elder people, can be open so promoting new relationship between different cultures and generations.

In other words Cultural Heritage mainly related to landscape, is one of the major pillars in the *European Agenda for Culture*, pursuing three most important goals: *promotion of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue; promotion of culture as a catalyst for creativity; promotion of culture as a vital element of the Union's international dimension*" [9].

In order to realize such goals, the digital policy is crucial: as we can read in "The European Digital Agenda": *The digitization of heritage contributes to the European Agenda for Culture, by improving public access to different forms of cultural and linguistic expressions; furthermore, Digitising Cultural Heritage, making it accessible online, and supporting its economic exploitation are also activities at the heart of the Digital Agenda for Europe. Digitisation multiplies opportunities to access heritage and engage audiences; while digital tools such as 3D scanning can facilitate the preservation and restoration of physical cultural assets* [9].

Digitization can affect in different ways the ongoing conference issues: i.e. we have in Italy cases, like Colletta, in Liguria Region, which has been completely wired by optic fiber and now it is a kind of "internet village": as writes Valerio Saggini: *"The decision to provide Colletta di Castelbianco with on-line telecommunications services represents the result of a carefully examined reflexion on a plurality of themes such as the restoration and reuse of the former rural settlements, the traffic problems afflicting metropolitan areas and its consequent alienation, environmental pollution and the advent of the information society, to name a few. Themes seemingly distant but all in some way attributable to the problem of the quality of life in post-industrial society"* [5].

So Colletta urban site, abandoned in the 1950s, has been restored as ancient settlement, respecting the original materials and building techniques by Giancarlo De Carlo, and it has been provided with a sophisticated technological infrastructure which allowed inhabitants to use digital resources. In this way, Colletta has been connected to a global scale, very important to attract tourists and starting to live again without changing the identity of a place.

But going deeply in digital issues it's worthy to deal with what communication can realize today as concerns cultural heritage sites: referring ourselves to possible approaches outlined by Icomos, we need to highlight two intertwined ways: roles and practices connected to digital "presentation" and "interpretation" [11].

We can also call the first as "top-down" actions and the second ones as "bottom-up" investigations and practices: digital technologies in fact affect images and information

at the same time, headed to a collective experience and consequently to social places, in two main directions: the inhabitants ‘one and that of tourists. In this debate framework, another key point about emerging digital technologies, is ability to carry traditional or innovative visions of heritage.

So what does “presentation” strategy mean? *“Presentation – as we can read on the above mentioned Icomos document- denotes the carefully planned arrangement of information and physical access to a cultural heritage site, usually by scholars, design firms, and heritage professionals. As such, it is largely a one-way mode of communication”*.

Such methodologies of data collection make up very advanced solutions realizing “master models” in order to represent exact digital features reproductions of the original artifacts [3].

The 3D Reality-based models realize information systems generating mock-up able to describe manifold contents (geometrical, material, formal, architectural). The goal is gathering all different information in a visual shape which should be as possible clear and readable. As De Luca, Véron, Florenzano write: “a 3D semantic based information system aims to present contextualized information, providing artifacts of a proper “context” semantically integrating 3D objects by 2D images, texts, references, to let users make queries based on a context and on a semantic content” [2].

Furthermore 3D GIS represent effective and meantime very useful tools able to fulfill the “presentation” requirements for a cultural heritage site.

We wish to underline that such digital models can be utilized first of all by scholars, they can in fact describe and show at the same time information in order to restore building and site, which are usually very specific to allow such interventions. At the same time the mock up can be thought and realized to better explain, by visualization, knowledge among lay people. Andrea Giordano well summarizes the steps required in this different approach: “Using examples from Venice, Padua and Carpi, it is important to show three distinct phases for this kind of inquiry:

