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2008

Online at <https://mpra.ub.uni-muenchen.de/34050/>
MPRA Paper No. 34050, posted 08 Mar 2012 12:50 UTC

Historical Centres as Resources of Development Opportunity. Problems and Improvements Concerning the South of Italy¹

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Abstract

Just like other European countries, Italy is proud of its cities full of extraordinary architectural monuments. The economy of these “open air museums” is based on the development and the preservation of its heritage. Instead, in the south of Italy, improvements and developments of the heritage clash with the difficult economic and social reality which is linked to the vulnerability territory. The theme of “natural risk” assumes a fundamental role starting from the international government politics, to create safe environmental settlements, special attention should be paid to the most critical issues ...disaster prevention, cultural natural and historical heritage (United Nations, 1996).

This paper will put in evidence the Italian and international policy about natural risks regarding improvements and preservation heritage, starting from the Heritage@risk (ICOMOS, International Council of Monuments and Sites) to the Heritage risk paper (Italian Reconstruction Central Institute). A special examination will be given to a Calabria region where there are special problems related to social and economic conditions, and also natural disaster in particular earthquakes.

Certainly in this region, heritage vulnerability is increased by reasons of natural risks, consequently integrated strategies that concern: degradation, unauthorized building, hazard, vulnerability assessment, were applied. These policies aim to improve: town planning, seismic risk mitigation, social and cultural aspects.

¹ Paper presented to the International Conference *Responsibilities and Opportunities in Architectural Conservation: Theory, Education, and Practice*. CSAAR 2008B. Organized by College of Architecture and Arts, Petra University, Jordan. In Collaboration with The Center for the Study of Architecture in the Arab Region, 3-4 November, 2008

Key words: *historical centres, natural risks, hazard, vulnerability, integrated strategies, aims of sustainability.*

1 Historical Centres and Seismic Risk

1.1 International policies

Among international policies to promote aims of sustainability there are numerous initiatives dedicated to preservation, improving and developing the heritage. These initiatives also regard the security of settlements and the preservation of heritage from disasters. The Habitat II Report recognizes that one of the sustainability's aim is the natural defence risk. In fact, the Report establishes that the impact on people and human settlements of natural and human-made disasters are becoming greater. Disasters are frequently caused by vulnerabilities created by human actions, such as uncontrolled or inadequately planned human settlements, lack of basic infrastructures and the occupation of disaster-prone areas (United Nations, 1996). Also the European Community has promoted integrated tools for achieving sustainability's aims. Among these, the Regional Applications Programmes (R.A.P.) inside the Community Economic Framework 2000-2006 have promoted integrated tools. One of the R.A.P. aim's is dedicated to the safety of urban and historical centres from disaster, and also to the mitigation seismic risk promoting innovative technologies and social participation.

Among scientific initiatives to improve the heritage knowledge framework risk's, l'ICOMOS, Unesco's scientific company, has achieved the [Heritage@risk](#) Project. The results of the census have contributed to make the "First world report heritage at risk" where the causes that induce the destruction and the "lost" of heritage are identified together with protection and conservation measures. The Heritage@risk Project marks four groups of heritage's risks: a) natural risks (earthquakes, landslide, flooding, etc.), b) risks from urban activity (dams, dumps, etc.), c) risks from social behaviour (wars, thefts, religious conflicts etc.), c) protection and conservation system weakness. L'ICOMOS has identified the principle actions to be made for conserving and preserving every category of risk.

