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HISTORIC URBAN LANDSCAPE AND UNESCO

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COUNTRYMEN CAPITAL



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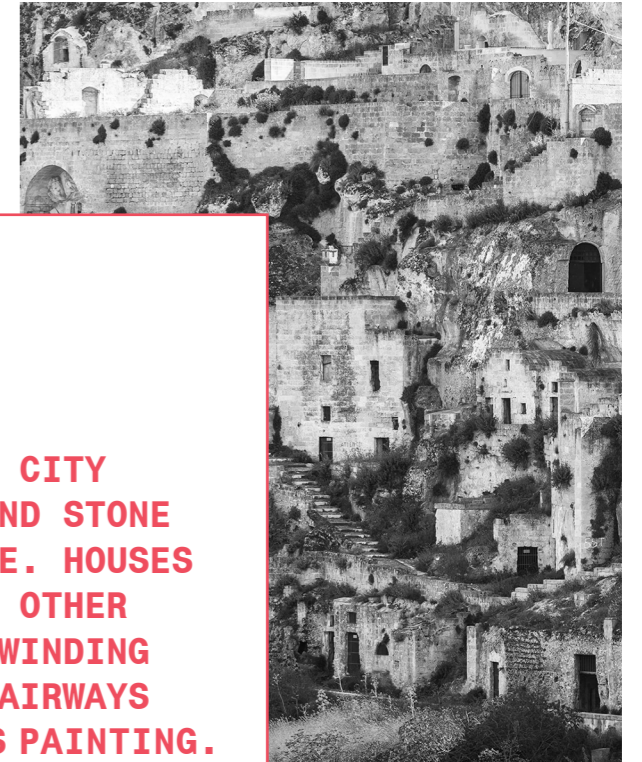
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**MATERA IS THE CITY
WHERE BRICK AND STONE
INTERPENETRATE. HOUSES
ONE ABOVE THE OTHER
CONNECTED BY WINDING
ALLEYS AND STAIRWAYS
AS IN ESCHER'S PAINTING.**

LICIA TROISI



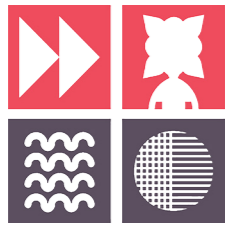
ABSTRACT

In the 1950s, Italy recovered from the trauma of the Second World War. However, in the deep South of the country, a city remained alien to this progress. Indeed, isolated for a long time, it was unable to challenge new immigration movements and ended up exceeding its saturation limit. That town was Matera, the ‘Shame of Italy’. In a country projected towards the new millennium, it was unacceptable that almost 20.000 people were living together with animals in dirty and cramped caves. Matera seemed to blame the national political class for not having taken steps to eradicate this age-old misery.

The city had to be decongested, so to move part of its population and allow the caves to regain the human scale they always had. However, it did generalize: all the caves had to be cleared and the delicate countrymen life had to be transferred to a galaxy of model rural villages. In the end, few of these were made, none properly. Those same people who lived in poverty were moved to modern dormitory districts, which yet had all the comforts allowed by modern times, but which were not suitable to hosting a community shaped by consolidated urban and interpersonal relationships.

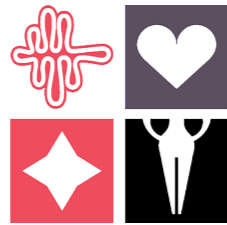
Only in the 1990s, it was realized that that life, those people, could not survive outside of those same narrow caves. The human and the architectural and natural components were inseparable. They did begin to realize what should have been done long before: restoring the architectural value of the caves, which today is even beginning to attract mass tourism.

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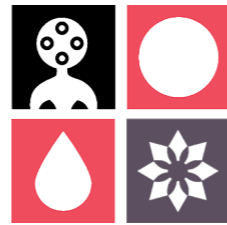
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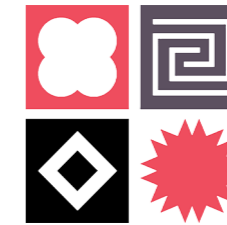
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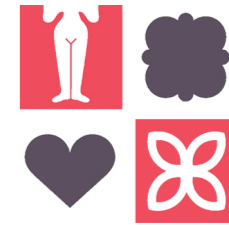
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INTRODUCTION



ARCHAIC HISTORY

This area is believed to have been settled since the Palaeolithic. This makes Matera one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world.

When cities face time passing, they are compromised in the material authenticity of their built environment. Although 'authenticity' is a labile concept, we can say that this is not the case with Matera, that irreproachably shows its organic growth over more than two millennia. The old part, known as the *Sassi*, lays in two concave canyons and looks like a complex of cave dwellings carved into rocks. By the late 19th century, these dwellings became noted for intractable poverty and rampant disease. Evacuated in 1952, inhabitants were relocated to modern housing and the *Sassi* lay abandoned until the 1980s. Matera is a paradigmatic case of how a wide public intervention can revolutionize the appearance and dynamics of a city, turning a dilapidated and secluded Historic Urban Landscape into a vibrant universally recognized center - named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993 - and revealing to its population the possibilities brought by modernity.

In general terms, the addressed topic here is then the interpenetration - which sometimes became a clash - between peasantry identity and modernity. And this topic is investigated through the excellent example of the *Sassi di Matera*. The intention of the thesis is in fact to study and investigate how the rural lifestyles and values of the dwellers of Matera have been preserved and reinterpreted during the complex modernization process of the settlement. The existing literature fully covers the a priori reasons and goals of this transformation. However, defective are feedbacks that analyze a posteriori the actual concretization of these reasons and goals into a humanistic and, more importantly for us, an urbanistic and architectural framework.

THE SASSI

The Sassi - Sasso Caveoso and Sasso Barisano - actually are two districts of the city of Matera.

We must distinguish three phases within this research. First, we should become aware of the situation from where the articulated transformation of Matera took start: which were these lifestyles and values that remained intact, locked up in Matera even after the Second World War? The Virtual Museum of the Collective Memory of Matera is able to offer a highlighted picture of that, thanks to a wide online collection of audio and visual documents. However, the *Caso Matera* was born because of a book: Carlo Levi (1902-1975), writer and exile in Basilicata, brought Matera to the center of the national interest towards the *Mezzogiorno* with his masterpiece 'Cristo si è fermato ad Eboli' - later turned into a movie -, where he pointed out the ideal urban unit for that kind of people Materans were:

FOR THE PEASANTS, THE UNIT OF THE STATE, THE ONLY ONE TO WHICH THEY COULD PARTICIPATE IN A MULTIPLE COLLECTIVE LIFE, CANNOT BUT BE THE AUTONOMOUS RURAL VILLAGE. THIS IS THE ONLY STATAL FORM THAT COULD ALLOW THE COEXISTENCE BETWEEN TWO DIFFERENT CULTURES, WITHOUT THAT THE ONE OPPRESSES THE OTHER AND VICE VERSA. THE ONLY ONE THAT COULD ENABLE THE BEST ORDER TO ERASE MISERY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE.

CARLO LEVI

Another significant movie is 'Il Vangelo secondo Matteo' (1964), filmed by Pier Paolo Pasolini (1922-1975). Focusing on the architectural aspect, strongly present in these works, the research identifies the mentioned va-

Levi, C. (1945). 'Cristo si è fermato a Eboli'. Torino: Einaudi.

Per i contadini, la cellula dello Stato, quella sola per cui essi potranno partecipare alla molteplice vita collettiva, non può che essere il comune rurale autonomo. È questa la sola forma statale che possa permettere la coesistenza di due diverse civiltà, senza che l'una opprime l'altra e vice versa. L'unica che consenta, nei limiti del possibile, le condizioni migliori per liberarsi dalla miseria (p. 240).

lues, finding them also in many social reportages and essays that were drafted by political insiders and novelists.

