

2nd International Symposium "NEW METROPOLITAN PERSPECTIVES" - Strategic planning, spatial planning, economic programs and decision support tools, through the implementation of Horizon/Europe2020. ISTH2020, Reggio Calabria (Italy), 18-20 May 2016

The Area Of The Strait Reading Theories And Strategies For A Metropolitan Dimension

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Abstract

Extending across a peninsular strip going from Gioia Tauro to Melito Porto Salvo on the Calabrian side, and from Milazzo to Giardini Naxos on the Sicilian side, the Strait of Sicily sees the *Aspromonte* massif and the *Peloritani* mountain range as two facing stage sets of land sketching in the gulf a water *piazza* of a *landscaping room*. Described in the proposal by Giuseppe and Alberto Samonà, Ludovico Quaroni, Antonio Quistelli, Sergio Musmeci, Paolo D'Orsi Villani and Leonardo Urbani, it outlines, in the county seats of Reggio Calabria and Messina, the prevalence of a Euclidean space, identifiable in the exact metrics given by the recurrence of the measuring *step* of the blocks drawn in the *reconstruction plans*. The geographical dimension and the human nature of the district identify into the longitudinal extension the characterizing element of a territory and with it the main issue of its own logistics coverage. In this scenario the *water piazza* of the Strait is cut through on a daily basis by the network linking the two sides, like strings of commuter traffic between two strips of land whose distance has always been too small to make out their separate destinies yet too broad to facilitate their joining. It follows the need to reflect upon the infrastructure of the entire surrounding area which, while proposing a study on the themes of accessibility and crossing, also outlines a strategy running on harbours and airports as gateways to the entire area to scale with nature and the size of its traffic.

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Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of ISTH2020

Keywords: Landscape; Metropolitan Area; Accessibility; Urban Mobility.

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1. Foreword

The terms *area*, *conurbation*, *city*, *metropolis*, *region*, *territory* indicate only some of the nouns, with similar meaning, which identifies the tiny part of the world between Calabria and Sicily which, although narrow in its geographical extent, identifies with the global unconscious with a fate separate from the very lands that enclose it. Described by Lucio Gambi as a "region between two regions" (Gambi, 1965), the *Area of the Strait* is a portion of territory featuring unpredictable boundaries identifiable in the catchment area of influence product of the *magnetic* charge of the *water piazza* of the *Strait* and of the by programmatic interpretation of a possible scenario of the lands that look out on it. Joint, two-edged, encompassing the literary-iconographic dimension of the bottomless gorges of *myth*, the geographical dispersion of the area in the southern Italian landscape reiterates the presence of legendary energy encapsulating disaster, specific orographic and anthropic natures, but also testimony of extraordinary itineraries, archetypical practices, ancestral traditions, reoccurring customs as components of a framework that can be described and turned into space that is alive, active in the thinking processes of its people, true script in the memory of the travellers who visit it, and becomes a word, a *place*. As in *Michelangelo's* void found between that critical distance between the finger of God and that of Adam in the Sistine Chapel, the absence of land between Sicily and Calabria together with the presence of the body of water known as *Straight* measures in its longitudinal extension, a unique *landscape unit*.

2. Empty space, the shape of the Earth and the *focus* of vision

Extending across a peninsular strip that goes from Gioia Tauro to Melito Porto Salvo on the Calabrian side, and from Milazzo to Giardini Naxos on the Sicilian side, the Area of the Strait sees the Aspromonte massif and the Peloritani mountain range as two facing stage sets of land, sketching in the verticality of the void of the Strait a water piazza of a landscaping room - evoking Franco Purini's (1991) effective theoretical argument that speaks of the internal nature of the Italian landscape - reinforced and enclosed by the Etna (Sicily) and Rocca di Scilla (Calabria) massifs. Described in the images of Grand Tour travellers that fashionably sketched its profile in an image of the landscape that is still very much contemporary, revisited in Wolfgang Goethe's travel memoirs (1965), as well as those of Norman Douglas (1962), in the historical rendering of Piero Bevilacqua and Augusto Placanica (1985), in the literary rendition by Stefano D'Arrigo (1975), Franco Costabile (1961), Matteo Collura (2007), Bartolo Cattaui (1961) and in the research by scholars who every day make of this scenery their centre of interest, the deep abyss of the Strait, as it places itself at the centre of the scene, retells *emptiness* as the crucial point of any place that thus wishes to call itself. When viewing it from the above, from the front and as a whole, the *shape* of the land, the orography of the *land* above sea level, restores the piazza of the *Strait* a Cartesian basin marked by a longitudinal development of the *lands* that define it. At the same time, from a reading of the vertical perspective, this reveals as a repository of acropolis memories that, as in Greek space, see the meanders of the coast line as a series of punctuated outposts that characterize the core of the vision. Within the basin, a *two-faced* onlooker, as it constantly remodulates its perspective on the double land *focus*, it outlines a sequential reading of multiple perspectives, partial views, independent spaces where one can see collection points, significant values and crucial emergencies for a possible, as well as necessary, supposition of union. The orographic development of the mountain "backstage" is marked on both sides by the valleys of the rivers that sit vertical on the coast arranged as bars as if with an imaginary metric ruler, measure the longitudinal extension of the basin of the *Strait*. The depressions of the bed prove to be repositories of stand-alone space figurativeness that are on occasion exceptional and unexpected and that are often forgotten and reviled by the lack of aesthetic acknowledgement. Memorable, for every guest, is visiting the basin of the Amendolea, on the Calabrian coast, or the Nisi on the Sicilian side, which in the sudden dilation of their spatiality, restore an alienating dimension, traceable even today to the iconography of *the horrible* and the fantastic.

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