

# **ICOA1063: HERITAGE LED-DEVELOPMENT BY SHARED RECOVERING OF URBANIZED HISTORIC RURAL LANDSCAPES IN THE VENETO REGION, ITALY**

## **Subtheme 01: Integrating Heritage and Sustainable Urban Development by engaging diverse Communities for Heritage Management**

**Session 1:** Sustainable Development and Community Engagement

**Location:** Gulmohar Hall, India Habitat Centre

**Time:** December 13, 2017, 11:45 – 12:00

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*Valentina Torelli earned in 2015 a Master Degree in Architecture at the Ferrara University (Italy) with a thesis about resilient strategies for the World Heritage site (WHS) of Valparaíso (Chile). She is now PhD Candidate at the International Graduate School in Heritage Studies of Cottbus-Senftenberg (Germany) and her topic is Historic Cities Urban Transformations and socio-ecological Impact in WHSs. The work focuses on an impact assessment tool to solve conflicts between development needs and values preservation.*

**Abstract:** The UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape is revising the concept of protected urban areas and its related management approach (UNESCO, 2011). In fact the traditional West European conservationist object-based and top-down approach is shifting to landscape-based, including the social dimension of (historic) cities (Guzmán, Pereira Roders & Colenbrander, 2014) and the involvement of the local community in the decision-making. The new approach should be constructed from experts and decision-makers with the local community and propose measures and alternative scenarios in order to monitor the impact of urban development not only on the architectural fabric but also on the social one (Guzmán, Pereira Roders & Colenbrander, 2014). But is these new approach really implemented by monitoring urban renewal and developments projects? Gentrification, resettlement or privatizations of public spaces are frequently occurring due to urban renewals in historic urban areas. Often citizens do not have the opportunity to be aware of urban development project before impacts as commodification and exploitation are occurring. These phenomena still occurring are the result of a top-down approach at international, national and local level, which is looking at the urban heritage as an object and not considering inhabitant's life and their involvement in the decision-making regarding changes of the built environment. Who is dealing with the design and conservation of urban spaces is modifying socio-spatial structures and social relations and has the responsibility to build up an open discussion about his decisions. The research wants to investigate the possibility to develop a tool, which could enable the local community to democratically assess urban development going on in urban historical areas. The tool has to be able to foresee and avoid this kind of social impact of urban renewals or conservation scheme in urban historic areas through a democratic and participated assessment.

**Key words:** *historic urban landscape, local community involvement, urban developments*

## **The European Contemporary City: loss of borders between rural and urban**

From the beginning of the last century till today, the modern development model has been slowly dismantling the symbiotic coexistence of the European city with the surrounding land. According to the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism in the last century the Italian territory faced extremely rapid transformation of development models compared with previous centuries: from two millions of buildings in 1919 to more than twelve millions in 2011 (MIBACT, 2017). During the after war reconstruction the building industry was active especially in cities and around the sixties moved to the hinterland. Toward the seventies the number of constructed buildings in main cities equals the number in the hinterland.

When we speak about the growing dimension of our cities we imply a process of becoming: from rural to urban, indeed all European cities developed on former agricultural land (Co. E., 2006). After World War II, due the pressure of the reconstruction and the related restart of the economy, diverse forms of urbanisation have been spreading in European countryside: today is therefore impossible to recognize the city as a defined object from the land. Our perspective on the city achieves today a territorial scale; we are living in metropolitan regions, in different kind of form of urbanization as “urban sprawl, suburbanization and counter-urbanization, urban fringe, edge cities and exurbs” (Antrop M., 2005, pg.26). The modern relation with nature rooted in Enlightenment, Christianity and Capitalism (Uggla Y., 2010) was based on the emancipation from the land and on its use and consumption. The shift of our societies from rural to urban can help to understand the process of the European past century modernization, which created the modern unsustainable relation we have today with our territory. Indeed “a population which is becoming increasingly urban has often severed some of its roots with the countryside and has lost its empirical knowledge of life in a natural environment” (Co.E., 2006, pg.47). The modern reductionist approach is reflected in the way modernity has been looking at nature without ecological consciousness (Uggla Y., 2010). This process can be understood as the “disappearing culture of nature” (Co.E., 2012 pg.47).

## **Toward heritage-led development**

The historic rural heritage in the European context and especially in Italy is usually a dispute between values to conserve and needs to accommodate. Development projects are therefore generally formulated between this opposition and rarely this ensures effective and holistic strategies. Conservation measures for built heritage born in the sixties generated a division between protected and generic areas (Magnaghi A., 2014). The division between protected and generic areas is a form of modern zoning and has brought to urban quality inequalities between historic city centres and peripheries. In the after war reconstruction strong legal restrictions for building in historic city centres have exacerbated the difference with the periphery and the countryside which have been used merely as support for economic activities. This could be interpreted as one of the reasons of the urban dispersal in the historic countryside. National and international conservation tools are rooted in West European conservation theory: they conceive the built heritage and the historic landscape as conveying values through the physical attributes, as described in the Venice Charter, 1964. The research claims that the built heritage as well as the historic landscape should be interpreted as “a realm of ideas rather than a collection of objects” (Andrews C., *et al.*, 2007, pg.126) and as a knowledge to be recovered namely the knowledge of building and inhabiting (Choay F., 1995). Historic rural heritage, rather than being identified through boundaries and laws conserving its value, should be identified through its potential, and based on its enhancement should start the planning of the sustainable development. The sustainable development demands an understanding of the *genius loci*, not simply conservation of historic forms but recognition of the meanings and richness that must be improved