We move then to the forced *Sfollamento dei Sassi* - ordered and regulated by the Special Ministerial Law 619 of 1952 - and the previous territorial and ethnologic surveys undertaken by the UNRRA (United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration) preparatory to the realization of various new modern residential neighbourhoods spread in the Matera countryside. The first one of them to be completed - which also later became the most emblematic and known - was the *Villaggio La Martella*. In its design some of the most important Italian urbanists and architects of the time were involved. There were multiple reviews on the actual success of how ideals have been applied during the design of these neighbourhoods. These mainly were articles published by the local *Casabella Continuità* and *Basilicata* magazines.

Starting from the 1980s, then some years after the *Sfollamento dei Sassi*, we had the multiform rehabilitation of the historic center promoted by the ICCROM (International Center for the Study of the Cultural Property) corresponding to the important nominee by the UNESCO in 1993, which again shed a light on Matera and the issue of the contemporary maintenance of the very delicate and fragile equilibrium between this rather unique habitat and its inhabitants. The *Fondazione Adriano Olivetti* and Architect Pietro Laureano (1951) can assist us in understanding how the tradition has been adapted to fit inside an international touristic hub. This last process gave the *Sassi* the appearance we can admire today: what does remain of the post-war Matera and what are the next future scenarios for the city?

MAGAZINES ARTICLES

Casabella is a renowned monthly architectural magazine. It was born in 1928 and during the 1950s it was held by Architect Ernesto N. Rogers (1909-1969).





BACKGROUND OF THE COUNTRYMEN CAPITAL

THE DENUNCIATION BY CARLO LEVI
AMORAL FAMILISM
THE 'VICINATO' UNITY
RECORDING UNIVERSAL VALUES
CONCLUSION



Today it is not an exaggeration to say that Matera is one of the most beautiful cities in Italy. It is hard for the traveler who visits this city for the first time to believe that its history comprises a tremendous period, during which Matera was even known as the *Vergogna d'Italia* ('Italian Shame'). Not many decades ago - immediately after the end of the Second World War -, Matera was completely isolated from the rest of the world. That time profoundly marked it and determined its slow and extremely late development.

The *Sassi* were defined a hellish crater by Carlo Levi's sister. However, - like everything that is sublime - they can raise an opposed feeling too. Indeed, Carlo Levi himself wrote these words: **The countrymen capital is concealed within the caves of the *Sassi*, the hidden hearth of an ancient civilization. Whoever watches them cannot but be shocked by their expressive and painful beauty.**

We cannot deny that Matera is the complete manifestation of a long and special history. Almost similar villages can be found in countries like Greece and Iran, but these have not entirely conserved their authenticity. We intend they haven't preserved their original urban and architectural form. Besides, several hill settlements in Southern Italy (such as Gravina, in Apulia) have been built on comparable principles, but most of them lost their integrity over time as well. As the UNESCO Advisory Body Evaluation reported, **the *Sassi* bear unique witness to man's activities.** The outstanding universal value stems from the harmonious symbiosis between cultural and natural characteristics. This first chapter will investigate the reasons and the possible interpretations of this delicate relationship.

Levi, C. (1945). 'Cristo si è fermato a Eboli'. Torino: Einaudi.

Nelle grotte dei Sassi si cela la capitale dei contadini. Chi la vede non può non restarne colpito tanto è espressiva e toccante la sua dolente bellezza (p. 94).

UNESCO (1993). Advisory Body Evaluation (ICOMOS). (p. 12).

THE DENUNCIATION BY CARLO LEVI

We have heard that Matera turned from a national shame to a European pride. Is it like this? Or is it rhetorical excess? Let the facts speak: in Matera, in 1937, out of 15.250 babies, 6.760 - the 44,32% - died, illnesses like tuberculosis were rampant and there was mass illiteracy. The expansion of the agglomeration, the increase in population, and the decline of the pastoralism - which until then had been the main local activity - led over time to an important deterioration in living conditions. The caves were enlarged, churches, stables, and cisterns were transformed into houses, interventions that not only led families to live in increasingly unhealthy conditions, but also heavily depleted the yet poor services.

Surprisingly, all these conditions remained ignored until Carlo Levi exposed them to national awareness. **Matera appeared as a sort of original sin, the more severe the less his existence had been considered.** Carlo Levi was arrested for anti-fascist activities in 1934. After a second arrest, in 1935, he was confined in Lucania, in the town of Aliano. Here he came into contact with the reality of Southern Italy - totally unknown to him - and set his best-known novel, 'Cristo si è fermato a Eboli' (written during the Second World War and published in 1945). The exile used stark words: **These inverted cones, these funnels, are called *Sassi - Sasso Caveoso* and *Sasso Barisano* -. They have the shape with which I imagined Dante's hell at school. The very narrow street passed over the roofs of the houses, if those can be called so. They are caves dug into the hardened clay wall of**

DISCONCERTING DATA

These numbers are contained in a 2019 Il Sole 24 Ore article by the Materan Eliana di Caro (1972).

Levi, C. (1945). 'Cristo si è fermato a Eboli'. Torino: Einaudi.

Questi coni rovesciati, questi imbuti si chiamano Sassi, Sasso Caveoso e Sasso Barisano. Hanno la forma con cui a scuola immaginavo l'inferno di Dante. La stradetta strettissima passava sui tetti delle case, se quelle così si possono chiamare. Sono grotte scavate nella parete di argilla indurita del burrone. Le strade sono insieme pavimenti per chi esce dalle abitazioni di sopra e tetti per quelli di sotto. Le porte erano aperte per il caldo, io guardavo passando e vedevo l'interno delle grottesche: non prendono altra luce ed aria se non dalla porta. Alcune non hanno neppure quella: si entra dall'alto, attraverso botole e scalette. Ogni famiglia ha in genere una sola di quelle grotte per abitazione e ci dormono tutti insieme, uomini, donne, bambini, bestie. Di bambini ce n'era un'infinità. Nudi o coperti di stracci. Sembrava di essere in mezzo ad una città colpita dalla peste (pp. 78-80).

the gravina. The streets are floors for those who come out of the houses above and at the same time roofs for those below. The doors were open for the heat, I looked and I saw the inside: they take no other light and air than from the door. Some do not even have that: you enter from above, through hatches and ladders. Each family usually has only one of those caves as home and they all sleep together, men, women, children, beasts. There was an infinity of children, naked or covered in rags. It looked like being in the middle of a city hit by the plague. This was his astonishing exploration.

With this description, Italian politics began to have an interest in the issue: the leader of the Italian Communist Party Palmiro Togliatti (1893-1964) was the first to arrive in Lucania in 1948. With extreme frankness he defined the *Sassi* as the 'National Shame', an evil to be eradicated by force to give back dignity to people. Anyway, Levi's Christ also showed another Matera, a city in which lived a civilization of values suffocated by misery, values that could and should be recognized and preserved. But healing a shame could have been - and in part it was - another shame: uprooting a rural civilization, completely alienating it.

AMORAL FAMILISM

Before Carlo Levi, the *Mezzogiorno* was dominated by the bourgeoisie and the state. Peasantry remained in the background, depersonalized, moved by instincts rather than by social reasons. Clearly mentioning Alexis de Tocqueville's (1805-1859) belief that in democratic countries the science of association is the mother of all other progresses, in 1958 the political scientist Edward C. Ban-

field (1916-1999) wrote 'The moral basis of a backward society' trying to figure out a hypothesis to account for that inability of peasants to act together for their collective good. Based on fieldwork in Montegrano (in order to protect the original town of Chiaromonte, in Basilicata, this fictitious name is utilized), the book proposes amoral familism as the responsible for the misery in these lands. It is defined as a state of affairs where each person behaves as though he was following this rule: maximize the material, short-run advantage of the nuclear family; assume that the others will do likewise. The peasant considered himself a parent: for him the family was the nuclear one. The struggle appeared to him uneven and bitter because on the one hand an uncontrollable Nature canceled every effort with its calamities, and on the other hand strangers were competitors or enemies.

