“Degrees of Freedom”. The “natural” and rural areas as contemporary generators of social affective synergies

Angel L. Gonzalez Morales, European Phd Polytechnic of Milan

1. Degrees of Freedom. Affectivity as memory and imagination

Slower natural processes may transform an ancient landscape, or social shifts cause bizarre dislocations. In the midst of these events, people remember the past and imagine the future. Lynch K., What time is this place?, MIT Press Media Departament, 1972

The actual existing relation between the population and the institutions, the monument and the house, shows us like still today, one of the main problems of the city and the territory continues being “the will to restructure the city from above” and the imposition of abstract conclusions that does not take in consideration the cultural dimension of the human conviviality. This situation will become necessary the research and reinvention of instruments to promote and generate new mechanisms of reinterpretation that allow the use of individual “auto-generated” relations and reactions existing in the territory.

This text will begin from the idea of considering the affectivity like the origin of an "internal process" be able to generate a new feeling of belonging. Sensation of amenity linked to a reinforcement of the freedom of choice, which will make us focus the attention in the current need to rethink the role of the architecture from a symbolic point of view, and in particular as a consequence of the action of singular individuals, of their desires, choices and decisions.

It will be this consideration of the architecture like a cultural representation\textsuperscript{1} linked to the construction and representation of a condition of own and specificity humanity, which will allow us not only the conservation and reinvention of a feeling of belonging and the built of a new sense of domesticity, but also from an the identitary point of view because the affectivity will can be considerate the fundamental concept for the creation of imaginative spontaneous mechanisms able not only to allow the integration and the symbolic intermediation with other diverse individualities, but also to define and protect a specificity, an concrete way of "knowing" and "recognizing" in the new global scale of the Net-City.

From this point of view that the figure of the architect (and of the architecture) will turn in fundamentally. Not only as manager or planner of a present to the search of a foreseen and predictable future, but as interpreter and protector, of a history and a memory turned into "way" (I specify and only) of living through a certain place.

\textsuperscript{1} ROGERS E.N., Gli elementi del fenomeno architettonico, Marinotti, Milano 2006.
In the following reflection we will try to develop this key idea that will allow us to understand the territory as the result of an affective process of “internal” evolution (J. Portugali) link to the individual capacity of the persons to made became a territory, HIS territory, and not only recognizing it as part of a collective memory and a shared history, but also as result of a constant transformation in the time based on the imagination and the invention of this population.

2. **Inventive and creativity: “From the form to the norm”**

We have to create cities for free and alive men, that is to say capable of being diverse. The heart of the city is the maxim expression of this quality, must be therefore the place where the freedom is explained and perfected.


There is no Country which has not been socked for this renovation. Fruit of the calculation, which is universal, and of a new conscience borns during the first century of the industrial age, this urbanism and this architecture spread in the whole world possess common features. Some years of expansion will be sufficient in order that made appear spontaneously the local characters imposed by the climate and the customs of life.

Le Corbusier., *Maniera di pensare l’urbanistica*, Laterza, Bari 2004

We will divide therefore of taking again the idea already expressed by authors as E. N. Rogers, F. Choay or R. Venturi referred to the Utopian and authoritarian character of the urban projects proposed by the modern movement and of his nefatas consequences in the planning and the urban current project, to propose a major humanization of the architectural process promoting strategies of resistance to the global standardization thanks to the participation in the capture of decisions, the action and comparison of individual consciences across the exigency of a major freedom of choice and of the consideration of the difference as sign of identity, fundamental in the construction of a space, natural and social (a context) shared that allows the foundation of a local common heritage.

These concepts, linked to the importance of the symbolic aspect of the architecture, will allow us to pass from the study of a more popular and vernacular interpretation of the architectural project carried out for R. Venturi to the study of the importance of big cities peripheries (as an example of the capacity of the populations to take necessary decisions to define its own space across the use of decorative elements and formal very common rules) for the research of symbolic elements and rule of design. More remote, isolated and forgotten zones i.e. “not urban areas” which never contain intact the spatial premises able to start an urban metabolic sustainable development, will guarantee the conservation of the character and the local specificity of a place, in the time.

Capacity, through the individual action to modify the general context, which will be understood therefore as a real index of diversity and which will recognize the existence of a semiotic wealth giving us the possibility of measuring the existence in a neighborhood of a “feeling of belonging and of appropriation” depending on the free modifications realized on the “architectural original morfotypes” and which have formed this neighborhood along the history. Analysis and knowledge of the urban phenotypes arisen from an original genotype that will allow us to locate in addition the most propitious zones where to project strategies of collaboration and civil participation.