(Thompson C., 2004). Neither international quality standard nor international conservation laws are able to help a village, a city or a metropolitan region to develop further because they are never *site specific*. Planning strategies are often based on the new needs of services, residences or functions rather than on the territory potentials. As the “complexity” of the agrarian society has been substituted by the “complication” of the modern one, we should investigate the possibility of recovering the complexity of the former (Latour B., 1987). The postmodern discourse of sustainable development brings us to look at our pre-modern past as an inspiration for the future. Recognized that the cancellation of the *milieu* is a result of the industrialization and modernization of our society, this pre-modern element is key to recover a complex understanding of the world we are living in. Patrik Geddes interprets the milieu as the bound inhabitant-place through his occupation. This is explained in the Geddes’s valley section (Volker M. W., 2005) where hunting, pastoral, agricultural and commercial societies are respectively located on the mountains, on the hills, on the plain and on the coastal areas, he “saw this combination of organism, function and environment as key to understand human settlement and civilisation” (Thompson C., 2004, pg.1).

### **From Palladian landscape conservation to local rural development**

The case study the paper deals with is located in the Italian megalopolis along the Po river valley, in northeast Italy (Turri E., 2013). Speaking about the Po Valley is relevant and paradigmatic in the discourse of rural heritage-led development. According again to Turri the megalopolis is encompassing in the north of the valley Milan, Turin, Veneto and Friuli cities and in the south is stretching from Turin to Bologna and Rimini. This area is defined as megalopolis due to its diffused urbanization: it is not possible to define the borders of the mentioned cities due to the continuity of urban dispersal in rural areas. This kind of megalopolis is isotropic, agro-metropolitan and based on car transport infrastructure networks.

The Po valley megalopolis is defined “one of the most heavily polluted areas in Europe with a highly deteriorated environmental matrix” (Romano B., & Zullo F. 2016, pg.126). Within this massive urbanization the paper focuses on a region located in the northeast and extending from the Alps slopes till the Adriatic coast, the Veneto Region. The contemporary urbanization of this region can be described as “a product of Italy’s successful post-industrial, late-twentieth-century economy” (Cosgrove D., 2007, pg.1-2); it is also defined as *la città diffusa*: it is polycentric and composed by several “formerly independent, historic urban centres whose dependent cities range in size from agglomerations of over 200000 inhabitants down to small cities of less than 30000” (Cosgrove D., 2007, pg.1-2).

Within the region the focus lays in its central part where a common historic milieu can be recognized through the presence of the agricultural Villa settlement. Around three thousand Venetian Villas dating back to the XV - XIX century under national and regional protection are located in the north east of the Po Valley. The villa settlement was ‘more than simply the architectural and artistic monument’ (Cosgrove D., 2007, pg.3) but a micro agricultural system with high density in the region due to the presence of an extraordinary quantity and capillarity of watercourses and an easily accessible water table. The region was historically affected by river’s floods, which were fertilizing the ground for agricultural use.

The Republic of Venice due to the economic crisis of the seventeenth century gave rise to reorganisation of an urban economy in the region. It organized and reshaped the mainland to make it cultivable: drainage, land recovery and irrigation works were organized based on the ancient Roman water management system. Rivers and channels were also functioning as transport infrastructure from the mainland to Venice. The Venice Mainland was “a strategic area where relations between environment and water management have marked durable technical acquaintances” (Vallerani F., 2016, pg.187).

A governmental body of the Venice Republic, namely the Office for Uncultivated Natural Resources was established in 1556 to assess and eventually approving “water concessions” for recovery and drainage

projects of cooperatives as well as private irrigation projects. The Venice Republic used to have policies for water coordination at a regional level several years before France, Netherlands and England. The measures for avoiding flooding of rivers were of several kinds: the reinforcement of river banks and the definition of “buffer zone” close to the rivers as well as the “mapping” of the most vulnerable areas (Cosgrove D., 1991). After World War II and especially during the eighties these areas have been affected by unregulated urbanization and that defined the layout for today’s ‘natural calamities’. Today in Italy planning practices are applied with a ‘typical reactive approach’ and with a “policy-making largely guided by emergency measures” (Gazzola, P., Caramaschi, M., Fischer, T.B., 2004, pg.190).

