

International Conference - Green Urbanism, GU 2016

Farm Cultural Park: an experience of social innovation in the recovery of the historical centre of Favara

Dr. Giorgio Faraci*

**University of Palermo, Palermo 90133, Italy*

Abstract

In 2010 some people from Favara decided to initiate a process of recovery and re-appropriation of the abandoned historical centre, by establishing *Farm Cultural Park*, a private cultural institution. This paper aims to describe the process of sustainable design, social innovation and inclusion, triggered by the *Farm Cultural Park* in the historical centre of Favara which, by showing its resilience, has redefined its identity, progressing from a place of widespread, unauthorised development to a dynamic *creative city*.

© 2017 The Authors. Published by Elsevier B.V. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

Peer-review under responsibility of the organizing committee of GU 2016

Keywords: creative city, historical centres regeneration, building reuse, social innovation and participation, sustainable city development.

1. Introduction

In sharing the assertion by Nobel Prize winner Herbert Simon that “science considers the world as it is, whereas design explores what it could be”, Ratti (2015) endorses the possibility of establishing a profitable relationship between design and tomorrow: “not the useless pursuit of predicting, but an opportunity for experimentation to accelerate the transformation of the present”, which is rather similar to the idea of anticipatory design theorised in the 20th century by Buckminster Fuller¹. Contemplating future possibilities represents a necessity for Man, allied to the need for choice and strategies to give a meaning to his own life and to his daily actions, to somehow control the consequences of his decisions. This paper aims to describe the process of building recovery and social innovation, launched in the historical centre of Favara by two patrons of the arts, who conceived of a feasible and more

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: giorgio.faraci@unipa.it

desirable future, with changes generated through design, by creating the *Farm Cultural Park*. Favara showed its resilience, redefined its identity and progressed from an icon of sprawling, unauthorised over-development to a dynamic centre of contemporary art. By recovering old values and defining new ones, it has, without doubt, become a more liveable, all-inclusive and creative town.

2. Description of Favara: icon of unauthorised over-development

The historic centre of Favara, a few kilometres from Agrigento, presents morphological and typological Islamic characteristics, such as the *road-tree* lay-out, with its intricate network of streets branching off in all directions into alleys and communal yards and extensive courtyard housing. After the Second World War, as was the case throughout the country, people started abandoning the old quarters and moved out to modern areas characterised by unauthorised construction and a renunciation of the public and urban value of buildings (Abbate, 2009; Trombino, 2005; Trombino, 1994). Moreover, these unauthorised buildings are considerably taller than the old ones in the historic centre; they have generally only been completed on the inside, whereas the facades are often left unfinished. Furthermore, there is a total absence of public green space and no car-parks. Here, investment in construction has played a leading role in the local economy and labour market; it set in motion a perverse and relentless mechanism leading to a huge volume of new constructions, almost totally illegal, devoid of any quality and largely left unutilised. This condition is also a consequence of the pattern of “home ownership”, according to which the family provides for the construction of a building, initially consisting of a ground floor to be used as a garage or for storage-space and a first floor intended for habitation; this will subsequently soar skywards, floor by floor, over the years and eventually ensure a home for each of the offspring.

Thus, the old town became a peripheral and marginal area, in which desertion, lack of maintenance and neglect of buildings led to conditions of widespread structural instability. La Cecla (2008) makes sense of the ruins as that which remained of the neglected and abandoned town once the intentions of planners, administrators and architects had been exhausted; the decay of buildings or parts of cities due to their obsolescence is a very topical issue, which might be regulated through a “project geared to model objectives and indicators of change, with the insight and vision necessary to think about the future and its various options”. As Fanzini e Rotaru (2015) observe, Boulet (2005) uses the term “problem city” to express the gap between the technicality with which the question of the city is approached today and the real issue underlying any reasoning regarding its present and future management, whereas La Cecla (2008) highlights the need to establish a new discipline, “the science of understanding and building cities”, seeing the city as an experience undergone by its inhabitants and looking towards the future, whilst not necessarily having to implement this future immediately. Hence a city founded on the real needs of citizens and institutions, to become a network of social and technological innovations (Dioguardi, 2013).

In 2010, the collapse of two buildings in the historic centre of Favara led to fatalities among the residents; consequently, for security reasons, the local Authorities decided to carry out preventive demolition, which might well have erased for good the identity of this crumbling, old district. This event goaded a couple of philanthropists from Favara into action. Therefore, in order to make this a more habitable and exciting place in which to raise their daughters, Andrea Bartoli and his wife Florinda Saieva, patrons of contemporary art and architecture/design enthusiasts, conceived of an alternative; they countered with a vision, a plan to initiate a process of recovery, re-appropriation and providing a new meaning to the area by involving artists and designers, creating a hub of contemporary art in Sicily. This faith in creativity and design as tools for change enabled the philanthropists to alter their perspective regarding the historical centre, passing from criticality to opportunity as a source of urban resilience.

¹ The term ‘anticipation’ stands for the action-oriented field of future studies; the anticipation is not predictive in the traditional sense but aims to trigger the possible change by working with the mind-sets of the interlocutors for building together with them possible futures; see Miller, R., Poli, R. and Rossel, P. (2013), “The Discipline of Anticipation: exploring key issues”, WP 1, Paris.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/5745171>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/5745171>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)