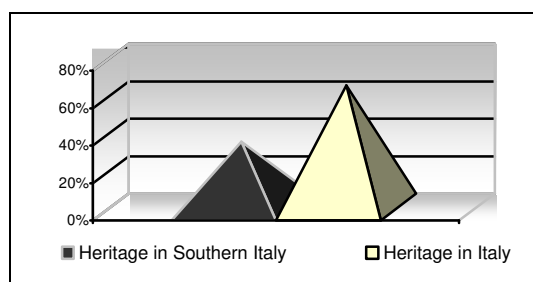


Figure 1: Sites included in Humanity Heritage List, Unesco 2000

1.2 Italian policies

In Italy, the heritage at risk knowledge framework has been achieved by the Italian Reconstruction Central Institute through the “Italian heritage risk’s map”. This Map was accomplished using G.I.S. which made it able to calculate the “lost” or the risk for every cultural heritage. The aim of the Map was to census all the heritage present in Italian territory. Cultural heritage census from Italian Reconstruction Central Institute were distinguished in: cultural archaeological, cultural architectonics, and urban sites built after 1950. For each of these categories all the information about their typology, the localisation, the actually use, the value, etc., has been taken. The Map has underlined that in the South there are 3.240 cultural sites, divided in to 903 archaeological sites, 2.073 buildings, 264 historical centres.

In 2000, another initiative directed to improving and developing the heritage knowledge in the South was accomplished from the Civil Protection Department with nationally funded and with the scientific support of the National Seismic Group Defence (S.N.G.D). This initiative has allowed the vulnerability assessment of historical centre but also vulnerability of every cultural heritage (churches, buildings, monasteries, fortresses, etc.). This initiative was achieved by many unemployed engineers and architects. For every cultural heritage the technicians used apposite schedules for the vulnerability assessment. This has contributed to improve the framework heritage knowledge in the South and its vulnerability assessment.

These censuses have revealed the diffuse presence of the heritage in Italy and in particular in the South where there are: a) a large economic and occupational crises, b) a cultural, environmental and landscape value waste, c) the absence of territory defence, d) a large presence of unauthorized buildings that make landscape worse.

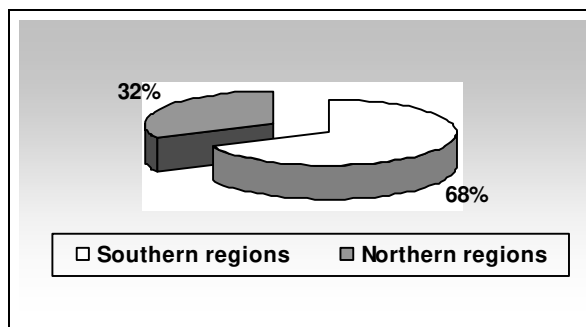


Figure 2: The unauthorized buildings in Italy. Ministry of Infrastructure, 2002

In a planning area, the renewal tools for historical centres are “Renewal plans” introduced by the law n. 457/78. This law discerns the different renewal interventions that regard both the ordinary repair urban renovation interventions. But, all these interventions do not consider seismic aspects, that have promoted new researches in seismic area for defining renewal experimental methodologies for historical centres. In fact, in Italy, today the renewal tools of the city cannot be found in planning laws, but can be found in news tools with citizen participation procedures. These procedures have put the public administration and the private entrepreneurial class in agreement. In Italy, besides the Plans for urban rehabilitation that regulates the interventions of renewal in the historical centers, other planning tools which are directed to urban seismic risk mitigation do not exist. That has contributed numerous experimental initiatives concerning new methodologies of intervention for the rehabilitation in urban seismic areas to emerge. Among these, probably, the first initiative note as "Project rehabilitation" has been achieved by the Emilia Romagna region to promote interventions of urban renewal. Subsequently the Emilia Romagna region established for municipalities classified seismic, the redaction of the feasibility study concerning an evaluation of the seismic risk with particular consideration to the urban vulnerability. Which has contributed to numerous experimental methods on urban vulnerability assessment to emerge, then executed in abridged versions and low costs, this has facilitated the choices of planning.

