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REALIZING TRADITIONAL
BUILT HERITAGE FOR
SUSTAINABILITY

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PROJECT DESCRIPTION



Project description

The project aims at generating the capability to appreciate the traditional tangible heritage as expression of historic intangible knowledge and local development, as well as starting point of a local uniqueness and peculiarity, that may be at the core of economic and social regeneration. In this respect, it will focus on the concepts of Authenticity and Integrity in built heritage preservation.

Structure also based on ETCAEH Traditional course on [history of preservation](#)

PROBLEM ADDRESSED



The preservation tools though have showed to be partially efficacious due to a certain attitude by people and professionals to consider them as obstacles instead of “indications for good rules”. It happens then very frequently that whether monuments are perfectly protected, traditional buildings, which are the witness of the historic layers of a place, including the local *savoir faire*, the *genius loci*, are constantly changed to be adapted to the owners needs, regardless of their real potential in preservation. Moreover, these changes are often made by replacing “expensive” traditional finishing by new, cheap and globalised ones.

PROBLEM ADDRESSED



PROBLEM ADDRESSED



opting for globalised solutions in buildings renovation means also reducing the local productivity (traditional crafts and materials) but also supporting a movements of materials and products which is not sustainable from different viewpoint, namely social (local unemployment increase, loss of savoir faire in the area with loss of historic identity, exclusion of local products), economic (products made in low costs countries, loss of productivity in the building area, tourism attractiveness loss), environmental (materials travelling world-wide instead of using local ones, use of new raw materials instead of focusing on preservation and valorisation of existing assets, etc.)

PROBLEM ADDRESSED



MAIN OBJECTIVE



This project is meant to work on people and operators mind to change this negative trend. **People** should be aware of the fact that local features are positive, that traditional building are an opportunity and that their renovation and adaptive reuse can also be done preserving the traditional characteristics, materials and technologies (not fully, clearly). The renovation costs through preservation activities may be done at the same costs, with the advantage to have an authentic and integral building that is more attractive in the market (real estate and tourism). Traditional buildings owners should be aware of the impact of their objects to local sustainability and to their quality of life.

STEPS AND METHODOLOGY



- The main concepts of traditional heritage: genius loci, local materials, traditions and climate adaptation;
- Authenticity and integrity: what is authentic and why this is important.
- Preservation, maintenance, conservation and restoration;
- The troubles of “adaptive reuse”
- Sustainable tourism, local development, traditional heritage;
- Preservation and circular economy
- Case studies display, telling some successful stories and good cases. The same may be done by showing bad case studies, in Europe and world-wide (although my main issue is on European-Mediterranean context).

STEPS AND METHODOLOGY



- A. Course on the main concepts of traditional heritage. What is the genius loci, why it is important and how to determine it. Notions about the significance assessment will be delivered;
 - a. Power point on Genius Loci, Significance, Values
 - b. References on the topic
- B. Definition of authenticity and integrity, integrated with bibliography and references;
- C. Definitions of the main concepts of conservation with references and videos from experts in the field.
- D. Definition of adaptive reuse and examples of successful and unsuccessful stories (pictures, literature descriptions, etc.)
- E. Cultural tourism and authenticity: present theories, impacts and trends. Definition from the literature and graphic examples of the linkage;
- F. Explanation of conservation as paradigm of circular economy. Practical examples and present theories
- G. Case study display using different traditional settlements as example: in particular Venice, Gorizia and **Vipava**. Other examples, in planning, may be Lovran and Opatija (Croatia), Netherland (Amsterdam/Utrecht) and UK/Scotland (using examples from National Trust and Historic Scotland)

COURSE LEARNING OUTCOMES



- understand the global scope of heritage studies and their relevance for local traditions;
- understand the ‘material’ and ‘non-material’ aspects of heritage, in specific how the tangible represents the history of intangible;
- recognise heritage as a ‘process’ as well as a ‘product’ of certain activities and individuals in the past and present;
- recognise heritage studies as a specific field of study, leaving the conviction that “anyone may decide on his taste”;
- understand the idea of the authorised heritage discourse (AHD) and accepting the advanced state of the art of heritage studies.

Realizing Traditional Built Heritage for Sustainability



THE GENIUS LOCI, THE SENSE OF PLACE AND THE SIGNIFICANCE

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THE GENIUS LOCI



Genius Loci refers to the specific creative inputs that is generated by a specific place. Historic development associated to climatic conditions create different, peculiar, place oriented human responses for adaptation.

This means that the tangible manifestations of human adaptations represent a proof of the history of a population.

THE GENIUS LOCI



Traditional buildings, as well as traditional crafts and knowledge are expression of the genius loci, of the adaptation of human beings to specific environments, beyond cultural “contaminations” and before globalization trends.

Genius loci may be visible in architecture, infrastructural solutions, in landscaping, in crafts and in popular rituals and festivities.



Venice is one of the best an Global example of Genius Loci applied to an entire settlement.

The city was built adapting to the climate conditions of the place, learning from the lagoon and its waters and rivers, using the available materials and inventing solutions for the urban sustainability. Also the venetian traditions, including cuisine, are an example of Genius Loci.