But if this ethos was the reason for misery, then it would have been difficult to challenge it. We need a more complete explanation. A 1968 article by Sydel F. Silverman (1933-2019) stated it would have been backwardness to cause this ethos. One proof is the lack of the concept of 'community'. Italian has the word *comunità*, but it is used to refer specifically to a monastic community. Any reference to a village as a whole is usually made with the word *comune*, which still refers to the administrative unit. Since 'community' did not exist for peasants, the alternative of collective action too was difficult for them to imagine and correspondingly difficult to undertake. According to 'Dieci anni di politica agraria nel Mezzogiorno' by Manlio Rossi-Doria (1905-1988), the absence of collective action in the South has been generated historically by the agrarian system. The ethos is a consequence rather than the basis

Banfield, E. C. (1958). 'The moral basis of a backward society', New York: Free Press. (p. 85).

Rossi-Doria, M. (2004). 'Dieci anni di politica agraria nel Mezzogiorno'. Napoli: L'Ancora del Mediterraneo.

L'assenza di una azione collettiva nel Mezzogiorno è stata generata storicamente dal sistema agrario. L'etica è una conseguenza, più che la base di queste caratteristiche sociali. Queste, a loro volta, hanno origine nel sistema agrario (p. 85).

of these social characteristics. They, in turn, have their foundation in the agricultural system.

So how was this agricultural system? The land has always been property of a few aristocrats, making it impossible for small farmers to work together and so benefit from their work. For this reason, they became suspicious even of members of their own family, with everyone trying to survive through a direct connection with the landowner. The land was divided into parcels, each cultivated essentially as an independent unit by an individual, part of a family, or a whole nuclear family. The division of the land into working units was unstable over time: through the inheritance process, parcels tended to be subdivided into fragments of diminishing size. Finally, the specific parcels cultivated and the terms under which were worked often changed over time.

THE 'VICINATO' UNITY

In the 20th century, towns and cities replicated the agricultural organization and the cultural patterns of peasants. The rural population was clustered into fairly large and compactly settled centers and the countryside remained uninhabited. Typically, cultivators lived at some distance from the land they worked and for this reason, several hours traveling a day was not unusual. The earliest house form in Matera was a simple cave in the tufa with a closing wall formed from the excavated blocks, the *jazzo*. This developed into a vaulted room, the *lamione*. As the town grew, more houses were excavated and built, climbing the hillside. Groups of dwellings around a common courtyard evolved into the urban and social structure



SOCIAL GLUE

In the 1950s, it was clear that people was leaving there in really poor conditions. Nevertheless, this consolidated urban form was essential for the exact growth of children. They were fundamental: they acted as a glue for conflicting neighbouring relations.



of the *vicinato*. Therefore, every neighbourhood in Matera acquired a specific topographical physiognomy as well.

In general, the neighbours ignored each other - both deliberately or not - with a subtle game of quick mutual checks or in the most sincere and absolute indifference. As the population density rised, a more intense social life was felt in narrow streets, between balcony and balcony, door and door, and sometimes seemed to materialize in organized groups of children who circulated with the same mastery everywhere. Here, the neighbour wasn't only the person or family who lived next door, but represented something different that already had a certain psychosocial function, of moral and material solidarity, of control, of influence for the formation of attitudes and modification of opinions. And it had different implications.

Firstly, it had negative effects, as confirmed by the great deal of negative tension between the families of neighbourhoods studied in Matera. It can be said that mo-

PRESENT IMPRESSION

This could be the same space shown on the page before, just seven decades later. The physical quality of the building is for sure better, but the group of children is now a crowd of tourists.



st families are unhappy with the neighbours they have, even though they know they can count on them in case of urgent need. The causes were: excessive spatial proximity (relationships were worse the closer the houses were), low economic level - which meant that every small difference acquired a disproportionate value -, and that the neighbourhood constituted the most immediate meeting point of the old and new generation, in which the differences in attitude, ideals, way of life were felt in every circumstance.

On the other hand, it could be said that children live in the *vicinato* more than in their family. They moved from one house to another, absorbing everything they can by observing their neighbours both directly and through what they heard about them. This way, they learned not only the psychological and social, but also moral patterns of the group. It's perhaps easy to imagine how the individual, in times when being able to read and write was luxury of a few, was modeled by the context. Today, almost all chil-

De Rita, L. (1955). 'Il vicinato come gruppo'. Centro Sociale.

Si può dire che la maggior parte delle famiglie sono scontente dei vicini che hanno, pur sapendo bene di poter contare su loro in caso di necessità urgente (p. 3).

De Rita, L. (1955). 'Il vicinato come gruppo'. Centro Sociale.

I bambini passano più tempo nel vicinato che nelle loro famiglie (p. 3).

dren go to school, families have radios, newspapers, and brochures circulate everywhere, people go to the cinema quite frequently: **it would be absurd to think that the *vicinato* can keep its function intact.**

RECORDING UNIVERSAL VALUES

The *Sassi di Matera* have been transformed into Jerusalem three times within a film: in 1964 with Pasolini's film 'Il Vangelo secondo Matteo', in 1985 with Richard Gere (1949) in the role of 'King David', and in 2000 with 'The Passion of Christ' directed by Mel Gibson (1956). Nevertheless, Pasolini's one, with his persistent focus on the landscape of the *Sassi di Matera*, is the film that more than any other showed Basilicata when it was unknown to the world.

Initially, his idea was to shoot in Jerusalem itself: when he went there for some inspections, he returned disappointed and embittered by a scenario that with urbanization no longer bore any trace of its historical past. Pasolini was touched by the complete atemporality of the *Sassi*, he chose to make them protagonists of a likewise universal history. He made them a metaphor and paradigm of other Souths, of all those unconsidered farmers civilizations that were being destroyed. Pasolini found women, men, children who still lived there in those caves. **Those intense faces seemed carved out of diamond and coal.** He made them act: most of the walk-on roles in the film are literally picked up from Matera's streets. Thus, the people of the spectators also physically met Lucania and Matera. Actually, rather than meeting them, it crashed into them, as the city of Matera in this film is almost always seen from a frontal perspective.

Russillo, F. (n. d.). 'Pasolini e il Cristo in terra lucana'. Regione Basilicata.

Quei volti intensi che sembravano scavati nel diamante e nel carbone.

CONCLUSION

The previous discussion emphasized that the inhabitants of Matera were not prisoners of their ethos, but of their agricultural and urban system. Therefore, urbanism must have been central to any progress of reform. However, we can say that if the *vicinato* constituted the punctum dolens of the peasant culture, this showed that it was one of the most essential aspects of this lifestyle and that perhaps one of the means to reconstitute more solidly and in a renewed and democratic atmosphere the old social plot of the peasant world was that of not letting the *vicinato* shipwreck, enhancing and strengthening it. In this way, it would have been easier to support the push for renewal without letting it become a reason for rupture - whose moral consequences could be very harmful -. With this direction, the peasant world would be better and more naturally helped to solve its great problems with its same strength.

As Carlo Levi asserted, the state should have played a primary role in this process:

THE INDIVIDUAL IS NOT A CLOSED ENTITY, BUT IT IS THE PLACE OF ALL RELATIONSHIPS. THIS CONCEPT OF RELATIONSHIP, OUTSIDE OF WHICH THE INDIVIDUAL DOES NOT EXIST, IS THE SAME THAT DEFINES THE STATE. THIS IS THE ONLY WAY OUT OF THE VICIOUS CIRCLE OF FASCISM AND ANTI-FASCISM. THIS PATH IS CALLED AUTHONOMY. THE STATE THEN CAN ONLY BE THE SET OF AUTONOMIES, AN ORGANIC FEDERATION.

