



Index  
and english translation  
of the articles

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | <i>Pierluigi Properzi</i>  | <b>Back to Matera</b>  |
|  | <i>Luigi Acito</i>   | <b>The Sassi of Matera. A story of urban restoration</b>   |
| <b>Problems, policies and research</b> | <i>edited by Corinna Morandi</i>   | <b>Commerce and the large scale: common themes from three different experiences</b>  |
|  | <i>Antonio Font, Lorena Vecslir</i>  | New spaces of production, commerce and production in the Barcelona metropolitan region   |
|  | <i>Marco Guerzoni</i>  | A territorial project for Bologna's commercial system  |
|  | <i>Corinna Morandi</i>   | Commerce in the milanese territory: the geography of supply and main lines of governance and enhancement                               |
|  | <i>Corinna Morandi</i>   | Retail development ambits  |
| <b>Projects and implementation</b>     | <i>edited by Domenico Cecchini, Giordana Castelli</i>  | <b>Esperiences of sustainable neighborhoods in Europe</b>  |
|  | <i>Domenico Cecchini</i>   | A new season   |
|  | <i>Carlo Vigevano</i>  | The model Hammerby in Stockholm: strength and quality of an integrated approach  |
|  | <i>Francesco Bigi</i>  | A sustainable neighborhood instead of gasometers   |
|  | <i>Cinzia Abbate</i>   | BedZed: eight year later   |
| <i>Giordana Castelli</i>               | Solar City of Linz   |  |
| <i>Giordana Castelli</i>               | Valdespartra in Zaragoza: the city of water and wind captures the sun                            |  |
| <i>Francesco Prosperetti</i>           | Sustainable neighborhoods and new urban landscapes, an opportunity for the Italian city          |  |
| <b>Profiles and practices</b>          | <i>Valeria Erba, Mina Di Marino</i>  | <b>Ecological networks in the urban planning. Strategies and action plans in the case studies research of Montreal, Milan and Rome</b> |
|  | <i>Francesco Chiodelli</i>   | <b>Cohousing Vs gated communities?</b>   |
|  | <i>Silvia Macchi, Angela D'Orazio</i>  | <b>A taxonomical analysis of cohousing</b>   |
|  | <i>Rosario Pavia</i>   | <b>Gender auditing in spatial planning: the case of Rome's provincial plan</b>   |
|  | <i>Roberta Lazzarotti</i>  | <b>New labyrinths</b>  |
| <i>Luigi Manzione</i>                  | <b>Housing plan and historical centres: regional declinations of the State-Regions Agreement</b> |  |
| <b>Methods and tools</b>               | <i>Valeria Di Blasio</i>   | <b>Gaston Bardet's Rome: the view of a French town planner in the thirtie of the 20th century</b>                                      |
|  |  | <b>Cities beyond the car</b>   |

## Back to Matera

*Pier Luigi Properzi*

Matera as few other towns is one of the recurrent references in the memory of Italian town planners, a cornerstone in the evolution of the facts to which reference is made in reconstructing a brief history of the subject.

Moreover in this history Matera assumes a hinge role between town planning under fascism and that of the post-war reconstruction with all the ambiguities that characterized this transition, but against this, due to all the specific features of said transition, it may now be regarded as a metaphor of the often unrealistic intellectualism of the conceptual system of town planning after the war. Matera is not only this; for years, in fact, it has been an exceptional workshop in which theories have been tried out and housing models put into practice, where a completed and naturally innovative conception of a system of territorial governance stemming from Olivettian federal regionalism filtered down from the communitarism of pauperism in the south was replaced first by the decentralization of rural villages with new nuclei and then the setting up of public housing districts in which the best architects and town planners of those years were engaged, and finally the most outstanding process of 'town-planning' restoration of the original nucleus of a settlement, started with the special law on the Sassi.

This would be enough to explain the choice of holding a Town Planning Review, the sixth one, with the declared intention of relaunching planning policy in southern Italy. The occasion lends itself also to starting up an aware reflection on two interlinked themes: the adequacy of the instruments involved in relation to the change of the social model and the limits of local development in the conception of identity and of community.