2 Urban Renewal. Planning Tools and Methods

The methodologies for historical centres renewal are integrated and involves many aspects: a) social, incrementing residential population with leases and low cost purchases, b) economic, improving commercial initiatives, c) buildings renewal, with economic incentive and tax relief. Today, in a seismic area the renewal of individual buildings is not enough to preserve historical centres integrity. Seismic risk, in fact, is one cause of historical centres degradation and progressive abandon. That, has contributed to make new vulnerability assessment integrated methodologies. Among these, the methodology that involves social, economic and seismic aspects about historical centres renewal is so-called Minimum Urban Structure (M.U.S.). The Rosarno’s Urban Aseismic Plan (in the Southern Italian region of Calabria) is the first planning tool where the M.U.S. is applied. This planning tool is becoming an example for all the administrations which are making historical centres protection plans.

2.1 The Urban Aseismic Plan of Rosarno’s historical centre

2.1.1 The beginning

The Rosarno’s Urban Aseismic Plan (R.U.A.P.), was proposed by Department of Treasury to State Administrations for making innovative projects with Economic European Funds. The conditions requested from

the Department have to be able to improve integrated development, were: a) social and economic development with unemployment increment, b) private co-financing, c) immediate implementation of the project.

The Italian National Seismic Service (I.N.N.S.) entered a competition for planning new experimental methodologies from which the M.U.S. was defined. The aim of this new methodology was to introduce new planning aspects of mitigation seismic risk. The Calabria region and in particular, Rosarno and Melicucco, where there is the most seismic hazard of Italy, was chosen to apply the M.U.S.

2.1.2 The active participation of citizen

In collaboration with I.N.N.S. the Italian Planning Institute (I.P.I.) promoted a planning participated process with the citizens through planning laboratories. The results of active participation were necessary for a correct planning. The active citizens participation in Rosarno was made through: a) audiences and public meetings, b) workshops and brainstorming, c) public events.

Nevertheless the Rosarno society has many problems, youth unemployment and organized crime, however citizens participation has been a success. The R.U.A.P. took into consideration the indications of the laboratories, above all the necessity to improve Rosarno's citizens quality of life.

The Rosarno's citizens main needs were: a) to extend the historical centre border, b) to improve cultural development, c) to increase social areas, d) to retrain the buildings and public spaces.

In particular, the suggestions expressed from the laboratories are becoming Strategic Aims (S.A) to carry out to the R.U.A.P. implementation: 1) S.A. The city; it involves the conservation, retraining, and renewal of buildings, 2) S.A. Security; it regards the mitigation seismic risk and in particular the mitigation urban vulnerability, 3) S.A. Sites; it regards in particular, the necessity to improve and plan new public spaces.

2.1.3 General strategies and specific aims.

The Urban Aseismic Plan of Rosarno's historical centre involves the following general strategies: a) to integrate historical heritage conservation requirements and environmental values with aseismic finality. To this purpose, to identification and implementation M.U.S., represents, as we shall see, the right strategy able to integrate improvement and conservation; b) to develop integrated strategies able to introduce social and economic opportunities which are the necessary assumption for conservation and rehabilitation of the historical heritage; c) to promote public - private cooperation as conditions for the activation of all existing resource potentials.

From the above general strategies two ambitious objectives derive: a) the first one, gives to the theme "renewal" a broader meaning compared to the

traditional Italian urban debate which usually involves; i.e. the recovery of a role inside the wide territorial system where Rosarno is placed (Piana di Gioia Tauro); and the recovery of socio-economic functions inside the historical centre; b) the second, gives to the historical centre, the “lost” value of quality urban space.

Therefore, the Urban Aseismic Plan of Rosarno’s historical centre pursues the following specific aims: a) to improve the strategic role of the historical centre concerning both the urban context and the broader territory with functions, facilities and services, as well as improving the accessibility, the mobility, and the parking facilities, inside the historical centre; b) urban and environmental regeneration, through integrated actions concerning urban areas and primary and secondary urbanization facilities; c) improvement of historical heritage and degraded urban structure, with particular reference to the historical and distributive characteristics of the buildings, through actions directed to introduce reuse of the built heritage, and through planning tools directed to mitigations the seismic vulnerability of the built heritage itself and to removing the building superfetations; d) mitigation of urban vulnerability, i.e. the seismic protection of buildings, but above all the functions and social relationships that characterize the historical centre with regard to the urban context.