---

2 CHOAY, F., *Le patrimoine en question anthologie puor un combat*, articolo non pubblicato.
Creative mechanisms of project process generators of self-organization, which they would allow to create an architecture as the people wants it, but also as the architect it has decided about the search of a collective memory. Creation through the architecture of a series of composite and geometric rules, which in hands of a population, they would provoke a morphologic / functional renovation able to turn into a cultural synthesis and representation of a chosen identity.

There would be allowed this way the transformation of the old “authoritarian” premise promoted by the modern movement (from the norm to the form), allowing the step a version more democratic and participative, able to create from the study of certain historical existing forms (through its formal, spatial and environmental characteristics), the construction of a new architectural and urban composite norm.

3. The example of the Gallineras neighborhood and the Bay of Cadiz Natural Reserve. The “natural” and rural areas as contemporary generators of social affective synergies

Once in Seville, in the past, who wants make construct a house said to the architect or simply to the bricklayer which was the dimension of the court and and then ask to obtaining about the rooms that were possible. Also this case for me is connected with the problem of the freedom and the imagination, because the things to fix are small but cannot be been wrong, these are the last sense of the construction.

Rossi A., Autobiografia scientifica, Il Saggiatore, Milano 2009

The generalizations serve to confirm the right of the new ideas to the life, these will never drive to the invention or to the discovery of new goings. The process is the inverse one, the life is done of spontaneous inventions (…)

Le Corbusier, Maniera di pensare l’urbanistica, Laterza, Bari 2004

To understand clearly the concepts previously developed I will briefly describe a practical example of a best practice in landscape design, which highlight the importance of rural and “natural” areas to recover the specific identity and the “local character” of any site: Gallineras’ Neighborhood (San Fernando Andalusia, Spain) case.

The present case of study will represent an example of design focused to demonstrate the importance of the Natural Reserve of Bay of Cádiz as a source of opportunities for the regeneration and reactivation of the territory (in ecological, cultural, historic, technological, social and economic terms). The natural reserve is a “natural” element able to originate and strengthen the structure of urban identity and the internal codes of the chronological mutation and adaptation process which generates economic and social affective synergies. The defense of existing values is therefore guaranteed and alternative renovation processes are set up to improve degenerated environments.

The Gallineras’ neighborhood is also important because is part of San Fernando’s eastern suburban area, i.e. a city district that represents a precise definition of the main vulnerabilities of Cadiz’s metropolitan area - such as lack of employment, drug traffic, citizen insecurity. For this reason the present case study is also focalized in the reinforcement of inhabitant’s local identity and sense of belonging. Such approach could create new alternatives for the big works architectures, which are usually globally oriented and unrelated to their context: it’s an effort to understand the Natural Reserve of Bahía de Cádiz as a “landscaping element” from a natural, geographical and historical point of view, and not – as it is considered today – simply as an obstacle for moving from one urban center to another. It should indeed be
designed as the central space that links and unifies all the particularities of Cadiz Bay territory. This new point of view would allow people of Cadiz to consider the Natural Reserve as a space full of opportunities to generate a real sustainable development from an indentitary point of view and a container of rules of design, images and architectural form able to define the character and specificity of the context.

At the time of study morphological and historical characteristics between this urban area and the natural reserve, I could find a fundamental relation between the geometrical dimension and relation of the actual houses of the Gallinera’s neighborhood and the original houses linked with the agricultural use localized in the natural area. After a conscientious analysis I get to synthesize them in a little quantity of geometrical rules and decorative elements.

Figure 1. Morphological and historical characteristics between the urban area and the natural reserve. Doctoral Thesis. Angel L. Gonzalez Morales
The main idea of this project was to turn this morphological rules into an urban normative, permitting the freedom of its use in hands of the inhabitants, and returning to them the roll of generators of necessary transformations for the development of their neighborhood. The application of a series of simple rules of design through its recombination and continued mutation will allow a renovation and constant environmental evolution of the context depending on the desires and needs of the community which live there. After the project's development it's possible to affirm that this process guarantee the conservation and reinvention in time of a sentimental relation between citizens and the environment (natural and urban areas) where they live and provide that they will form part of their own biography and daily experience, of their memory and their imagination, result of the sum of affection and creativity.

Figure 2. Project Proposal or the development of the Gallinera's neighborhood. Doctoral Thesis. Angel L. Gonzalez Morales