THE GENIUS LOCI



The agricultural terraces of Cinque Terre in Italy are a global example of Genius Loci on the landscaping.

Perfect climatic condition but very difficult geomorphology of the land has pushed local populations to adapt the sunny slopes for cultivation of lemon trees, olive trees, vineyards, lavenders, etc.



THE GENIUS LOCI



Karst and its landscape, architectures and infrastructures is also an example of Genius Loci. A place where human beings have understood the consistency of the land, its behaviour, materials, but also have coexisted with the intense perennial cold winds.

This has generated specific features in the houses, as the inner courtyards, the communicating balcony (Gank), the small external windows, the heavy stone roofs.



THE GENIUS LOCI



This an example of what Genius loci produced, being fastly reproduced in many areas of eastern Europe. The double window and the plantation shutters offers the best solutions for the internal climate control during the cold winters and the hot summers, together with easy maintenance solutions



THE GENIUS LOCI

THE SENSE OF PLACE



Sense of place is for many corresponding to the genius loci, although it should be understood with an additional dimension, the social one. The sense of place indeed refers to the present use of the place in line with its genius loci

The sense of place reflects the historic development, the peculiarities that made a space place for a specific group of individuals in time. Sense of place refer to the use of the place.

THE SENSE OF PLACE



Traditional buildings and local traditions give the tangible contextualisation of the place and their respect, maintenance, contribute to the preservation of this sense.

If a traditional architecture may be considered unique or peculiar, the sense of place make it even more unique. The sense of place contribute to the quality of life as one is relating to his own environment.



Regardless of its outstanding Genius Loci, Venice is presently loosing the sense of place.

The mass tourism, clear effect of a global cultural and artistic attraction, is badly accompanied by the attitude of the residents that are “selling” their place careless of the potential loss of real life. This is producing a fake where the real inhabitants are those who do not depend on the tourism industry



THE SENSE OF PLACE



Reinterpretation without awareness may change drastically a place. Understanding the qualities and peculiarities of traditional built heritage in a specific context may avoid wrong reinterpretation, inappropriate changes and modification to global or too personal standards.

Traditional buildings are private properties, but their outfit is a common good, shared with others in the present and in the past.



THE SENSE OF PLACE



Traditional built heritage may be considered as the result of popular participation to the sense of place. Producing low cost building solutions in line with the genius loci and through emulations has determined a commonly used space, actually a place.

A more inclusive urban landscape history can stimulate new approaches to urban design and contribute to an urban “art” of creating a heightened sense of place in the city/town.



THE SENSE OF PLACE



Do not forget that the use of materials in traditional buildings was very much determined by their availability in the closest area. Materials and climate conditions have stimulated the Genius Loci but have also suggested the sense of the place.

Changes and replacements of materials and technologies may slowly supersede the sense of place imposing completely different and new visual and behavioural criteria. History may be not perceived anylonger.



THE SENSE OF PLACE

THE SIGNIFICANCE



Genius loci and Sense of Place generate also the significance.

Significance was introduced by ICOMOS and UNESCO in the international debate to describe the Outstanding Universal Value of a World Heritage Site. However, significance was already a contentious issue, being dividing the doctrine for year.

For specialist, the significance of a building is clear and given by the architectural specificities and language.

THE SIGNIFICANCE



The preservation theory has lately developed more sophisticated and approaches to determine the significance, although the recent acknowledgement of the importance of all tangible and intangible manifestations of human adaptation in the local cultures.

This means that significance for a site or place refers to set of peculiarities that make it worthy to be preserved. It is a mix of subjective and objective positions that offer locals an important say on their place.

ASSESSING THE SIGNIFICANCE



Assessing the significance means balancing the values of the site or place. The values come out from the site/place qualities referred to other sites/places.

*Culture economists enlisted several values as:
Economic, aesthetic, artistic, emotional,
educational, historic, etc.*

Looking at the qualities one may determine own quantification of the value and these are both subjective and objective.



Back to Venice, its significance is globally measurable as perceived by the global population and the question may be “what if Venice did not exist?”.

Aesthetic, Artistic, Historic, Emotional, Economic, educational values coming from its qualities are exceptional and reaching the highest numbers. We may indeed determine these values by comparing the qualities of Venice to the ones of other heritage cities and sites in the world.



THE SIGNIFICANCE



Significance may not be necessarily at global scale, but have a regional or national or local range. This is why there are increasing listing procedures for different heritage assets.

Listed monuments, cultural landscapes, national parks, etc. may be included according to their historic, artistic, natural, educational importance. Importance may vary depending on the country and location and believes.

Burial, Finland



Boundary Stone, UK



Tourist stone piles, Norway



Road Mark, Norway

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THE SIGNIFICANCE



Traditional architecture and built heritage through have always a high local significance because there may be a consistent overlapping of historic layers for each individual inhabitant.

A traditional house is entailing the history of the place, of the family and its habits along the decades/centuries.

History is made of big events, but also of small, daily happenings. The patina, the history of a traditional buildings gives it an additional appeal.



THE SIGNIFICANCE

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