1. Data acquisition: archival documents, laser scans and photogrammetric surveys can be processed and organized through 3D modeling that can be implemented by interoperable platforms.
2. Data communication: the information gathered with the methods listed above can be conveyed through the design of apps and interactive systems for multimedia devices, as well as web platforms. This process entails designing and testing augmented reality and 3D models for multimedia devices and the implementation of immersive reality.
3. Sharing: integrating the models as means of analysis into the conservation process of the architectural asset by the virtual reconstruction of architectural features.” [4]

So here the key points are “communicating” and “sharing”, which represent indeed another way to consider heritage by digital, really closer to what Icomos names “interpretation”. To better explain the idea, we prefer to quote from the abovementioned document: *“Interpretation [...] denotes the totality of activity, reflection, research, and creativity stimulated by a cultural heritage site. In this respect the input and involvement of visitors, local and associated community groups, and other stakeholders of various ages and educational backgrounds is essential to interpretation and*

to the transformation of cultural heritage sites into places and sources of learning and reflection about the past, as well as valuable resources for sustainable community development and intercultural and intergenerational dialogue” [11].

In order to realize such goal in “communicating”, it is crucial first of all employing images and more in general “visualizing” tangible and intangible heritage. As everyone today can see our contemporary society is at the same time deeply changed by web communication and prevailing use of images. We are facing in fact an intercultural globalization “flowing” by visual communication media. The Internet Era let us moving in a “social showcase” involving wide processes and a growing number of individuals.

How Vanni Codeluppi noticed, technologies allow people to get stronger personal opportunities in telling and asserting themselves in a social and cultural context. Lastly the visual and technological turn combined each other, consent us to be more visible in such social life [1].

Our life is becoming currently more and more a “virtual stage” where it is possible showing ideas and proposals in general about the city, or opinions on ways of life, or furthermore to say something about architecture, urbanism and cultural heritage, largely using for that purpose images produced by ourselves or found in the net.

In this perspective the connected employ of ICT and Web allow to provide new interesting scenarios to take in consideration for heritage; I will try to list below the most relevant:

- Multimedia for Cultural Heritage
- Data for recording the memory of places
- Information system design for mapping and data basing heritage
- Image and information technologies to share collective experience of places
- Open data and web based tools.

Summarizing: digitizing cultural heritage consists not only of translating analog information into digital copies (texts, images, drawings, maps, data sets, funds audio/video, etc.) but more of solutions able to cope a growing demand for social inclusion by participating and making sources free to be accessed; in this sense, a new perspective for cultural heritage applying digital tools, aims to use open-data and web-based tools in order to share as much possible knowledge of contents and values, assessing also a possible impact in policies of preservation.

At the same time, digital tools turn out to be therefore crucial in activating relationship between territorial assets, activities and actors of cultural programs, in other words both for locals and tourists.

Referring ourselves to European policies and then to the connected perspective in matter of cultural heritage, seems interesting to take in consideration the new scenarios that a change in point of view could imply, in order to merge the contribution coming from scholars but at the same time, taking seriously into account inhabitants’ and visitors’ visions.

The role of digitizing in making effective such change in perspective, may be crucial, both in increasing awareness of cultural heritage values and in sharing information and enhancing them in a tourism perspective.

So summing up, digitizing more in general should deal with: Educating by cultural heritage multimedia; Experiencing and sharing new contents on territory heritage by people; Transmitting local heritage and meanwhile transforming identity value chains; Using ICT to share collective experiences of places; Trying to answer the demand to free access resources; Connecting tangible and intangible heritage in a tourism perspective [6].

To conclude: digital technologies should realize at the same time “a common ground” in preserving heritage and promoting actions in order to involve more actors in processes of “interpreting” heritage, sharing knowledge and attracting cultural tourism.

Today, we have to utilize in the best way digitization, operating system setting, simulating and 3D modeling, using friendly interfaces to access information, and last but not least taking in consideration information local database information, such as Wikimedia environment (Wikipedia- Wikidata - Wikimedia Commons - Wikisource – Wikivoyage etc....).

Further web operating system and web Gis 3D show how many and different approaches are now possible in order to produce a more effective way in knowing, circulating and communicating contents about cultural heritage.

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