CARLO LEVI

Levi, C. (1945). 'Cristo si è fermato a Eboli'. Torino: Einaudi. L'individuo non è un'entità chiusa, ma il luogo di ogni rapporto. Tale concetto di rapporto, al di fuori del quale l'individuo non esiste, è lo stesso che definisce lo stato. Questa è l'unica strada che ci permetterà di uscire dal giro vizioso di fascismo e antifascismo. Tale strada si chiama autonomia. Lo stato non potrà essere che un insieme di autonomie, una organica federazione (p. 239).



THE HEALED CITY

THE STATE INTERVENTION
VILLAGGIO LA MARTELLA
LA MARTELLA AS OF TODAY
WHAT HAPPENED?
CONCLUSION



Gorio, F. (1954). 'Il Villaggio La Martella. Autocritica'. Casabella.

'Eliminare' era la parola, eliminare una città! Come se una città fosse divisibile in due parti completamente indipendenti: pietre e uomini (p. 5).

In Matera, the absence of a social model and the conformism of urban planning practices found a strong alternative, constituted by the emancipation of the historic poor and loser identity of the *Mezzogiorno*, but also by a collective tradition, which has sterilized its nature from the progressive deformations of urban and political methods. Matera was a real exception. First, an abominable exception that rational and euphoric grammar could not tolerate and therefore had to eliminate. **'Eliminate' was the word, eliminate a city! As if a city was divisible into two completely independent parts: stones and men.** It was yet known that the coherence between things and humans was a real fact, strongly alive. In other words, it was precisely that richness that is usually indicated with the word 'tradition', and it was sensed that it would have been impossible to make a raw cut without having a serious damage. Hence, how this tradition have been applied within the realization of new modern rural neighbourhoods on the outskirts of Matera?

A new *città risanata* ('healed city') took shape from 1953 to 1961. As the most prominent Italian urbanists of the time asserted, contemporary Matera became the center of experimentation for a new way of doing Architecture, a new way of thinking about a city taking into account the specific socio-economic peculiarities of the communities living there and, above all, the millenary history to which the customs of the future inhabitants belonged. This story took place in the cultural climate of Neorealism, a post-war movement characterized by the will and need to observe and understand reality and to work on it within a moral and ideological framework of social redemption in a new rediscovered condition of democracy.

THE NEOREALISM

In Italy, Neorealism was also a film movement. It was characterized by stories set amongst the pors and the working class, frequently using non-professional players.

THE STATE INTERVENTION

In 1949, there was a first intervention programme drawn up as part of the Marshall Plan. This proposal was accepted by the UNRRA and the Italian Institute of Urban Planning: its director Adriano Olivetti (1901-1960) formed a commission for the study of the city and its countryside. In 1950, Prime Minister Alcide De Gasperi (1881-1954) selected Emilio Colombo (1920-2013) to study a law aimed at restoring the *Sassi* based on Olivetti's work. The Communist Party proposed closing the caves and demolishing all the uninhabitable houses. The Christian Democracy's thesis, on the other hand, was the explication of a recovery programme for entire areas. **On May 17, 1952, Italian State issued the Special Law for the Evacuation and Restoration of the *Sassi di Matera*.** The second idea distinctly seemed to prevail.

The law established seven new villages to be built and the refurbishment of 859 houses in the *Sassi*. However, this proposal did not worry much about the implementation aspects. Firstly, there were no conditions to ensure that every displaced family had a self-sufficient farm to cultivate. Secondly, there was no incentive for the expensive renovation of the *Sassi*. Anyway, as early as 1953, some inhabitants obtained new houses, paying ridiculous rent in exchange for the transfer of their old dwellings to the state property. The idea was to bring farmers closer to their properties **substantially making their business more profitable. We wanted to make the countryman of the *Sassi* an independent agricultural entrepreneur, but still part of a self-managed cooperative.**

Friedmann, F. G. (1987).
Conversation with Laura Olivetti.

VILLAGGIO LA MARTELLA

In Matera, the first and greatest example of agricultural village was *Villaggio La Martella*. The project was carried out by an architectural and urban planning group led by Ludovico Quaroni (1911-1987) and Federico Gorio (1915-2007) and gave life to a new model of intervention in the territory and of management of the relocation of families from the *Sassi* to new sunny and healthy residences in the open countryside. Their main concern was to abandon the rationalist schemes in favor of free from geometric canons ones, a modern habitat for the habitus of the countrymen society of Matera.

La Martella consists of 160 buildings, 183 apartments, and 1.350 rooms. Its toponym derives from a plant: in the Materan dialect, *marted* is the myrtle, a precious aromatic shrub used in the preparation of olives. The village is located in the *Matinelle* area, a place affected by the Land Reform, about seven kilometers from the city. The neighbourhood was not imposed on this territory, but it was gently placed on the orography of the site. It is a micro-urban unit, gathered around a hill occupied by the main church. The urban design is based on a network of organically and freely developed roads - the *vicinati* - consisting of housing units and stables side by side, preceded by courtyards and followed by vegetable gardens with wells. The terminal closure of these streets is given by the oven, an infrastructure for social aggregation. The buildings are located along the streets without rigid alignments. The intention was to re-propose popular and peasant purity: native materials such



as tuff and fired clay ashlar were used, as well as traditional roofing and galleries. The attention was not paid only to the *Sassi*, but also to the models of the American Green Belt Cities, Tennessee Valley proposals, and plans for Norristown and Draper.

Worthy of note, designed by Quaroni himself, are the theater and the church of the *villaggio*. The theater is not a classic theater: it has no chairs or armchairs, as it was conceived so that everyone should bring their chair from home, to preserve the idea of community so dear to the former inhabitants of the *Sassi*. The church has a large bell tower with a square plan, made with blocks of exposed tuff and which recalls in its shape a huge granary. The thin back wall is made of glass so that rituals were accessible to anyone.

But *La Martella*, was not imagined only as an urban and architectural fact. It was also conceived as an act of community, shaped by Olivetti's studies on the Danish Cooperatives of the late 19th century. He detected an interesting and passionate operation of collective education and merged that with the models of American progressive culture supported by the theses of Lewis Mumford (1895-1990). Thus, families were taught city education, cooperative management of agriculture, and a new form of distribution of agricultural goods. The first families who arrived in *La Martella* also got a cow and a cart with rubber wheels as a gift.

The planners who built this village did not think of realizing their dream of the ideal city, but they began their work by studying the real limits of the problem. Architect Giancarlo De Carlo (1919-2005) really pointed out this as a new approach used for the village:

IF THEY HAD STARTED FROM AN OBJECTIVE INVESTIGATION, THE DATA WOULD HAVE COMFORTED THEM IN THE UNSHAKABLE CERTAINTY THAT THERE WAS NOTHING TO SAVE IN THE SICK COMMUNITY THAT HAD TO BE TRANSFERRED.

GIANCARLO DE CARLO

Yet, new in Italian urban planning was the spontaneous birth of a current of cultural collaboration towards a problem that would generally have been considered only urban planning. Many things would never have been done if everyone had observed the limits of their field of action with bureaucratic rigor. Moreover, the peasants themselves collaborated in the design of homes. This could have been a tragedy, because you know, the architects say: 'You tell me how to do it?' No, you have to come and see the *Sassi* and how people live here. For example, living together with the mule in the caves had important consequences from a hygienic point of view, like a higher incidence of malaria than the Italian average. However, the mule was the only means of production for many families, and it was also for this reason that they used to keep it within the home. In *Villaggio La Martella*, architects opted then for an opening in the bedroom wall, closed by glass but with a door, so that the animal could be watched during the whole night.

LA MARTELLA AS OF TODAY

La Martella is mentioned in the Dossier of Matera for European Capital of Culture in 2019: the declared

Sacco, A. (2012-2013).
Conversation with Federico Bliò.