From the above aims mentioned, derives the experimental nature of the Plan, in which is expected an integrated approach involving different expertises and requirements: a) disaster and post-disaster management; b) rehabilitation both of the formal-architectural and the structural characters of buildings; c) social and economic revitalisation.

In pursuing such aims, the methodological answer, therefore originates a precise town planning field, which is required to provide new approaches and actions analysis and new actions for improvement of historical centres. The M.U.S. is the base of an urban centre, or the vital system that must survive a seismic event. The M.U.S. methodology allows, in general, to orient the vulnerability analysis and the mitigation actions towards all the elements that are a part of it, and to leave out (at least initially) the rest of the urban area.

2.1.4 The cognitive inquiries

To pursue Plan targets, the inquiries are directed to the knowledge of the Rosarno historical centre by three different classes: a) the first one is social, to return the actual image of the urban centre through direct inquiries that translate what the people’s voices in laboratories of urban planning participation; b) the second regards architectural aspect, and the architectural qualities of the buildings in the historical centre. Rosarno’s town does not have the characteristics of an historical centre because buildings violations have prejudiced the original look and harmony of it; c) finally, urban renewal and safety of the old town should be connected.

2.1.5 The seismic hazard

Rosarno town is situated in a big earthquake zone with active and characteristic earthquake structures of high hazard. This means that in earthquake events the damage prospects are very high. In fact the structural collapse of most of the buildings can be connected to the ground distortions such as slopes unstableness and liquations. Rosarno territory, in particular the one between Fiume Medma and the settled town, was in the past subjected to flooding, especially in the valley area. In Rosarno the M.U.S. is individualized in the strategic parts that structure the whole area where the populated town is located.

Besides, Rosarno is situated in a privileged position regarding transport by road, by sea, by rail and the Jonio-Tirreno freeway. Being a central position important activities and the process of economical development have reasons to start off.

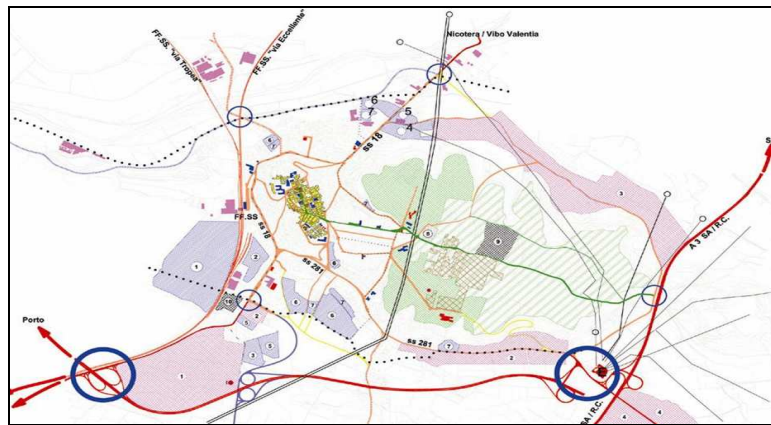


Figure 3: Gioia Tauro's territory and Rosarno's Minimum Urban Structure

2.1.6 The renewal of the building heritage

Rosarno historical centre is not full of cultural buildings because most of them were replaced by new buildings. Some buildings have a good cultural quality but they appear tampered with the original architectural composition such as to demand for a renewal. The buildings located in the historical centre must conform to the current earthquake regulations, for this reason they are subject to a vulnerability assessment with S.N.G.D. support. The buildings of historical centre reflect the phenomenon of the labourer mobility as the working class that is always looking for an accommodation. Instead the middle class houses were built with the best technology and were located on the tableland.

