

## RENOVATION AND POST-INTERVENTION MANAGEMENT

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## ABSTRACT

*The paper deals with the impact of long-term vision, required by the step from restoration/event to conservation/process. A consequence is the increasing importance of the program as the framework where the targets and the tools of the renovation are defined, previewing the costs of the restoration as well as the costs and income of the post-intervention management. For this purposes the business plan methodology can be used. Long-term vision has many impacts also on the intervention choices, this point being shortly discussed referring to some example from Italy. Most examples show that convent buildings have been very much transformed in the past, changing many times their functions. That's why their significance is often complex and has to be managed as one of the most influential factors in the renovation process. The best management produces an evolving significance, and advanced technologies become relevant part in the presentation of a site.*

**Key words:** conservation, business plan, long-term vision, significance, multidisciplinary

## RISTRUTTURAZIONE E GESTIONE DOPO L'INTERVENTO

## SINTESI

*L'articolo tratta dell'impatto della visione di lungo periodo richiesta dal passaggio dal restauro/evento alla conservazione/processo. Una prima conseguenza è la crescente importanza della programmazione come cornice entro la quale sono definiti gli obiettivi e gli strumenti dell'operazione di recupero, prevedendo i costi del restauro come anche i costi e gli introiti della gestione post-intervento. Per questo si può adottare la metodologia del business plan. Una visione di lungo periodo ha molti impatti anche sulle scelte di intervento, e questo viene brevemente discusso con riferimento ad alcuni esempi nel panorama italiano. La maggior parte dei casi mostrano che gli edifici conventuali sono stati già molto trasformati in passato, cambiando molte volte la loro funzione. Per questa ragione il loro messaggio è spesso complesso e deve essere gestito come uno dei più decisivi fattori del processo di recupero. La miglior gestione produce un significato dinamico, e le tecnologie avanzate vengono ad assumere una parte rilevante nella presentazione di un monumento.*

**Parole chiave:** conservazione, business plan, visione a lungo termine, importanza, multidisciplinarietà

### THE STEP FROM RESTORATION/EVENT TO CONSERVATION/PROCESS

Post-renovation management is a relevant issue when designing the restoration of a monument. This statement makes sense, no doubt, but it is always felt as a misleading requirement in the field of historical preservation, where a historical building ought to be restored just because of its cultural values. Some authors seem to discard any worry about the use in the future, as if the use itself were a necessary evil, not a condition for the existence of a building as an architectural construct. In other words, the discussion about future management goes back to some very basic questions concerning the methods used for a restoration project, such as: should we restore the monument, then study an adaptive reuse; or should we take all the problems into account at once in order to find out optimal solutions? Likewise, it questions the perception of architecture itself: by its appearance or in terms of its use? Some authors think of architecture within the cognitive frame of visual arts while others think that architecture is made to be used, passed through, inhabited, perchance even observed – but never simply looked at. Of course these different approaches come from different visions of what in historical architecture counts and what constitutes an optimal solution: a beautiful and comfortable picture, or a minimum intervention, respecting even hidden and not recognized values? The debate is obviously open, but I want to quote Mezzanotte (1998) and Bellini (1998) as examples of slightly different positions at a turning point of my own research.

The problem of use and management is naturally not new. Athens Conference, 1931, recommended “that the occupation of buildings, which ensures the continuity of their life, should be maintained; but that they should be used for a purpose which respects their historic or artistic character.” Venice Charter, 1964, art. 5, says: “The conservation of monuments is always facilitated by making use of them for some socially useful purpose. Such use is therefore desirable but it must not change the layout or decoration of the building.”

The problem seems to be clear, at least in general; but what about complex buildings modified in the past, like convents transformed in hospitals, mills, military, stores, dwellings...? What constitutes the historic or artistic character that is to be respected? Which layout will be kept unchanged? General guidelines risk failure when applied on these difficult cases implying that perhaps there is some reason to deal with the problem of renovation and post-intervention management, even if simply taking into account the example of the “type” of convents and monasteries. In my treatment of the topic I will make reference to Italian examples assuming them to hold as examples of the general. This is justified because there have been certain historical factors which

spread all over Europe (and beyond) networks of religious communities that in turn built settings according to some recurring features: the church, the cloister... Furthermore, the process of suppression of Orders and convents had similar features in different countries, so that the historical background and the problems are the same everywhere even today for renovation. On the other hand, I suppose that in an international meeting I am expected to showcase Italian experiences.