E questo, per i progettisti, sarebbe potuto essere una tragedia, perchè sai, gli architetti dicono: 'Tu dici a me come si fa?' No, tu devi venire a vedere i Sassi e la gente come abita.

Sangerardi, N. (2020). 'Matera, se Borgo La Martella diventa un sogno perduto'. Stato Quotidiano.

Una mattina di sabato, inizio Febbraio 2020, camminando dentro Borgo La Martella si nota quanto segue: chiusa la Biblioteca Comunale Adriano Olivetti, chiuso il Teatro Ludovico Quaroni, inaccessibile la Chiesa dedicata a San Vincenzo de' Paoli. Strade e alberi che necessitano di manutenzione, varia immondizia scaricata fuori dai cassonetti, fabbricati in stato di abbandono.

A LANDMARK

The church was the symbol of the bureaucratic and administrative decentralization on which the Matera plan was based. It was therefore a point visible from the surrounding plain.

intention was to make it a center for cultural production. How does this visionary neighbourhood look today? Local journalist Nino Sangerardi (1951) wrote this: *Saturday morning, early February 2020, walking inside Villaggio La Martella you notice the following: the Municipal Library Adriano Olivetti is closed, the Theater Ludovico Quaroni is closed, the San Vincenzo de' Paoli's Church is inaccessible. Roads and trees need maintenance, various garbage is dumped out of the bins, buildings are in an evident state of neglect.*

This is a very surprising picture given the assumptions set out in the previous section. But let's go in order. In 1957-1958 the maximum number of inhabitants was reached. In the following years, with the industrial development, *La Martella experienced a return emigration towards Matera and the population decreased until reaching its minimum in 1987.* Nowadays, there are three poles: the elderly, the Ecopolis complex,



312 residential units built between 1992 and 1997, and the public housing. *Currently, La Martella represents a settlement without autonomy and precise connotation.* An heavy phenomenon of commuting makes it a dormitory and temporary residence area, not favoring the strengthening of social relations between people. Most of the houses built in the 1950s are inhabited, but the farmers and their descendants have adapted the individual building units to the changed living conditions, compensating for the typological rigidity of the original buildings with countless - sometimes abusive - interventions.

WHAT HAPPENED?

So what happened? We can now give a subjective opinion on why the traditional local value did not successfully found a place in *La Martella* planning. *Blame can be attributed to the political environment and to the bureaucratic system that directly surrounded La Martella, but also to the designers of the village.* First of all, this plan ended up being a collection of public works to be photographed for wall posters. This is certainly what politicians wanted, but it means, for any true urban planner, the failure of a masterplan. It must be said that the *Sassi* should not have been completely emptied, because studies said that only half of the 18.000 inhabitants should have been moved to the new villages. The houses in the *Sassi* were made up of a maximum of three rooms, with up to ten people living in a single cave. But if a family left and if the emptied cave was recoverable, it could unite with another nearby cave, and the remaining family could expand and live decently. But the newly elected National

COLLECTIVE SPACE

When designing La Martella, urbanists needed to re-locate the bureaucratic and decisional life of the peasants. The icon of this initiative was the new church. However, like this pic shows, today the only living being in this square is a stray dog.



Sacco, A. (2012-2013).
Conversation with Federico Bliò.
Prese i documenti ed ebbe il colpo
di genio di decidere cosa fare senza
curarsi dei vari studi.

Minister Colombo **took the sheets and had a flash of genius to decide what to do regardless of the many studies.** Following this wicked political decision the *Sassi* were completely emptied, including buildings still in good condition, monumental palaces, and adaptable complexes. It was the need to access a huge electoral basin that motivated such a massive intervention. Actually, the administration was offering new houses to everyone. Yet, reality did not keep this excessive promise and eventually *La Martella* was the only rural village to be built. The new model became large neighborhoods of public housing, where the mule was forced to climb the stairs to reach the apartment. The plan was never well seen either on the right or on the left. The Communists did not want a capitalist intervention and the Christian Democrats did not want to see the rise of new possible socialist cells.

Let's continue. Various bureaucratic conflicts have specifically compromised the effective activation of *La*



LATER APPROPRIATION

Observing one of the vicinati of La Martella we can see numerous substantial interventions made by the residents also intended as a further adaptation of the buildings to modern times.

specifically compromised the effective activation of *La Martella* project. The chronicles of the time reported inexplicable delays and other malfunctions. For example, it took a very long time to decide on the construction of the cemetery and there was a long debate about whether the business center - precisely the business center, which is the primary reason for the new village - should be built in *La Martella* or elsewhere too. Or again, when the first families moved, the municipal oven was not yet finished. For three months, women - at the beginning, when it was important for them to stay at home and get used to the completely new situation - had to bring the dough to Matera and stay there doing nothing all day waiting for the bread to properly bake.

The people who had moved to *La Martella* since more than a year still lived in a semi-deserted and messy construction site. Even the newly built buildings deteriorated because the works had been badly hastened to allow

Zucconi, A. (n. d.). 'La Martella: l'assistenza sociale al servizio della pianificazione urbanistica'. Bliò, F., Vadini, E., (2016). *Matera e Adriano Olivetti*. Roma/Ivrea, Comunità Editrice.

Si dice che durante l'inaugurazione il prefetto ha voluto aprire la porta di un ambiente del nuovo ufficio postale, ma la maniglia gli è rimasta in mano. O che, dopo l'ascesa dei Comunisti al governo, hanno messo persone che sabotassero le costruzioni, otturando i camini così le case si riempivano di fumo (p. 83).

De Gasperi to inaugurate the village before the elections of June 1953. **It is said that during the inauguration, the prefect wanted to open the door of a room of the new post office, but the handle remained in his hand. Or that, following the succession of the Communists to the central government, people had been placed to sabotage the buildings, blocking the chimneys so the houses were filled with smoke.** People here certainly did not find what was promised to them: it is documented by some themes by the school children that the first assignees left the *Sassi* with the suspicion that in the village they would have been forced to live same as in a concentration camp, that would have been instituted a curfew, that the area was malarial, that the village even was suitable for bombing experiments. On February 3, 1954 already, a big group of farmers went to the city and occupied the Prefecture.

We finish with the shortcomings of the designers of *La Martella* and the other agricultural villages. It is necessary to admit that an anti-logical path has been followed here, so from the particular to the general. In the first place, the construction of the new villages was decided, then their location was chosen, then this initiative was linked with the Land Reform, and - eventually - it was introduced in the *Matera Plan*. In this plan, the example of Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian regulatory plans prevailed alongside the concern to recreate a Southern environment. Ernesto N. Rogers asserted that **in *La Martella* there is too passive complacency for traditional forms.** And among all these traditional forms, there is also the fundamental one of the *vicinato*, which, taken exactly as it was, was in clear anachronism with the social relations of today contemporary world.

Rogers, E. N. (1954). 'La responsabilità verso la tradizione'. Casabella.

Ne *La Martella* v'è, a mio modo di vedere, troppa passiva accettazione delle forme tradizionali (p. 1).

CONCLUSION

Matera and few other cities represent in the memory of contemporary Italian planners one of the recurring references, a cornerstone in the evolution of the facts to which refer to reconstruct a brief history of the discipline. Besides, in this quite complex chronicle, it assumes a crucial hinge role between the fascist urban planning and that of the Economic Boom and simultaneous post-war reconstruction with all its many characteristics and ambiguities.

