

ID-Entity: the earthquake in Emilia (Italy)

A new visual approach to understand the whole heritage from the intangible to the build one in Emilia after the earthquake

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Abstract: Within the section related to the seismic events which happened in Emilia (Italy) on May 20 and May 29 2012, our research has been transformed to more visual, more tactile aspects and more involving experience of an earthquake.

For all these reasons, the result of our work substantially goes out of the typical linguistic and communicative aspects of researches in the field of preservation/rediscovery of the historical/archeological heritage.

Without making an investigation of the cause and the possibilities of the reconstruction, we have examined the emptiness which an earthquake can leave by destructing a common identity, like it happened in many places in Emilia.

An identity where the historical/archeological heritage has not only constituted the basis for the development of shared typological sense of aesthetics but it also established many of the social aspects.

The pattern square - town hall - church which is similar in all of the villages situated in Emilia - they all demonstrate and exist like a true example of deep identity.

The earthquake has interrupted a customary urban and social typological system used for centuries by damaging these key elements which can be hardly recovered.

ID-Entity would like to suggest the observer to lead a reflection by focusing on the sense of emptiness and precariousness. This would make the observer to consider the necessity of preserving precious architectural sites and to think about the possibility to start a new architectural way without forgetting the traditions.

The earthquake had not created a nihilistic and annihilating vacuum but has left behind a ground with a strong will to restart.

The proposed poster will present a journey through images in the area of the Emilia Earthquake, spotting on the ancient -now physically lost- urban area, trying to reach the deep sense of the place between what is gone and the overcoming of the ruins.

Keywords: Earthquake, Emilia, Identity, Emptiness, Social aspects.

The Cultural Heritage

The area of Emilia (Italy), between Via Emilia and the river Po, has a consistent Cultural Heritage known all over the world that was severely affected by the earthquakes in May and June 2012.

The Heritage value is constituted by the characteristic features of the historical Italian territory such as villages, churches, "pievi" (small churches) and "incastellamenti" (castle settlements).

The Heritage has specific architectural and cultural value related to the territory, which determine stylistic and typological uniqueness. Since the VIII century, the territorial settlement has been relying on agricultural

economy, creating typical architectural artifacts; this Heritage, despite the fact of belonging to a minor artistic and architectural value, can be considered and must be preserved according to its importance as a "grid system" strictly connected to the social structure of this area.

The cultural value (architectural, artistic, historical) of heritage

The structure of the territory originated from the division and morphological organization is made by the Monastic Orders between the end of the XII Century and the beginning of the XIV.

The process has generated over the centuries a series of "subsidiary system": small churches, hospitalia, mills, etc., often implemented by a "mother" abbey - in this specific case the abbey of Nonantola.

These elements are the signs of a network management whose value goes beyond the single architectural object to invest the entire territory. Nevertheless some excellent assets must be pointed out.

A general classification is made to easily identify the categories of individual artifacts:

Buildings with high artistic quality, universally recognized, for their historical and artistic uniqueness

Estensi castles:

- Castello Estense (XIV century, Ferrara)
- Castle delle Rocche (XIII-XV cent Finale Emilia)
- Rocca Estense (San Felice sul Panaro)

Castles and other villas:

- Castle Galeazza (XII / XIV century. Crevalcore)
- Pico Castle (XVI century. Mirandola) -where Pico della Mirandola was born-
- Ronchi Castle (XVI century. Cavezzo)
- Castle Palata Pepoli (XVI century. Crevalcore)

Buildings with medium artistic quality that still retain a high historical value

Parish and other urban churches:

(almost all the churches in the towns affected by the earthquake have been heavily damaged if not totally or partially collapsed)

- Church of Jesus with the heritage of wooden inlay of local school (XVII century, Mirandola)
- Collegiate Church of Santa Maria Maggiore (Pieve di Cento)
- Church of San Giacomo (San Giacomo delle Segnate)
- Cathedral of Cavezzo (Cavezzo)
- Church of San Francesco (Mirandola)
- Nonantola Abbey (Nonantola)

Common historical buildings with lower quality, whose value is related to the territorial system

- Farmhouses
- Loghini - rural house typical of the Mantova countryside, usually consisting of a isolated house, with a barn and an additional deposit used to stock agricultural equipment.
- Farms
- Mills

The meaning of the Heritage to the affected community

The heritage of the area, though identified in several buildings, has to be considered as a whole system of relationships between the territory and the population, based on traditions, identities and different dynamics.

Urban context: the relationship between town and community is a living expression of social and civic dynamics. Almost all municipalities rely on common urban schemes (square-church-hall or, main street-hall-church). This pattern has guided the development of the town through the centuries, and even today they allow the community to gather around these common social values. The earthquake has stepped into this delicate system, compromising its existence.

Rural context: here the earthquake has shut down the agricultural economy, which was already facing a declining phase. In the same way the rural buildings already degraded before the earthquake came bringing the damage on a wider scale. All the previous tentative to recover the value and the Cultural Heritage (tangible and intangible) like small museums, visiting area, minor activities, are reduced almost to zero by the heavy damage caused to all the architectural structures.

“In understanding and defining disaster, the focus should be on intersection between society and environment in terms of societal adaptation to the total environment, including the natural, modified and constructed contexts and processes of which the community is a part.

The reason for adopting an adaptational dimension in our understanding of disasters is grounded in the fact that human communities and their behaviors are not simply situated in environments.

