RECYCLING SPACE TO GIVE NEW MEANING TO WHAT EXIST

Abstract. Gorizia, for all that geopolitical reasons and conditions related to its history, can certainly be considered a case study of considerable interest.

Despite the historic name of "garden-city" with which it was called the beginning of the last century and an urban and architectural morphology certainly not without interest, it now has a markedly attractive value compared to its thriving past and a strongly conditioned urban fabric. From the succession of historical events that have torn the plot. However, precisely this unfortunate contingency means that the City can now be configured as a sort of architectural laboratory on the instruments of simulation making it possible to experiment with ideas and solutions that can open up to hypotheses and compare possible future urban scenarios, following methods of interventions verified and studied at local level, can become technical models that can be exported to other contexts.

Keyword: recycling space, architecture, refurbishment, sustainability, reconfiguration.

“If an idea can live in two forms, it will not be as happy as two ideas that lives in a single form”
Karl Kraus

One of the problems of the contemporary city is that the existing property was generally built in accordance whit typological and technical paradigms that fall increasingly short of present-day requirements in terms energy saving sustainability and the new user profile. At the same time, however, precisely because it is nowadays characterize by multiple phenomena of obsolescence and abandonment, the urban landscape itself is capable of offering a considerable quantity of buildings and sites that are moreover located in already urbanized areas that can be refurbished and inhabited once again.

While this situation is common to most European cities, in Gorizia, for a number of known geopolitical and historical reasons, it unquestionably proves so evident as to offer a case study of considerable interest and opportunity to experiment whit methods that, once tried and tested at the local level, can then provide models and techniques applicable in other contexts.

The city as in fact a large number of buildings that are mostly disused or even in severely derelict state, and the scale of this phenomenon is such as to militate against any major projects that involve new constructions until an effort is made to salvage at least some of those already existing in the urban territory. The recent events connected whit proposals for the for the conversion of the area examined here speak volumes.

Built in 1953 by the Department of State monopolies, originally for packaging and garment manufacture, the old Manifattura Tabacchi complex is located in what has since become a residential district of Gorizia.

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Due to the factory’s lack of any particular architectural merit, the relevant information and documentation is largely confined to the scanty material available in the city’s State archives.

Designed for the production of work garments for employees of the department of States monopolies and to handle the complete processing cycle (including manufacture, disinfection, washing and drying) of the sacks required for packaging salt, it was built as a modern factory by the standards of the period and hence equipped with a whole series of facilities to improve the working conditions.

The currently disused complex, owned by Beni Stabili Property Service S.p.A., consists of a site of approximately 13,000 square metres, 5,450 of which occupied by buildings, in a location where the zoning plan allows for residential and commercial buildings as well as services for persons and firms.

A change of use approved in October 2011 was supposed to pave the way for a major project to convert the long abandoned industrial plant into a now residential and commercial complex, which was still-born, however, not last because of the present economic crisis, in actual fact, the company involved appears to have already submitted a proposal a few years earlier and failed to obtain approval due to its disproportionately large scale as regards the height to the buildings and the residential density, which was more than doubled with respect to the level set for the area.

In our view, however, the failure of this initiative cannot be attributed solely to the economic crisis. While this unquestionably played a part, the real reason is perhaps to be found rather in the inherent limitations of the projects, which completely ignored the fact that, as states above, what Gorizia really needs is not to erect new buildings but to salvage, convert and refurbish those already existing.

If nothing else, however, precisely because of its inappropriate scale and the fact of having regarded the area solely as building land without taking the existing structures into account, the proposal put forward by the owners forced the local authorities to take stock of the problem.

As a result, it unquestionably has the merit of having involuntarily prompted general critical reflection on the stock of existing property and perhaps providing an opportunity for evaluation of the potential for recycling and adaptation to needs in accordance with standards of energy saving and sustainability.

In any case, the present-day tasks of architecture and urban planning unquestionably include that of establishing relations with the structures existing in the urban space. In other words, the approach adopted is guided by an environmental attitude that is not confined to the use of alternative sources of energy and the choice of construction materials but also informs the preliminary process and, contrary to the growth patterns of the urban system, focuses attention on the reinterpretation of existing built-up areas as spaces to be replanned for reuse.

Needless to say, the fact of being economically sustainable lends further support to this type of approach. To give just one example, consider the project developed in 2007 by the Dutch architects MVRDV for the Didden Village in Rotterdam, which saw both a clash of identities and reflection on the costs of the urban sprawl. The new “blue village” built on the roof of an existing structure proved in fact to cost far less than a possible equivalent on the ground.

In the light of these considerations, our project is therefore designed with a view to safeguarding the resource of land through the reclamation of existing structures, thus
creating and activating connections that reorganize the space involved so as to fill in the gaps and take advantage of the opportunities.

The work of restitching the urban fabric, which includes redefining the contours as well as the solids and voids, thus leads to reconfiguration of the architectural form as a whole.

The concepts of space, the boundary, the threshold, and inside and outside are all called into question through physical and spatial fusion whereby the new melds with the existing to generate spaces and configurations that endow the whole with new meaning.

While parallels can be drawn in a certain sense between this approach and the “parasite architecture” developed in Europe for over a decade now, this holds only insofar as both are expressions of the art of contingency peculiar to states of necessity. Moreover, the latter is concerned more than anything else with mobile, lightweight, habitable structures designed to colonize residual urban areas. In any case, the similarity certainly does exist in terms of the key characteristic of a response to present-day needs, giving physical shape to the conflicts and contradictions with which the contemporary city is riddled.

At the same time, this project is most definitely an operation of architectural re-cycling and can therefore be probably connected as such with the current movement of the same name, where recycling is not understood in the sense of reusing waste materials but as a creative strategy for constant experimentation and the rethinking of architectural, natural and urban forms.

References

The opening quote is excerpted from: Karl Kraus, Sprüche und Widersprüche (Sayings and Contradictions), 1909


“Lotus” no. 133 (Milan, 2008)


*Maria Giuseppina Grasso Cannizzo*, edited by C. Rizzica (Melfi, Potenza: Llbria, 2006)
Гваранья Джанфранко
ггваранга@units.it
Университет г. Триеста, Триест, Италия

«ПЕРЕЗАПУСТИТЬ» ПРОСТРАНСТВО, ОЦЕНИВ СУЩЕСТВУЮЩЕЕ

Абстракт. Город Гориция, благодаря своим особым геополитическим условиям и политикским характеристикам, связанным с его историей, безусловно, может рассматриваться как предмет изучения, представляющий значительный интерес.

Несмотря на историческое название «город-сад», которым Гориция был назван в начале прошлого века, а также морфологию и архитектуру города, безусловно являющиеся достаточно интересными, сейчас город не имеет такой значимой привлекательности по сравнению с тем, каковой она была в его процветающем прошлом, прерванным чередой исторических событий и изменившим его урбанистическую ткань. Однако именно это обстоятельство означает, что теперь город можно рассматривать как своего рода архитектурную лабораторию, позволяющую экспериментировать с идеями и выводами, которые могут быть открыты для новых гипотез и предположений, и с помощью инструментов моделирования, проверенных и опробованных на локальном уровне, выстраивать возможные будущие городские сценарии, которые могут стать техническими моделями и которые можно экспортировать в другие контексты.

Ключевые слова: переработка пространства, архитектура, реконструкция, экологичность, реконфигурация.