If Athens and Venice Charters seem to point out a reasonable way of treating the problem of usage, in accordance with the reality of the last decades it is possible to tougher ways of practicing renovation, as well as more sensitive remarks. At a certain stage in Italy, re-use took command in a well-identified frame of urban renovation policy, then integrated conservation turned into integral conservation.

A symbolic step has been the plan for Bologna, 1969, when the historical city was tackled as a whole monument. Here, monastic buildings (what remained of monastic buildings, of course) were classified as “complex specialist nodal buildings” (being derived by composition of different simple specialist nodal buildings with cloisters, courtyards, gardens and parks) in the category of big “containers”, where the planner can locate social functions. These buildings were supposed to be wide enough and decayed enough to host any use required by the design of urban services. The core of the Bologna program was social housing, but the renovation process was definitely systematic also for the “containers” (Scannavini, 2001; Butina Watson, Bentley, 2007; Bravo, 2009). As an example we can quote the Jesuit church of Santa Lucia; it had been transformed in a gym, before being restored as the aula magna of Bologna university.

Bologna is just one case, perhaps only the most renowned, sometimes explicitly imitated in 1970s and 1980s Italy, as it focuses on the idea of cultural and social functions as appropriate uses for conventional buildings. Actually, there are plenty of studies telling the story of successful reuse of monastic complexes for this kind of use.

From the very beginning, soon after the suppression of monastic life, the best destiny for a convent had been to be turned into a museum or an academy of beaux-arts: this is the origin of the Accademia di Brera in the Jesuit College of Milan. Under Napoleon, the Venetian Accademia moved into the former convent of Santa Maria della Carità. The Museum of French monuments itself managed by Alexandre Lenoir was hosted in the convent of Petits-Augustins (Lenoir, 1799; Regazzoni, 2007).

A recurrent function is also the use for archives, perhaps as a legacy of becoming state property after the suppressions. The State Archive in Venice is located in the Frari complex; in Pavia, it is located in the former Cistercian monastery of St. Maiolo's; in Naples, in the

former Benedictine monastery of Santi Severino e Sossio; in Milan in the Collegio Elvetico; in Mantua, in the Jesuit convent of St. Vincent's. Here the church had been transformed in a military store; now it stores documents with a special care for keeping the best microclimate for paper conservation.

The reuse of convents to locate universities has famous examples in the reuse of St. Ambrogio bramantesque cloisters in Milan, by Giovanni Muzio (see Pezzola, 1990; Irace, 1994), as well as in different interventions studied by Giancarlo De Carlo in Urbino (Guccione, Vittorini, 2005), in Bologna, in Florence... More recently, in Brescia (Volta, 2006; Berlucchi, Brandolisio, 2010) the location of the university faculties and facilities in conventional buildings has implemented an explicit strategy to rescue urban sectors.

Such "cultural" uses seem to be appropriate or "compatible" because of "intangible" reasons: there is some ideal continuity between history, art and studies... Cultural uses entail openness to public attendance so that historic convents may also act as assets for cultural tourism (Moretti, 2000). But this "ideal compatibility" criterion does not consider the impacts on the building itself. It is worthwhile to observe that convent buildings (if we agree that it is possible to speak of them as a "type") have some typological and structural characteristics, which did not support any use, and the modern requirements (loadings, safety stairs, accessibility, comfort...):

Perhaps the main feature of the monastic "type" is the cloister around which most rooms are organized. It has been noticed (Zucchi, 1989, 49–58) that the architectural significance of the courtyard became so relevant and autonomous that in many cases the arcades have been completed even if one or two wings remain without rooms behind: see for example the plan of St. Sebastian's convent in Mantua, for decades a military quarter, currently empty and looking for a new use. Nowadays these buildings are a bit difficult to reuse because such long arcades and galleries look like wasted space in modern arrangements. Furthermore, cloisters are made up with thin columns which worry structural engineers, like wings having strange sections with walls leaning on the center of the vaults below (for example in Padova. Santa Giustina, or in Brescia, San Faustino: see Giuriani, 1997). Cloisters are open, sometimes also at upper level; these represent the connection between different rooms. Nowadays it is difficult to accept that people go from one room to another via an outdoor path. Additionally, vertical connections are often missing, making problems for accessibility, safety in case of fire, architectural barriers...