The current building alterations are not results of planning but they are the results of unauthorized buildings built in the last twenty years. These interventions of building alterations have spoiled the urban landscape, so the historical centre is completely lacking of architectural quality. It is very difficult to find in the historical centre, buildings which conserve their original composition. In fact the violations are visible on the external side of the buildings, many of these regard the platings constructed on roof terraces.

2.1.7 The vulnerability of the buildings in historical centre

The vulnerability of the buildings was assessed using two methods. A modified version of the Emilia Romagna region proposal was used for vulnerability assessment of private buildings. A S.N.G.D. support was required for public and important buildings for the assessment vulnerability. The interventions and proposals to reduce the vulnerability of the Rosarno historical centre was suggested by the January 16th 1966 law “Technician rules for the buildings in the earthquake areas”. The interventions suggested are directed to strengthen the buildings as well as to remove or to consolidate the elements of strengthlessness.

For the historic buildings, the purpose was to put them in safety conditions by interventions of seismic improvement, trying to remove the violations.

The rules that put buildings of historical centre in safe conditions are directed to removal of those elements that can increase the buildings vulnerability. Another detractor of safety was represented by numerous retaining walls present in the historical centre. The seismic consolidation after the stability assessment for the retaining walls was established.

2.1.8 The implementation plan

The laboratories’ results have allowed to structure some integrated strategies of renewal, through: a) a Regulatory Framework, that set rules on buildings interventions, b) an Operating Framework, that establishes four Main Projects: 1) Buildings Aseismic Reinforcement, 2) Security line and emergency areas, 3) Public urban spaces, 4) Aseismic consolidation of lifelines. This Operating Framework has to be applied by the municipal administration with specific projects to submit to the European Community.

The Operating Framework requested, also, planning areas projects: 1) Cathedral square – Largo Bellavista project finalized to the reorganization of the areas with the function of a meeting point in case of emergency; 2) Corso Garibaldi street project, finalized to a security line; 3) Mastrilli square, finalized to improve and plan new public spaces; 4) Elena street project, finalized to the economical development; 5) Corso Umberto street project, finalized to an alternative security line; 6) East area, finalized to buildings and public spaces retraining; 7) Council houses, finalized to rehabilitation both of the formal-architectural and the structural characters of buildings.

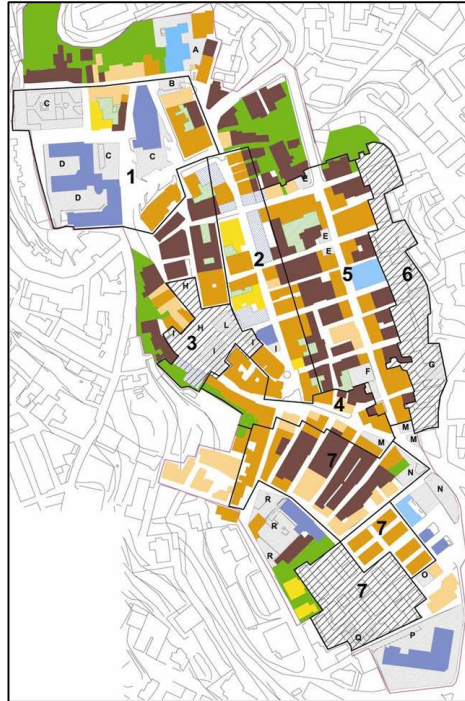


Figure 4: Rosarno's historical centre and planning areas projects.

3. Conclusions Remarks

Living in historical centres in the South of Italy, signifies to live in urban and social environmental degradation. Above all, which depends from discontinuous and non development integrated policies. An important operative solution of the renewal integrate theme is represented by planning tools with citizen participation. These planning tools suggest innovative procedures for improving urban life quality. Among these, the Rosarno's Urban Aseismic Plan is based on experimental procedures for aseismic historical centre renewal: urban forum based on visioning technique's, laboratories with citizen participation etc. These procedures have contributed to defining and sharing of policies and strategy development which involves many aspects, from social and economic including seismic aspects.

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