This Nord Italian historic agrarian landscape is including the World Heritage Site of “The City of Vicenza and the Palladian Villas of the Veneto”. The Site is encompassing the city of Vicenza, its twenty-three Palaces as well as twenty-four extra-urban Villas in the countryside located in the provinces of Verona, Padova, Rovigo, Treviso e Belluno. Except from Villa Capra, each Villa is located in a rural village. The buildings, designed by the architect Andrea Palladio, are according to criterion i the “result of this Renaissance master’s architectural genius” and, according to criterion ii “exerted exceptional influence on architectural and urban design (...) giving rise to Palladianism, movement named after the architect” (ICOMOS, 1994, pg.35). The paper wants to focus therefore on a potential local system within the villages of the Palladian Villas: seven rural villages are located in the northern area of the Vicenza province, along the valley of the river Astico that is often overflowed. The idea is to create a scenario for this system and understand the vulnerability in term of water hazards.

The first step is the construction of a system, a Local Territorial System (LTS). The image of the LTS is constructed out of something that exists in reality and it ensures the effectiveness of its construction. The LTS is defined not only in terms of belonging based on the memory of the past but also in terms of organization of the system, on a sense of continuity and cohesion into the future and a capacity of self representation: the goal is to construct a territorial system able to achieve development goals autonomously (Campagna, M., 2012).

Experiences as River Contracts and redistribution of land use on the floodplain will be considered as best practices. This could be the starting point to a restoration of the rural heritage and its landscape. The choice to work on a system of villages located in the periphery of the European metropolis can be interpreted as the focus on a potential lifeboat, which can be self-sustainable: the lifeboat has to be used when the metropolis is not offering lively conditions anymore (Friedman Y., 2009). An isotropic, decentralized and polycentric network of several village leads to a possible recover of integrated and democratic urban planning (Magnaghi A., 2014).

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# ICOA1063: UN OUTIL DE PRISE DE DECISION SUR LE DEVELOPPEMENT URBAIN DANS LES SECTEURS SAUVEGARDES

## Sous-thème 01: Intégrer le patrimoine et le développement urbain durable en engageant Diverses communautés pour la gestion du patrimoine

**Session 1:** Développement durable et engagement communautaire

**Lieu:** Hall Gulmohur, India Habitat Centre

**Date et heure:** 13 Décembre, 2017, 11:45 – 12:00

**Auteurs:** Francesca Léger, Valentina Torelli

*Valentina Torelli a été diplômée en 2015 d'un master en architecture de l'université de Ferrare (Italie), avec un mémoire sur les stratégies de résilience du site inscrit au patrimoine mondial de Valparaiso (Chili). Elle prépare une thèse de doctorat à l'École Internationale de hautes études sur le patrimoine de Cottbus-Stefenberg (Allemagne). Son sujet de thèse porte sur les transformations urbaines des villes historiques et l'impact socio-environnemental dans les sites du patrimoine mondial. Son travail se focalise sur la mise au point d'un outil d'évaluation destiné à résoudre les conflits entre les valeurs de préservation et les besoins en développement.*

**Résumé:** En 2011, l'UNESCO a publié une recommandation révisant le concept de secteur urbain protégé et son approche de gestion intégrée (UNESCO, 2011). En fait, l'approche ouest-européenne traditionnelle, du haut vers le bas, basée sur une défense de l'environnement ponctuelle s'est transformée en une approche plus globale fondée sur le paysage, incluant la dimension sociale des villes –historiques- (Guzman, Pereira Roders & Colenbrander, 2014) et la participation des communautés locales aux processus de décision. La nouvelle approche devrait être co-construite par les experts et les décideurs avec les populations locales et proposer des mesures et des scénarios alternatifs, de façon à contrôler l'impact du développement urbain non seulement sur le plan des architectures, mais aussi au plan social (Guzman, Pereira Roders & Colenbrander, 2014).

Mais cette nouvelle approche peut-elle réellement être mise en œuvre en contrôlant le renouvellement urbain et le développement des projets?

L'embourgeoisement, le changement de population ou la privatisation des espaces publics sont une conséquence fréquente des opérations de renouvellement urbain dans les quartiers historiques protégés. Souvent, les citoyens n'ont pas l'opportunité d'être informés des projets de développement urbain avant que n'arrivent le choc de l'exploitation commerciale et des changements d'usages. Ces phénomènes récurrents sont toujours le résultat d'une approche verticale (top-down) au niveau international, national et local, qui voit le patrimoine urbain comme un objet et ne prend pas en considération la vie des habitants et leur implication dans les processus de décision concernant les changements de leur environnement construit.

Qui peut négocier la conception et la restauration des espaces urbains peut modifier les structures socio-spatiales et les relations sociales et a la responsabilité d'établir une discussion ouverte à propos de ses décisions.

La recherche se propose d'étudier la possibilité de développer un outil conceptuel qui permette aux populations locales d'évaluer démocratiquement la conduite du développement urbain dans les secteurs sauvegardés. À travers une évaluation démocratique et participative, cet outil doit être en mesure de

prévoir et d'éviter les coûts sociaux du renouvellement urbain ou des plans de conservation des secteurs sauvegardés.

*Mots-clés: Paysage urbain historique, implication des communautés locales, développement urbain*