The *Matera Plan* is a significant essay on Italian urbanism, but it can also be an example of how not to act in the South. Definitive proof of the defeat of the plan could be found in later neighbourhoods that have sprung up just outside the perimeter of the *Sassi*. These are *Serra Venerdì*, *La Nera*, *Agna Cappuccini*, and *Spine Bianche*, predominantly residential areas with low population density and large frequent green areas, squares to evoke the spirit of cohesion between families that live in the neighbourhood. Yet for Carlo Aymonino (1926-2010), group leader of the *Spine Bianche* project itself, the *Matera* experience will nevertheless remain a big success because **it allowed us to experience the correctness of urban planning even if we feel that the transformation in space did not correspond to the transformation in the economic structure.** In any case, it could be said that it is difficult to say who is right: the certainty is that good design intentions in Italy are too often frustrated by practice. The new neighbourhoods without services and facilities had no chance of being as they were designed. They became suburbs, conflict places, small satellite cities disconnected from the urban fabric.

FASCIST URBANISM

Fascist architecture was a middle ground between Rationalism - a moderate vision of Modernism - and Neoclassical monumentalism.

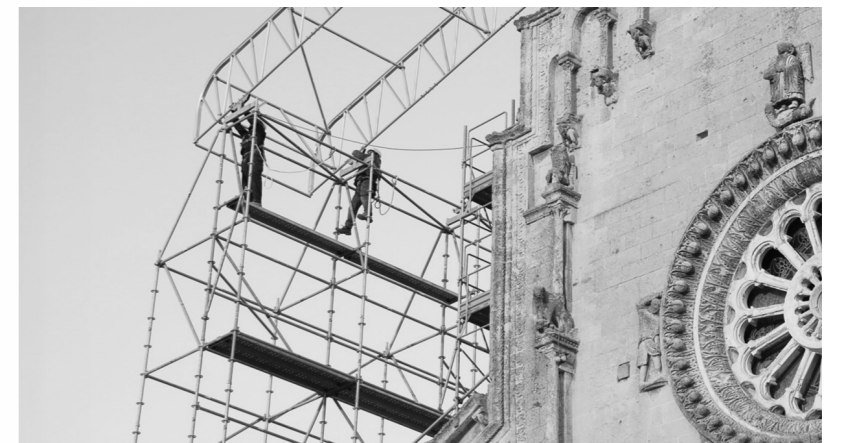
Aymonino, C. (1959). 'Matera: mito e realtà'. Casabella.

Ci ha permesso di sperimentare la esattezza della pianificazione urbana, pur capendo che alla trasformazione dello spazio non era corrisposta la trasformazione della struttura economica (p. 2).



A NEW SCENARIO FOR THE SASSI

THE FIRST (QUESTIONABLE) ACTION
UNESCO SITE AND ECOC
THE RECENT IMPACT OF TOURISM
CONCLUSION



At the end of the 1950s, the new *Spine Bianche*, *Serra Venerdì*, and *Lanera* districts were completed and all the inhabitants of the *Sassi* had already been moved. This strategy determined the physiognomy of the city as it still is today: Matera appears divided between large residential areas and a center congested by the crowding of services and tertiary sector workplaces. On the edge of this center, there are the two districts of the *Sassi*, which at the time were empty and silent, separated both visually and physically from the town life. A slow and inexorable process of physical-structural decay begun for them. The degrading action of rainwater, no longer regulated due to the lack of the ordinary and constant maintenance of roofs, pipes, and cisterns, which only the presence of the inhabitants could guarantee, quickly produced cracking phenomena, infiltrations, and collapses of walls and roofs. The invasion and propagation of spontaneous vegetation completed this work of destruction, sending the whole built environment towards a desolating and spectacular ruin, the largest completely abandoned historic town in Europe.

The community of Matera, still concerned by the memory of the miserable living conditions of the *Sassi*, was reluctant to produce a solid effort in their conservation. All the more reason it cannot even conceive of their possible recovery and residential adaptment. Talking about a such ambitious action, there were only a few active forces of the city, which since the early 1960s publicly posed the need to save and revitalize the *Sassi*, challenging for the first time the extreme positions that already called for the freezing and turning into a large scenografic museum of all the amazing ruined caves.

THE FIRST (QUESTIONABLE) ACTIONS

In 1971, the Venetian urban planning group *Il Politecnico*, coordinated by the renewed sociologist Aldo Musacchio (1933-2014), was commissioned by the Municipal Council of Matera to study and indicate the guidelines for a new urban design of the city. Eventually, this report assumed that **the *Sassi* were an economic asset and it was therefore absolutely necessary to really provide for their conservation.** A public competition was held between 1974 and 1977, but then the jury did not proclaim any winner, and - when the planned loan of 3,5 billion lire was eliminated from the state budget commitments - the whole plan was shelved.

The next opportunity happened in 1986. A new law allocated 100 billion lire. In the years from 1988 to 1994, the *Ufficio Sassi* - with the support of external consultants with a long proven experience - drafted the necessary plans, programs, and projects. It was then planned to merge the predominant housing function with some complementary tertiary functions that did not require to be concentrated in large building organisms and which, at the same time, were compatible with the precious maintenance of the shape, size, and typological structure of the *Sassi*. The goal was to bring the *Sassi* back to being a city and, as such, a place of income production. **A sector that was beginning to be taken into consideration was that of both national and international tourism.**

The first operational interventions were executed out by the Public Works. These were consolidation works carried out with largely invasive techniques, operated

in a logic of maximum profit using the regulations usually applied for consolidations due to a seismic disaster. Yet, Aldo Musacchio himself had clearly analyzed the impossibility of triggering recovery phenomena within historic centers with interventions in economic and social housing. However, the choices made can be explained by considering the dominant role in the city of construction companies that have grown since the *Sfollamento*. The same companies were then unable to convert into serious restoration businesses. Particularly questionable was the area behind the City Hall - which was entirely cemented with the so-called *Centro Direzionale*, a set of massive buildings that seriously altered the thin skyline of Matera - and the scenic opening between *Piazza Vittorio Veneto* and the *Sasso Barisano* below. This latter, created by Tommaso Giura Longo (1932-2018), was criticized by the architect Bruno Zevi (1918-2000), who attacked the Superintendence saying: *but the bloodless, frustrated emplo-*

yees do not agree. Intoxicated with monumentality, they pretend to block the passage with three skimpy arches. The result is a beautiful, picturesque, and idiotic illustrated postcard. In this period, however, the most serious damage was done on the underground city of Matera and its delicate network of channels and cisterns. *The shift of the image of the Sassi challenging the vision of misery and shame was achieved with the important inscription in the UNESCO World Heritage List, which happened in December 1993.* This event put to an end the first campaign of - at least questionable - actions made in the historic center of Matera.

Acito, L. (n. d.). 'I Sassi di Matera. Dal concorso d'idee all'iscrizione al Patrimonio UNESCO'. Bliò, F., Vadini, E., (2016). 'Matera e Adriano Olivetti'. Roma/Ivrea: Comunità Editrice.

Ai molli, frustrati impiegati non va bene: ebbri di monumentalità, pretendono di sbarrare il varco con tre archetti striminziti. Ne risulta una bella cartolina illustrata, pittoresca e idiota (p. 151).

UNESCO SITE AND ECOC

The responsibility of Matera's inclusion in the UNESCO World Heritage List can be largely attributed to the commitment of Architect Pietro Laureano an expe-

CENTRO DIREZIONALE

The Centro Direzionale district was a heavy urban intervention close to the historic center. These two imposing buildings are the Law Court (on the left) and the City Hall (on the right).



BELVEDERE

This picture shows Piazza Vittorio Veneto, the current heart of Matera. On the right, three arches give access to one of the most famous panoramic viewpoints over the historic town.

rt in desert oases and stone cities for UNESCO itself. It was his study - unified into the book 'Giardini di Pietra' - that convinced the experts of the world organization that Matera and the *Sassi* were a unique reality that had to be protected and enhanced. Laureano himself bought a house in the *Sassi* in 1991, when construction was continuing - even if there was no demand -, while the proposal to return to live in the *Sassi* was neither convenient nor accepted. In 1993, the evaluation made by ICOMOS in Cartagena, Colombia, recognized that the center of Matera met the following three criteria:

III: MATERA'S SASSI AND PARK REPRESENT AN EXAMPLE OF A ROCK-CUT TOWN, ADAPTED PERFECTLY TO ITS GEOMORPHOLOGICAL SCENARIO AND EXHIBITING COUNTINUITY OVER MILLENNIA.