As Ingold notes, the interface between society and environment is not one ‘of external contact between separate domains’ (1992: 51). Societies are founded and formed in nature themselves, just as nature is culturally constructed and physically altered by society.

Nor is this mutual constitution static. Rather, it is an active, complex, and evolving interaction.

Society and environment are not separate but two interrelated and reciprocally formative entities.

Environmental features and processes become socially defined and structured just as social elements acquire environmental identities and expressions.

Societal development entails development of an environment, and the resulting interplay emerges from the many continual processes of exchange through the porous and shifting borders between them.

Society and environment thus are interpenetrating, mutually constitutive of the same world, comprised basically of the possibilities for exchange and action provide by natural modified and built environments and of the abilities and capabilities of people and their cultural constructions (INGOLD 1992: 52).

Accordingly, disasters occur in societies. They do not occur in nature. However, disasters do not originate exclusively in societies, but rather emerge from societal environmental relations and the institutionalized forms those relations take.

The frame or context in which disasters occur is a set of interacting and mutually constituting processes of human society and material culture, each with its own internal auto dynamics, and of nature, also with its own auto dynamic and self-organizing processes.

Disasters thus become defined as failures of human systems to understand and address the interactions of this set of interrelated systems, producing a collapse of cultural protections and a resulting set of effects called a disaster. Disasters can result from the interaction of social, material, and natural systems, producing a failure of human culture to protect.

Since our understanding of the effects of our actions and about these auto dynamic systems is far from complete, the risk of failure becomes very high (DOMBROWSKY 1995).

In terms of anthropology, then, disasters are best conceptualized in terms of the web of relations that link society (the organization and relations among individuals and groups), environment (the network of linkages with the physical world in which people and groups are both constituted and constituting), and culture (the values, norms, beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge that pertain to that organization and those relations)”

(OLIVER-SMITH, 1999)

The purpose of the work

Starting from the analysis of the cultural heritage and the anthropological pattern with which it interacts in a relationship of reciprocal influence, our goal was to find an easy interpretation that would allow you to overlay the situation of heritage after the earthquake and those social relationships interacted with it.

In essence, we have tried to make clear and understandable the network of relationships surrounding the assets affected by the earthquake, by using a visual tool.

The way we propose is the "map of relationships," which is supported by many elements already known for the study of the territory (maps, aerial photographic surveys and interviews after the earthquake, etc.) on which we operated directly to highlight the relationships that interact between them.

At the end of the operation the results were different and with a different nature.

In "maps of relationship" first, it's possible to have an overview of the situation of individual places and damage caused by the earthquake. In addition to this, we understand the strong dissonance between the elements within the territory (no longer present due to the earthquake) and those connections that exist in the social environment, but which are no longer "reality" in the territory.

Somehow, it been generated a state of confusion in the people, a sense of loss but also the sense of getting lost as Franco La Cecla writes in his book "Losing yourself the man without environment":

"Losing yourself means that between us and the emptiness the space is not there is only a relation of domination, control by the "soggetto", but also the possibility that space to dominate us ... "

(LA CECLA)

This strange sense of domination by the environment is certainly disorienting, but the same as La Cecla suggests even if not relate directly to a seismic event, brings with it a renewal, something positive, a chance. In this context, the concept of heritage is extended to include everything that represents the "environment" in which people live and at the same time makes it alive, knowing that the individual artifacts are nothing without the social reality that "animates" them. The individual products do not exist outside of the "network" enough to include the idea of preservation artifacts, after all, would present an analysis of "canonical" elements of value to protect, but which, in relation to people's lives, become important in order to safeguard a territorial area.

Through the "maps of relationship" you can easily understand what is irretrievably lost and what you can instead start to create new territorial dynamics that complement and replace the old ones.

Characteristics of the work and conclusions

"The easiest way to look at a map is not what it appears to us today as the most natural, that is, the map that represents the surface of the earth as seen by an eye extraterrestrial. The first need to fix on paper the places is related to travel: it is the reminder of the sequence of steps, the route of a journey..."

The need to visualize the dimension of time along with of the surroundings is the basis of the map. Time as the history of the past ... and the future time. The map in short, even if static, presupposes a narrative it is conceived in terms of a route, it is Odyssey"

(CALVINO 1984)

The words of Italo Calvino well represent the operation that we have tried to achieve.

From the point of view of expressive intent was to provide a technical element in to communicate information related to different topics, like the kind of discipline or the way of perception.

The result of all this are the "maps of relationships", a way of expression that comes from the "maps of the songs" regional language Warlpiri, Australia, and is closer to the experiments "lettriste" that result in "metagrafie influenzali" by Ivan Chtcheglov or "Guide psychogeographique de Paris" by Guy Debord, rather than a purely technical research. At this point, the level of communication is moved to the perception of the flows that lively in this city and the territory also approaching the subsequent research (only for the expressive content) of the situationists and those (in this case for the methodological way) by Stanley Broune and Vito Acconci.

The need for a major change of type of expression is related to our belief that for a proper safeguard is necessary to add to the canonical studies in the area, a more complete and comprehensive analysis involving the entire territory, not least the psychic and emotional analysis of the people who live and change that territory, making it alive.

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Imprint:

Proceedings of the 17th International Conference on Cultural Heritage and New Technologies 2012 (CHNT 17, 2012)

Vienna 2013

<http://www.chnt.at/proceedings-chnt-17/>

ISBN 978-3-200-03281-1

Editor/Publisher: Museen der Stadt Wien – Stadtarchäologie

Editorial Team: Wolfgang Börner, Susanne Uhlirz

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