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Tools for Regeneration of the Urban Landscape Social Enterprise as a Link between People and Landscape

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Abstract

Urban Landscape constitutes a social, cultural and economic asset defined by a historical overlapping of values produced by cultures, tradition and experiences recognizable in their diversity and that have occurred overtime. It represents a key resource for economic development, social cohesion, and liveability in urban areas – and it is an element that can counter unchecked development that critically affects community values and can negatively affect urban quality of life. The Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) Approach “identifies, assesses, protects and manages” urban areas, considering the mutual relation among their physical shapes, spatial organisation, links, natural characters, social, economic and cultural values, variety of stakeholders and different levels of action (UNESCO, 2011). In order to respond to chapter IV of the UNESCO recommendation – asking for tools to make operative this approach – this paper identifies and analyses tools for investigating the social and economic dimensions, dealing with themes such as urban governance and new models of innovative entrepreneurship that encourage and support the protection of the urban landscape and its sustainable development. The methodological approach developed starting from a definition of objectives and indicators derived from the UNESCO recommendation, represents a comparative analysis of some socio-economic tools by means of a performance matrix. The first result of this on-going work is the identification of the social enterprise as an effective socio-economic tool in support of the regeneration of the urban landscape, capable of responding in a satisfactory way to the requests of UNESCO within the wider framework of sustainable development, principally thanks to its capacity to construct new relationships among people as well as between people and the urban landscape.

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1. Processing socio-economic tools to make operative the HUL Approach

Unchecked urban development – due to liberalization, decentralization of global market, exploitation of heritage and climate changes – involves manifestations of social and spatial fragmentation that mean high rates of urban density, lack of public spaces, increasing poverty, social exclusion and environmental vulnerability (Bauman, 2001; Bollens, 2012; Esposito De Vita, 2014; Latouche, 2010; N. Porter, 2014; Sassen, 1991). This process, recognised as “Urban Decay”, is negatively affecting social values and health of the cities. The HUL approach promoted by the UNESCO aims at managing these effects to ensure well-being of communities and the protection of the urban heritage (Fusco Girard, 2013; Poullos, 2014; UNESCO, 2011; Veldpaus & Pereira Roders, 2014). It proposes to make relevant the current model of urban regeneration by considering the protection of urban heritage within urban policies and practices at national, regional, local, public and private levels, through the wider involvement of stakeholders and the usage of urban landscape values to balance natural and cultural dimensions of the cities. One of the main objectives of the UNESCO is to operationalise this approach by identifying and testing of tools both traditional and innovative, and strictly rooted in the context in which they have to be utilized. The UNESCO recommendation channels the research towards four typologies of tools: “Civic Engagement”, “Knowledge and Planning”, “Regulatory Systems” and “Financial”. The research presented here aims at identifying and studying tools related to civic engagement and finance focusing on urban governance and new models of innovative entrepreneurship under the umbrella concept of human relations.

The “urban landscape” – considered as a dynamic organism – “comprises three main categories: monumental heritage of exceptional cultural value; non-exceptional heritage elements but present in a coherent way with a relative abundance; new urban elements to be considered (the urban built form; the open space: streets, public open spaces; urban infrastructures: material networks and equipment)” (UNESCO, 2011). Specifically, the HUL approach, “moves beyond the preservation of the physical environment and focuses on the entire human environment with all of its tangible and intangible qualities. It seeks to increase the sustainability of planning and design interventions by taking into account the existing built environment, intangible heritage, cultural diversity, socio-economic and environmental factors along with local community values. The HUL is the result of the layering and intertwining of cultural and natural values over time. Besides the notion of “historic centre”, it includes the broader urban context and its geographical setting. The layer overlapped are: cultural practices, infrastructures, built environment, diversity and identity, geomorphology, urban structure, economic processes, topography, open space, social values, hydrology” (UNESCO, 2011). This approach considers the urban landscape with its tangible and intangible components the key resource to improve urban quality and liveability, to pursue economic development and social cohesion in a constantly changing global context. In particular, the UNESCO recommendation calls for an integration of urban heritage protection strategies within the wider framework of sustainable development objectives.

The theoretical-methodological approach developed starting from a definition of objectives and indicators derived from the UNESCO recommendation, represents a comparative analysis of some socio-economic tools by means of a performance matrix. The first and second phases, which regarded the study of the UNESCO recommendation within the framework of sustainable development as well as a review of literature on theories, policies and practices on traditional and innovative tools in the urban field, have constituted the basis for construction of selection criteria and indicators through which to analyse selected tools. A comparative analysis has been applied in order to assess the performance of different tools as requested by UNESCO in 2011. For each tool a “sustainability profile” has been defined (Fusco Girard & Nijkamp, 2004), which is shown graphically with a “spider diagram” (Fusco Girard, 1997). The tool of social enterprise has emerged as the most effective in responding to the UNESCO request due to its capacity for building new relationships and sustainable urban regeneration dynamics both in social and financial terms, satisfying the four dimensions of sustainability homogeneously and with above average results. Research perspectives include a more in-depth analysis of the social enterprise through a theoretical study of its applications in different geopolitical contexts and a testing phase of fieldwork. The future objective is to build an evaluative model to assess the impact of social enterprise on the urban landscape.

Following this introduction, §2 describes the role of relations within the urban landscape and leads to the definition of the survey field, comprised of traditional and innovative tools of urban regeneration; §3 includes the theoretical-methodological approach regarding the comparative analysis and results; §4 collects preliminary general

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