UNESCO (ICOMOS)

IV: THE TOWN AND PARK REPRESENT AN EXAMPLE OF AN ARCHITECTURAL ENSEMBLE AND LANDSCAPE ILLUSTRATING A NUMBER OF HISTORIC STAGES.

UNESCO (ICOMOS)

V: THE TOWN AND PARK REPRESENT AN EXAMPLE OF TRADITIONAL HUMAN SETTLEMENT AND LAND-USE SHOWING THE EVOLUTION OF A CULTURE WHICH HAS MAINTAINED A HARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP WITH ITS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.

UNESCO (ICOMOS)

Matera was the first site worldwide to respect the criterion of 'cultural landscape'. This was identified the same previous year. The ICOMOS acknowledged the *Sassi* had retained a remarkable degree of architectural integrity - an 'authenticity' - thanks to the depopulation which took place during a period in which the integrity of many other similar historic centers was compromised. All in all, Matera was a symbol of a culture that recognizes that it is a product of man and - as such - it is subject to birth and development, but also to decline and disappearance.

Since the *Sassi* became a UNESCO World Heritage Site, Matera has accepted the overall international rules that require respect for the originality of the materials and not to destroy or replace ancient architectural elements or do intrusive consolidations. The Municipality of Matera equipped the *Sassi* with water, sewage, gas, electricity, and telecommunications networks and allocated a contribution from 30% to 50% for restructuring interventions. The value of the houses and caves exponentially increased and the requests to return to inhabit there multiplied.

A further driving force was the election of Matera in 2014 as European Capital of Culture 2019. That single year left behind further important redevelopment works: *Cava del Sole* and *Cava Paradiso* were reopened, the *Museo Nazionale* was born, the *Teatro Duni* and the Cathedral - reopened to the public almost after ten years of closure - were restored, and the *Matera Centrale* railway station was redeveloped by Stefano Boeri (1956). Matera is therefore the ECoC in first place for the percentage of tourism growth in the history of the event (+44% of tourists and +34% of presences in Basilicata), with almost 870.000 overnight stays.

Spaccapelo, N. (2000). 'Fondamento e orizzonte: scritti di antropologia e filosofia'. Roma: Armando Editore.

Una cultura che riconosce di essere un prodotto dell'uomo e in quanto tale soggetta a nascita e sviluppo, ma anche a declino e morte (p. 28).

IMAGE FRONTALITY

This frame is taken from the movie 'Il Vangelo secondo Matteo'. The film finally activated the public interest in the urgent conservation of an immense heritage that was sinking into neglect.

**THE RECENT IMPACT OF TOURISM**

Now we want to provide a numerical overview of the recent tourist development in Matera. In the period from 2014 to 2017, attendance in Matera grew by over 82%. We went from 11 accommodation units in 1999 to 482 in 2016, of which only 26 were hotels. There is therefore a strong fragmentation of the offer, which generates the fear that, as has already happened in other areas of Italy (exemplary cases are Venice and Alberobello), locals will be expropriated from their city and supplanted by tourists. **Nowadays, 25% of the houses in the historic center of Matera already are rented through Airbnb.**

However, as Laureano himself pointed out, these are phenomena that can be managed. Of course, there are damages, but we also see the merits: the tourist's eye often looks for the traditional, well-restored place. The private

sector itself knows that it must recover in a certain way. However, the data show that this evolution has led to an increase in prices for the population, as well as an increase in traffic. Below are three testimony bringing a particular point of view about the recent tourist vocation of Matera:

IN THE 1960S, EVEN A SIMPLE FOREIGNER WAS ALMOST AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL, LET ALONE THE CHINESE. IT IS AS IF THEY STOLE A PIECE OF INTIMACY FROM US, AS IF THEY PROFANE SOMETHING THAT BELONGS TO US, AS IF THEY SET THEIR SIGHTS ON A DAUGHTER.

EMMANUELE CURTI

I BOUGHT THIS HOUSE IN 1981 FOR 80 MILLION LIRE. NOW I SALE IT FOR 1,7 MILLION EUROS. THERE WAS A STRONG FEEL OF PROXIMITY. WE TALKED TO EACH OTHER FROM THE BALCONIES, WITHOUT EVEN HAVING TO RAISE OUR VOICES. NOW SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS WHISTLE ALL DAY TO ATTRACT THE ATTENTION OF VISITORS. THE SOUL OF THIS PLACE HAS BEEN LOST.

NICOLA FRANGIONE

I TOO REGRET LIVING IN THE VICINATO. I RENT THE GROUND FLOOR OF THE CAVE AS A HOLIDAY HOUSE THROUGH AIRBNB: IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP IT LIVING AND SOMETIMES I DON'T THINK IT'S NOT WORTH IT.

CHIARA PAOLICELLI

Curti, E. (2015). 'La materanità perduta e il turismo 3.0'. Il Quotidiano della Basilicata.

Negli Anni '60 anche un semplice straniero era un alieno, figurati i Cinesi. È come se rubassero un po' di intimità, profanassero qualcosa che ci appartiene, mettessero gli occhi su una figlia.

Zampano, G. (2017). 'Airbnb riempie Matera di turisti ma la svuota di abitanti'. Internazionale.

Ho comparato questa casa nel 1981 per 80 milioni di lire. Ora la vendo a 1,7 milioni di euro. V'era un forte senso del vicinato. Ci parlavamo dai balconi, senza neanche dover alzare la voce. Dai negozi e ristoranti fischiano tutto il giorno per attirare l'attenzione dei visitatori.

Zampano, G. (2017). 'Airbnb riempie Matera di turisti ma la svuota di abitanti'. Internazionale.

Anch'io rimpiango la vita del vicinato. Affitto il piano terra della grotta con Airbnb: è l'unico modo per tenerla in vita e a volte penso che non ne valga la pena.