I will start from the latter consideration, with reference basically to the urban structure of Matera as it is today, a result, moreover, adhering fairly well to the plans they had drawn up.

The plan, the theory behind the plan or rather its juridical conceptualization, centres on the functional organization of the settlement and presupposes a correlation between the design of the urban works (an ensemble of works for which the plan defines the public utility and urgency, the carrying out of which is mainly of a public character) and foreseeing a 'development' essentially referred to private enterprise.

This correlation not guaranteed by legislation has substantially not come about, giving rise to housing models no longer regulated by the plan but only by the market.

No corrections have been made to this legislative 'imbalance' safeguarded by an administrative right respectful to the constitutional nature of private ownership, by curbing fiscally (the reformist approach) or by the implementation processes (the approach of the urban design culture), the prevalence of the construction of the public

city with respect to the private one of the building cycle (owners + builders + tenants).

The Italian urban landscape is the most evident representation of the failure of a model of governance centred on a falsely authoritative, regulatory and wholly ineffective pyramid-type hierarchy of controls and sanctions, which above all is inadequate in its primary functions of building the public part.

This model with its nineteenth-century set-up (the plan as a whole coordinated by the public works) on which the law of '42 confers the presumed rationality of the ensemble of relations and the theoretical completeness of the parts, is lacking in the primary instrument of implementation, i.e. expropriation for public use, replaced by legislative and disciplinary attempts, the former nullified by constitutional censures and the latter annulled by the disinterest of the administrations.

Improper legislative instruments, in the sense of not being in keeping with a social model or at least with its evolution which in the south has been strongly characterized by elements of (amoral) familism and more recently by degenerative processes of the institutions.

The lack of success of recent development policies, which gave rise to much enthusiasm in the early '90s, and the rediscovery of local development, must also be ascribed to this absence of a social model of reference. Contributing towards their failure also was an incapacity, both central and local, of declining them in territorial and planning terms. The former was denied by the absence of a landscape and environmental culture, and the latter by the rejection of a quantitative town planning of indices and standards of little significance in the quality of the settlement.

In Matera this absence of a social model and the conformism of town planning practices and development models has found a 'strong' alternative consisting in the emancipation of the 'losing' identity of pauperism which has conditioned the south with respect to the north, with features ranging from folklore elements to aristocratic ones, but also by an Olivettian tradition which has in some way mobilized its nature, sterilizing it with respect to the progressive deformations of the urban model, and by its model of governance.

Hence two themes may be assumed as the reference for an interpretation of Matera's town-planning events from the 'Piccinato' Plan of '56 to the Structural plan being drawn up, but above all as strong points, the crystals, of a programme of reform for the subject.

## The Sassi of Matera. A story of urban restoration

*Luigi Acito*

Urbanistica dealt with Matera for the first time in 1955 (no. 15-16), in the article "Matera, the 'Sassi', the new Districts and the Master Plan", in which Luigi Piccinato summed up the layout being assumed by the city with the construction of the new districts, intended for the inhabitants evacuated from the Sassi, according to the provisions of the first special law for Matera (law 619/52). A few years later also Casabella wrote about Matera: in 1959 (no. 231), at the completion of the phase of transferring the inhabitants of the Sassi to the new districts, and in 1977 (no. 428) just after the international competition for ideas for the rehabilitation and the revitalization of the Sassi.

To understand more clearly the scope of this experience and the capacity of the local community to guide one of the most extraordinary processes in the history of urban rehabilitation 'the greatest abandoned historic centre' it is interesting today to review the intellectual and practical work that, from the Competition onwards, has characterized the process of rehabilitating the Sassi.

The city that the competitors had to study was the one planned by Piccinato (Masterplan of 1953-56), 'modernized' by the new districts, designed by the foremost Italian architects in the post-war period. A city in some aspects 'different' from others in southern Italy, and in which it is possible to distinguish three cities in one: the 'modern' one of the new districts, the historic Baroque area round the oldest nucleus, and the Sassi, sloping down the limestone canyon of the Gravina stream: almost wholly devoid of inhabitants, for which the Masterplan had not provided any organic solution and seemed by then fatally heading for irreversible degradation; but at the time still with its physical conformation intact and almost entirely recoverable.

