

Introduction to the “Paduli park” project

In order to identify the Italian nomination for the Prize, the Italian Ministry of Heritage, Cultural Activities and Tourism has launched a competition procedure. The documentation submitted by the several candidates constitutes a valuable survey of the projects realized in our Country. All of the projects show how strongly the communities feel the necessity to express local identities. “Paduli Park”, which has been chosen as Italian nomination, was selected and unanimously considered the most deserving thanks to the originality of the method, the completeness and the effectiveness of the actions taken during its realization and thanks to its full correspondence with the principles of the European Landscape Convention.

For a sustainable development

The project focuses on sustainability as the founding principle of the activities started in 2003 by a group of citizens from San Cassiano. It consists in the restoration and protection of an abandoned area in a state of decay with ancient olive groves, located within the same municipality in Bosco Belvedere.

Strengthening identity and the sense of belonging have become the central focus and the shared keywords of all of the activities realized with the aim of restoring the cultural heritage, by linking the culture of the places with the historically recognized natural features as well as integrating rural components within urban areas.

To the main objective of restoration of the olive groves, the project added further and well-defined sustainable goals:

- the recovery of the “caseddrha”, the typical small local farm. The intervention was an opportunity to experience a model of sustainable protection and development of a microagricultural architecture.
- the test of special accommodation points, fully sustainable, as a result of a call for design and an international workshop on sustainable housing (“Nesting the Paduli area”).
- the search for a touristic attraction capacity through different cultural and artistic activities, both tangible and intangible (music, theatre, dance), to disseminate cultural issues on local knowledge and productions, obtained with invitations to international competitions and the promotion of all forms of cultural local expressions intended as knowledge heritage able to attract even the younger generations.

For the exemplariness:

More than the project itself, its implementation procedures and its being gradually enriched make it a model to be transferred to other territories as well. During all phases, the communication strategy implemented was of utmost importance. The operational method of the “Thematic workshops” contributes significantly to make this project a reference example. The workshops involved qualified professionals, normally not used to deal with landscape issues, who were asked to actively participate in interventions of high interest for the development of the whole project. Moreover, the “laboratory” model is of great interest also thanks to its ability to engage the community and the government simultaneously, with the creation of a system of relationships both at a local and a regional level as far participation planning and agreement on the implemented choices are concerned.

In brief, the project exemplariness is made up of investing energy and creating ideas to combine economic aspects with land management issues and with the protection and enhancement of landscape values through a systematic participation process. Indeed a social action model, assessed by the Region, has been realized, a sort of recognized good practice to develop common and democratic processes which are essential to foster a sustainable potential social and cultural landscape, putting the collective memory and the local identity at the heart of all actions, as set out in the European Convention, in order to guarantee the success of the civil relationships among territory, landscape and democracy.

For public participation:

Thanks to the activities carried out by LUA (the winning group) and the numerous coordinated initiatives aiming at raising awareness about the cultural and landscape values embedded in the context, a strong supportive feeling grew up within the local population, which could not be ignored by the authorities, primarily for its ability to succeed in combining protection and socio-economic improvement in a neglected and abandoned territory.

Acceptances to this initiative have gradually intensified over the years and the population was fully involved in a series of activities aimed at raising awareness on the historical-cultural values of the landscape and on the strong sense and meaning of identity linked to the olive trees to be protected, which are considered evidence of the socio-economic history of this area. This process of involvement and awareness has influenced the development strategies in the municipalities involved in the project. But the effects of public participation are more extensive: in accordance with the Regional Law (n. 21/2008), an integrated programme of territorial regeneration has been prepared, a tool that effectively established a “pact” between the local community and the regional administration. Thanks to the “pact” a technical committee was set up in each of the 10 local government technical departments coordinated by LUA and the Park was identified as the territorial area where to actuate regeneration interventions at an urban and territorial scale.

10 renovation projects of city centres were prepared and a design for their infrastructural connections, involving the Park area, was also forecasted. The programme was then assumed as priority policy by the involved Municipalities and, as *Integrated Program of Territorial Regeneration*, “Terre Paduli” was first on the list of projects approved for funding in 2011.

To raise awareness:

The awareness of all local actors and their direct involvement in the processes of development and protection of the common good “landscape” was the main engine for the interventions, especially in the first phase of implementation of the project.

The communication strategies which have been adopted have aroused passion and enthusiasm in the people involved, making them appreciate those local values which characterize their territory and in particular Paduli Park.

The attention has been catalyzed by adapting the language, the themes and the forms of communication to a specific target of people, every time giving a specific character to each thematic workshop, laboratory or event.