Naturally, it is possible to comply with these requirements by means of a strong renovation, taking advantage of the parts already modified by previous reuses, maybe discovering by the way some hidden values. The problem also arises if historical transformations can

be recognized as significant layers. As it is well known, some years ago the Italian approach to conservation turned into a radical criticism against selective restoration, introducing the idea that any existing element has to be understood and preserved (Bellini, 1996; Guarisco, 2008).

I will emphasise that this is only one of the tendencies; many interventions proceed according to different methods and targets. Nevertheless this is the position which forwarded the debate: the next step consisted in acknowledging that conservation cannot be a special kind of restoration, as it has different philosophical foundations (Della Torre, 1999), and it is the output of a non-linear process of investigation, prevention, maintenance, and restoration just when needed. Integrated conservation, defined by the Council of Europe Charter, Amsterdam 1975, finds a new sense in the perspective of sustainability (see Della Torre, 2006; 2009). That's why management became part of our way of thinking preservation. A reference is given by the protection of sites inscribed in Unesco World Heritage List: they now require a Management Plan, following meaningful guidelines (Feilden, Jokilhetto, 1993).

#### PROJECT AND PROGRAM: DEFINING THE TARGETS AND THE TOOLS

The point is to disseminate this long-term vision, as most practitioners still think in terms of restoration or of a "value-free" adaptive renovation. In everyday practice, the first required change seems to be a new attitude to frame restoration projects into wider programs able to shape and to control the long-term process. In Italy, regulations of public works have shaped a mandatory document, the "Documento preliminare alla progettazione" which is on the way to becoming obligatory for practitioners, and to be exploited as a useful step towards a more efficient process (Catalano, Pracchi, 2009).

In other words, post-intervention management starts well before renovation works. Before (and while?) going to the architectural project (survey, diagnostics, archaeological investigation, layout of uses...) a programming activity is needed to check and to improve the feasibility of restoration as well as of post-intervention management. I say "while" because feasibility cannot be evaluated "a priori" disregarding the building itself, its significance, its hidden values, the opportunity given by the restoration process. The managerial plan cannot be written on a desk by a manager but rather has to be built up by an interdisciplinary team since a lot of multidisciplinary knowledge has to be gathered.

The existence of a written and certified program enables also the validation of the project's quality, which is a measure of capability to fulfill requirements, provided they have been clarified.

### THE BUSINESS PLAN METHODOLOGY: LONG-TERM VISION AND INTERVENTION CHOICES

To evaluate the feasibility, a method derived from the business sector can be adopted (Dubini, 2004). A business plan encompasses both qualitative and quantitative contents; therefore it is usually split into two parts. The first encompasses qualitative contents: market analysis and placement, supply system, organization of the business unit, fund-raising strategies, network of possible alliances. These are understood both as local networks giving scale economy in activity organization, as well as in terms of extended networks – that is, alliances necessary for raising scientific standards and internationalization. The second part includes quantitative contents: the preview of economic, financial and cash flow (costs, income, supports), the break-even point, the various monitoring indicators.

Even more than introducing fund-raising and management techniques, it is for our purposes an urgent requirement to understand how a long-term vision modifies the approach to intervention, as this is the point at which different disciplines meet and new benefits can be produced.

I will try to list some key-words.

- Responsibility: the check-point for a restoration is not today but tomorrow, not the cut of the ribbon, but the durability of treatments and the possibility of adapting the system to changing conditions (Della Torre, 2002);
- Feasibility: cost-efficiency can be better controlled within the framework of a program where targets and tools are explicit and clear to every stakeholder;
- Sustainability: currently the term may be so fashionable that it loses all meaning; nevertheless, as a matter of fact, what of importance is to integrate historical preservation with social, economic and environmental issues. I refer to examples such as energy efficiency in historic buildings and the use of chemicals in stone treatments;
- Networking: that is, strengthening relationships as opportunities for local development. Under this perspective, convents are a powerful metaphor for networking, as Religious Orders built networks throughout Europe, the convents being tangible relics of this factor of a common European culture. As an example, it's easy to recall Jesuits and their function in spreading culture and science throughout the world.
- Making explicit the benefits: that is, the benefits given by preservation to the local economy (tour-

ism, but also identity, social cohesion, attitude to innovation...).

