

Reflection.

P5 – Landscape Architecture Track

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This document represented a reflection of the graduation project: from “Stone City” to “Hidden Water Region” visualize and value the invisible water flows in Matera.

Academic relevance.

Research and design

The project starts with careful investigations about the traditional water system in Sassi di Matera, and end with a project with different water element designs across the region. The close relationship between research and design is important for understanding the project. On the one hand, the research and design focus on different ways of water recycling at different places and scales; on the other hand, they also show a continuity of the hidden water circularity relevant to people living in the area from past to the present. The research part discusses about the current lost cultural heritage (water harvesting system) in Sassi as a living system in the past, revealing its circular system, social network and green space. While, the design part aims to offer new landscape solutions to today's problems, guided by old wisdoms from Sassi.

Specificity and universality

The water circulation, green space and social life in the traditional water system of Sassi are not only applicable to Matera, but can also be used as a good example in the design of more arid and water-scarce areas. This thesis shows the possibility of design practice in Matera. Through a series of problem analysis, selection of water elements and research of water cycles, and representation of local landscape, the theory is embodied in a specific space with new scenarios.

Flowscapes studio

The Flowscapes studio, the MSc Landscape Architecture graduation program, offers a diverse range of approaches to landscape design and aims to create flows to influence our society in different ways. This thesis is done in the Circular Water Stories (CWS) lab, where water is seen as an important flow in landscape design. As a result, the hidden flows and circularity of water help to build a sustainable living system for people.

Practice of Landscape Architecture

This project explores the identity of landscape designers as coordinators between land and stakeholders, achieving a future vision that benefits both parties. For the agricultural industry, farmers may only consider the benefits and overlook the ecological and landscape value that their land can achieve. Design encourages providing more choices for land owners, rather than having a top to bottom method. Although a variety of renovation plans were provided for current small olive orchard, there is still a lot of room for improvement due to the lack of

site research and interviews with land owners.

Design focus.

Sustainability of water

Sustainability is the most important concept in this thesis, with it researched in Sassi and designed in Matera. The sustainable use of wastewater solves the water crisis of local agriculture, the dismissed drinking water from public fountains revitalizes the community life, and the rainwater controlled along the *grabiglioni* in Sassi di Matera reminds people of the hidden water city.

Different design scales

Designs proposed for the three water elements focus on different scales because they vary in size and water capacity. The drinking water fountain, as the most basic water unit scattered in city, has the potential of working locally as a neighborhood unit. The *grabiglioni*, now a hidden memory in old Sassi, has the perfect linear form to bring everything together for showing a bigger circularity in Sassi scale. The wastewater treatment plant, with the biggest water capacity, is the most promising supply for new green spaces in this dry region, so it can contribute to the big changes in the regional scale.

Social and moral aspects.

Cultural heritage under tourism

Through the design processes, the cultural heritage is seen as a significant topic. As a cultural heritage, Sassi di Matera, on the one hand, has made big contribution to the local economy due to the booming tourism, and on the other hand, it has also brought an impact on the lives of the local people living with the tangible cultural heritage. Under the influence of the tourism industry, the identity of Sassi di Matera as a stone city has been continuously promoted and rendered as the only cultural symbol in the eyes of tourists, while its internal mechanics ensuring the sustainability of living has been forgotten. Therefore, this thesis proposes a cultural heritage design that does not directly design the cultural heritage, but focus on the new design for local people and their needs. In addition, the naïve image of Sassi can be replaced by a panorama of Matera. The local rural landscape, stunning natural landscape, as well as the rural and urban life will be introduced to all.

Sustainability of development

The international fame of Sassi di Matera also made the rest of the city an invisible part. The life of local out of Sassi seems to be separated from that booming cultural icon. This trend leads to the discussion of the sustainable development of the region. The concept of sustainable development acknowledges that issues related to our health, culture, finance, security, and environment are not isolated, in conflict with one another, but rather are interrelated and interdependent. According to the UN Sustainable Development Goals framework, this is explained simply as the 3 pillars or 'triple bottom line' of economy, society and environment. This project tries to use a landscape approach as the start to unite different

entities across Matera, influencing the local economy and society. The underdevelopment of southern Italy in general also makes this project bring new insights to the southern territory. The low-investment approach to dealing with wastewater, and flexible options for olive farmers to have an ecological friendly orchard with promising economical results would be good examples for the sustainable development of the south.

Southern question

Southern Question (ie. the coexistence of an industrialized North side by side with an underdeveloped South.) is the main social problem confronting Italian society from the days of national unification in the latter part of the nineteenth century to the present (Piccone, 1974). Following the war, the agricultural industry witnessed a notable shift in its practices influenced by the implementation of the announced land reform, which was meant to address the unevenness in economic development between southern Italy—mainly rural and lacking infrastructures and job opportunities. Apart from the prevalent cereal monoculture (wheat and olive), which was typical for the sector, a significant change occurred with the transfer of land ownership from large-scale owners to smaller and medium-sized proprietors. Facing the future sustainable development of southern Italy, it is meaningful to seek solutions at a larger landscape level to achieve a balance between economic development and environmental protection. In addition, the value of agricultural landscapes in ecology and tourism can also help economic development. Smaller design interventions and more choices for farmers which do not need big capitals but with promising economic results, and investment from municipality for public entities would be meaningful.