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Revitalisation Practices for Resilient Cities: Creative Potential of Heritage Regarding Revitalisation and Renewal of Cities.

Giuliana Quattrone*

National Council of Research CNR, Institute of Atmospheric Pollution Research, UNICAL-Polifunziolane 87036, Rende, Italy

Abstract

The term “Resilience” has, in recent years, gained currency in many disciplines and has been increasingly applied to various scientific contexts. In relation to urban issues and studies in governance there exists a strong focus on the challenges of policy-making and planning, for which it is very important the power of the resilience approach to improve human wellbeing in urban contexts.

Built heritage and resilience may appear contradictory, at first glance, but a more thorough understanding leads to the conclusion that heritage contributes to resilience in various ways.

In recent years, mainly thanks to the inflow of the EU funds, many country of Europe have seen a great increase in the need or even fashion for reviving historical heritage and landscapes of cities.

In particular the historic city centres, the residual areas and the industrial heritage abandoned have become an arena of the new practices.

The paper aims to individue both positive and negative consequences of revitalisation projects made in the Reggio Calabria city, and as are the newly created places perceived by inhabitants. In addition the paper show how, trough good urban project, can there be balance between old and new architecture and green spaces and what is the situation of revitalised buildings and residual areas, often transformed to fulfil completely new roles, and their surroundings, often degraded and threatened with ecological disaster. The final considerations regarding how these urban renewal projects have helped to build a resilience city.

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* Corresponding author. Tel.: +39-393-795-5284.
E-mail address: g.quattrone@iia.cnr.it

1. Introduction

For a city to grow and develop in the long term, it cannot disregard its environment. The social, economic and environmental challenges which urban settlements face today, coupled with the speed of urban expansion, have encouraged the development of new and innovative approaches to local governance. Local governments are becoming increasingly aware of the benefits of citizen participation in urban decision-making.

Governance approaches which encourage urban stakeholders to have a say in the management of their city provide several entry points for the inclusion of environmental issues in urban planning. The experience of urban revitalization conducted in the city of Reggio Calabria through the recycling of road infrastructure carried out with the participation of the inhabitants and various social partners demonstrates that this urban renewal project have helped to build a resilience city.

2. Problems connected with city fragmentation

Contemporary towns are being fragmented by growing number of barriers, which are bigger and wider. They create “nobody’s land” in the areas between different city structures. The problems caused by ongoing city fragmentation are of different nature. They are represented by negative effects in city structures, environment and society, like the loss of compactness, chaotic and not coordinated development, poorly functioning fragmented urban structures, visual and functional chaos, ugliness, the lack of security in the undeveloped areas. Barriers destroy an urban compactness, as well as functional, environmental and social integration and cut computational connections. They also threaten the landscape values, change the character of landscape to the technical one and cause negative visual effects in urban space. As a consequence, the quality of city life is being reduced. Furthermore, the abandoned areas in between city structures are influencing

their wider urban surroundings in a negative way. All these areas should become an object of intensive investigations and undergo complex revitalization.

3. Green infrastructures in connecting cities and public spaces revitalization

There is a very interesting and wide spectrum of possibilities to use green infrastructure when creating public spaces in “in between” areas.

Green infrastructure may reinforce the real significance of landscape aspects in development processes, in consequence improving landscape quality and values.

The cities barriers are often formed by road systems, always accompanied by engineering infrastructure. This is an argument why engineering infrastructure can be used when designing “in between” areas as public spaces with green infrastructure, in addition green infrastructure should create a continuous system and should provide coexistence of different urban green areas, water systems and facilities of a technical infrastructure supporting the biological processes in nature (such as water retention, purification, drainage areas, ensuring an adequate climate). For this reason there are needed actions in several scales and interdisciplinary approach including professionals from different fields.

Public spaces are crucial to the vitality of city as they are the major medium/place where socio-cultural needs and community life are satisfied and continued. The quality of public spaces decides also the state of community vitality, and finally it also has an impact on community. Actually, as social, economic and cultural habitat for community, public spaces are drawing increasing academic attention, since there is the tendency that city centres risk becoming theme parks of heritage or banal spaces. In response the new urban planning is focused on priorities such as production and the regeneration of public spaces, as specific areas of identity, social exchanges and life. Public space is also considered as an indicator to measure the quality of physical transformations. For malfunctioning it is therefore effective to remedy by revitalizing lifeless or degraded public spaces. Public spaces can be revitalized according to the two concepts, “livability” and “connection”. In this second case creating public spaces “in between” city structures and in their wider urban surroundings with the use of green infrastructure requires the cooperation of experts from different fields: architects, urban planners, landscape architects, spatial planners, environmentalists and engineers. It is necessary to ensure a proper significance of landscape in creating public spaces in all activities

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