Matera society was not quite ready for a rehabilitation project; nor were the Superintendences, bogged down with safeguarding concepts still limited to single monuments and the bureaucratic administration of the laws of 1939.

Not until the Gubbio conference in 1960, organized by Inu, was a start made in Italy on 'extending the concept of safeguarding the single monument to the whole ancient part of the city'. For Matera, Carlo Levi made a heartfelt appeal for a housing use, calling upon the local community to act as 'custodian' and urging the political class finally to take action on the Sassi. And on 12/4/68 the local Council requested the Ministry of Public Works to order the immediate holding of a competition for the "redevelopment and conservation of the Sassi".

No first prize was awarded in this competition, but the second prize went to the group coordinated by T. Giuralongo, which stressed the methodological line, afterwards taken up by the municipal administration, based mainly

on the following points:

- the Sassi should be regarded to all intents and purposes as the historic centre of the city to be redeveloped for its main residential function;
- the rehabilitation of the Sassi was a problem of urban restoration, to be carried out after in-depth studies;
- integration of the Sassi and the overlying 'city of the plain', which, according to Piccinato, "had turned its back on the Sassi"
- protecting the facing Murgico plateau, the natural environmental context of the rupestrian habitat.

Between 1979 and 1981 the municipality of Matera, although without any great funds available, started up the operative phase of the town planning and environmental restoration of the Sassi.

An in-depth survey thus began of the physical conformation of the urban organism (limited to the Sasso Barisano), which was to provide the indications necessary for drawing up four pilot rehabilitation plans, which however remained a dead letter, due to legal and financial problems, at least until 1986.

It was not in fact until 1986 that programme openings were provided for the line elaborated by the municipality of Matera: the special law no. 771/86 finally enabled the municipal administration to have a special office (ufficio Sassi), for operative plans and programmes, starting up a vast operation of 'urban renewal', based on the 'active conservation' of the ancient architectural structures, by means of providing activities and functions of the present-day city compatible with the historical values.

Between 1988 and 1994 the 1st and 2nd two-year Programmes were defined, to carry out law 771/86, as was also the Framework Plan of the Matera Murgia Park, necessary for the full implementation of the rehabilitation project, not only the architectural part, but also, and above all, the town-planning and environmental aspects.

But the Sassi operation requires that the city should open up to national and international culture, to improve the quality of the overall project. A council was set up in the municipal administration for the purpose of transferring the problem «from a Matera town-planning dimension to a fact of national and European value», and also with the contribution of well-known architects (e.g. Renzo Piano) it was inserted in the administration's rehabilitation programmes and policy, to foster the fullest participation in this rehabilitation process. Unfortunately this process was beset by difficulties and contradictions. In many cases reinforced concrete was used and the surfaces of the outcropping rock and of the facades were thoughtlessly scraped, removing any sign of the construction process.

The need therefore arose for a guide to enable the urban environment of the Sassi and the original construction techniques to be understood. A. Giuffrè and C. Carocci were commissioned to draw up a restoration guide, while A. Restucci was asked to prepare a Manual for rehabilitation to guarantee "a linguistic continuity of the landscape of the Sassi between past and future".

In both cases, in an attempt to know the basic rules of the many types of architecture of the Sassi, the authors took as their basis the field testimonies of the few 'masons' still alive, the only ones able to remember these rules.

The integral restoration process of the Sassi and their context is thus in progress, and today they are once more part of the 'city'. Their ancient fabric, now 2/3 rehabilitated, as well as a fair number of housing units recovered (about 600), is teeming with activities linked with enhancing the urban and historical-cultural heritage.

The renewal-enhancement action on which the overall rehabilitation of the Sassi is based has been extended to the historical and naturalistic assets of the area. Hence the great force of the idea on which the whole process is based has made Matera internationally known as one of the most significant places of ecological-cultural tourism, and is acting as a driving force for the entire regional territory.