### MANAGING SIGNIFICANCE

The management of a historical property also includes its enhancement by means of promotion. There are plenty of studies about communication techniques and it is quite obvious that a renovation process can give side-benefits because of archaeological or artistic discoveries or even because of the architect's fame. Nevertheless, a historic site should not become a theme park, but rather has to be understood as the part of an interacting system, such as a city or a region. On this point, therefore, I deem it important to stress that the significance of a historic site must not be frozen in the "brand" of the site, as significance is not given at once as the "true" scientific outcome of our investigation, to be popularized and trivialized by touristic guides.

The significance of a site is the output of investigation; that is, a never-ending process, open to many interpretations at the same time: different views can clash, but dialogue is the only way to peace and progress. Therefore significance must not be static: it must evolve. An evolving significance means that investigation is a live process, cultivated people are at work, innovation is being produced through conservation.

A very productive benefit of a modern approach to restoration is the multidisciplinary cooperation which takes place on the building sites: as just a couple of examples, between infinite others, let me quote the restoration of the monastic church of Santa Maria Maddalena in Camuzzago (Moioli et al., 2010) and the restoration of the Serviti convent of Santa Maria del Lavello near Lecco, presented by Elisabetta Rosina in this publication. On the other hand, the involvement of universities in the renovation process of buildings foreseen as their seats gives the opportunity for advanced studies useful to strengthen research groups: I am glad to quote the studies on the plasters of St. Abondio's cloister in Como (Bugini et al., 2006).

The implementation of advanced technologies, for preliminary investigation as well as for monitoring and maintaining the property, becomes a relevant part of the significance of a site. As a conclusion, in the management of a property a good awareness of what a conservation process entails can confer a strong competitive advantage, allowing the setting up of multiple strategies and the diversification of tools for implementation.

## PRENOVA IN UPRAVLJANJE PO POSEGU

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## POVZETEK

Avtor v prispevku obravnava učinke dolgoročne vizije na prenavo in ponovno uporabo stavb, ki so bile zgrajene kot samostani. Ideal dolgoročne vizije narekuje prehod z restavriranja/dogodka na konzervatorstvo/proces: v članku je na kratko predstavljen ta ključni razvojni korak v teoriji konzervatorstva. Ena od očitnih posledic tega razvoja je vse večji pomen programskega okvirja, ki opredeljuje cilje in instrumente prenove ter kriterije, po katerih se predvidijo stroški obnavljanja, kot tudi stroški in prihodki od upravljanja objekta po posegu. V ta namen se lahko uporabi metodologijo poslovnega načrta.

Dolgoročna vizija ima številne vplive tudi na izbiro posega: tudi ta vidik je na kratko predstavljen v prispevku na nekaj referenčnih primerih iz Italije. Iz večine primerov je razvidno, da so samostanski objekti v preteklosti doživeli veliko preoblikovanj in so večkrat spreminjali svojo namembnost. Zato je njihov pomen pogosto kompleksen in ga je treba upoštevati kot enega najbolj vplivnih dejavnikov v procesu prenavljanja. Avtor zagovarja tezo, da se pomen zgodovinskega spomenika ne razkrije takoj kakor »pravi« znanstveni rezultat raziskave, ki bi ga nato lahko popularizirali in trivializirali turistični vodniki. Pomen spomenika ni njena »blagovna znamka«, saj spomenik ni tematski park, temveč del interaktivnega sistema, v tem primeru mesta. Raziskovanje je tako brezkončen proces, odprt za več različnih interpretacij hkrati: različna stališča so si lahko med seboj nasprotujoča, toda v dialogu najdemo pot, ki vodi v mir in k napredku. Najboljše prakse upravljanja so tiste, ki razvijajo in gradijo pomen, pri katerih je raziskovanje živ proces, kjer so na delu izobraženi ljudje, kjer konzervatorstvo poraja izboljšave in novosti in kjer v pomembnosti nekega spomenika igra vplivno vlogo tudi napredna tehnologija.

Iz tega lahko zaključimo, da lahko pri upravljanju neke lastnine zavedanje o tem, kaj prinaša konservatorski proces, pomeni veliko konkurenčno prednost, ki omogoča načrtovanje mnogovrstnih strategij in večjo raznolikost med instrumenti za njihovo izvajanje.

**Ključne besede:** konzervatorstvo, poslovni načrt, dolgoročna vizija, pomen, multidisciplinarnost

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