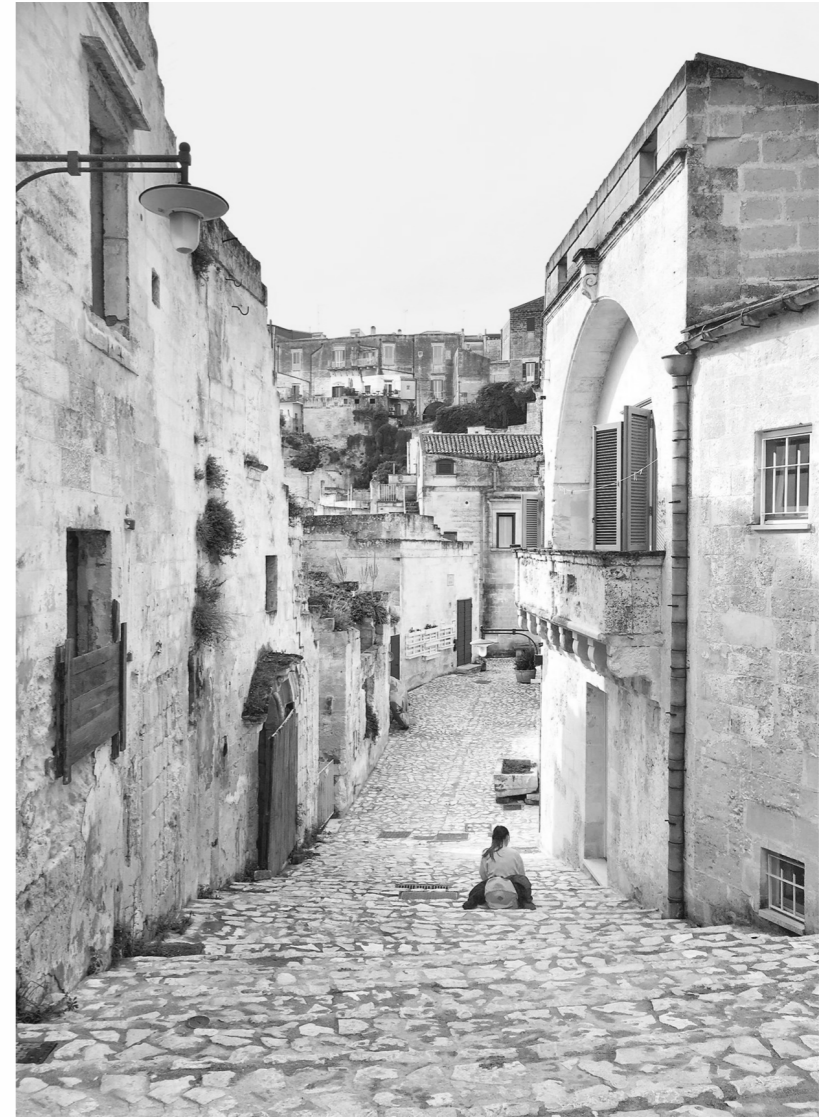
CONCLUSION

Matera represents a paradigm of the city opposite to the one we are traditionally used to. With its labyrinthic plots, underground passages, stairs, and almost inaccessible paths, in Matera, it is not important to reach a point, but to enjoy a path. The plot is not mastered by individual monuments or road axes, space is designed to linger, meet someone and get involved in social relationships. It is a city that has its essence in slowness, not speed. It is therefore not properly suited to the times of development imposed by modernity.

In a dimension necessary to solve a latent conflict and mend the relationship between the *Sassi* and the city, awareness is needed that the material, historical, and cultural diaphragm that always separated them must be definitively demolished. However, we can imagine that today unstitching is much more dangerous than in the past. The risk is inherent in the fact that the future possible transformation has the typical characteristics of irreversibility of the human action. This time the immaterial conditions are not at stake - as in the past -, but the material ones. Here, the new generations can better act because they lack the pain and the memory of the atavistic conditions of backwardness of the *Sassi* and because they are driven by the spirit of the new times. Trying to propose a mindset for further operations, participatory approach tends to be more sustainable, not only because it avoids creating certain bad stereotypes, but also because the local community has a greater interest in protecting itself and the surrounding environment from mass tourism.



CONCLUSION



This thesis wanted to retrace the emblematic architectural and social experience of Matera over the last few decades. This was done in the belief that understanding the varied approaches used for the case of the Lucanian city can be raised as a model for interventions in comparable situations. We wondered how the rural lifestyles and values of the dwellers of Matera have been preserved and reinterpreted during the public intervention to modernize the city which took place from the 1950s. This investigation touched upon a very specific and defined case in its complexity, but numerous branches sprout from it, which can extend to a multitude of realities in different sectors: not only architecture and urbanism, but also sociology, ethnography, economics, and entrepreneurship.

The relationship between the *Sassi* and the rest of the city is still being discussed. It's not a fact of today, it's an ancient relationship in the history of Matera, often conflictual, but still alive in the contemporary world and therefore open to possible developments. From the *Sassi* to the *Piano*, from the *Sassi* to the city of new districts: the dualism recalls what Marxist politician Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) indicated between city and countryside, between a progressive dimension (the city) and a backward one (the countryside), between the North and the South of Italy. But, by an accident of history, the parts have reversed: nowadays, the *Sassi* seem to be the real point of innovation, the future. The city realized from the 1980s onwards appears to be non-innovative - especially in its framework and urban dimension -. It still leans in a quite worrying condition of resignation to inactivity. The definition of innovation is in sustainability, in the reversibility of processes, and in practicability.

After the Second World War, the *Sassi* were still a treasure of millennial values. It was particular historical conditions that made one mistakenly think that there was nothing to save there. The conflict and exodus from the hinterland and the countryside - where the peasants worked - accentuated the densification and housing promiscuity of the *Sassi*, which reached about 17.000 inhabitants. The historic *vicinati*, the courtyard houses, and the same prestigious buildings were shattered into several units where each family was reduced to living in what was only a cell of a multifunctional and integrated system. The storage caves, the cavities for animals, the vegetable gardens, and the cisterns themselves became homes. The transformation of the latter into domestic environments eliminated the very symbol of the historical genius of the *Sassi*. Over time, the memory of their form and function was totally lost and the resource management system on which the urban fabric was based became illegible. These conditions explain the definition given to the *Sassi* - the *Vergogna Nazionale* - which consequently led to their emptying for hygienic reasons.

The logic for the UNESCO inscription recognized the *Sassi* as an ingenious urban system with an ability to harmoniously use the rare local resources: water, stone, and light. The ensemble constitutes a global system in which every smallest element is functional and bearer of complex meanings. From the patinas of the lichens, to the traces of excavation left in the caves, from the marks of the master quarrymen on the stone blocks up to the conformation of the underground cavities, to the articulations and fragmentations of urban spaces with openings or closings on the landscape. Each element is fun-

THE PIANO

The Piano constitutes the baroque and 19th-century part of the city, and develops around Piazza Vittorio Veneto and Via del Corso.



ctional to the control of the microclimate and resources. Each of these unique characters must be safeguarded in the interest of humanity; and in the 1950s this was already understood. These same values were applied to design modern neighbourhoods. It could be said that the Matera Plan was wrecked when the inhabitants began to be transferred to neighbourhoods with little reference to these archetipal values, neighbourhoods other than *La Martella*, to be clear. Yet, the mistakes were upstream: it was not necessary to generalize and declare all the *Sassi* uninhabitable. An inverse process to that of the earlier 20th century could have been initiated: adequately repopulating countryside and again decreasing the population density of the *Sassi* to make them suitable for welcoming life, as they always had been.

In the subsequent redevelopment of the *Sassi*, it was initially strongly believed that the only effective way to promoting the immigration of new people and - more importantly - the return of the original inhabitants was the one that would consider erasing the mark of backwardness and the memory of hellish living conditions the *Sassi* still had. In the absence of a definition and acknowledgment of the specific values that ruled a prosperous community here at least till the early 20th century, these actions ended up erasing precisely those fragile, but very significant elements of man's commitment to building this ecosystem. Even a restoration, if not properly implemented, could have led Matera to its definitive decline. Luckily, these values were rediscovered and it is now clear that they can also be adapted to modern times. With this objective, a controlled tourist development can even help this too.



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MATERA COUNTRYMEN CAPITAL

In the 1950s, Italy recovered from the trauma of the Second World War. However, in the deep South of the country, a city remained alien to this progress. Indeed, isolated for a long time, it was unable to challenge new immigration movements and ended up exceeding its saturation limit. That town was Matera, the 'Shame of Italy'. In a country projected towards the new millennium, it was unacceptable that almost 20.000 people were living together with animals in dirty and cramped caves. Matera seemed to blame the national political class for not having taken steps to eradicate this age-old misery.

The city had to be decongested, so to move part of its population and allow the caves to regain the human scale they always had. However, it did generalize: all the caves had to be cleared and the delicate countrymen life had to be transferred to a galaxy of model rural villages. In the end, few of these were made, none properly. Those same people who lived in poverty were moved to modern dormitory districts, which yet had all the comforts allowed by modern times, but which were not suitable to hosting a community shaped by consolidated urban and interpersonal relationships.

Only in the 1990s, it was realized that that life, those people, could not survive outside of those same narrow caves. The human and the architectural and natural components were inseparable. It did begin to realize what should have been done long before: restoring the architectural value of the caves, which today is even beginning to attract mass tourism.