Heritage: Re-informing Pre-Existence(s)

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What is the proper term, today, for our relationship with a past—call it inheritance, pre-existence, context—to value and re-signify it at the same time? If, in the traditional approach, the key has been the restoration (and/or reconstruction) of the "already previous," and if in the modernist approach the intention has been the regeneration (and redefinition) of the "already obsolete" (and its morphological and epistemological transformation), the contemporary approach and the new environmental sensitivity have prioritised the recycling (and reuse) of resources—of the "already existing"—as a new, sensitive paradigm.

The impact of new technologies at the turn of the century, the new logics of a multi-layered complexity (and multi-programme), and the potential of increasingly responsive environments (which are more sensitive to information processing) invite us not only to *recycle* reality but to *re-inform* it (and to reactivate it) by incorporating new layers of superimposed realities—combined, conjugated, superposed, infiltrated, crossed, or hybridised—in synergy and mutual interaction. This means preserving assets and previous values and incorporating new relational scenarios in sensitive and empathetic interaction with them—rather than in contradictory confrontation, as in the modernist approach. Obviously, reactivating reality implies both action and relationship (or relationship and action) at the same time, as well as strategy—not just form. A procedural approach to design—architectural, urban, and landscape—calls on us to "integrate systems" rather than "(re)compose" forms and/or formalisms. Paraphrased today, fifteen years later, the voice of *Urban Recycling*, collected in the *Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture* (Gausa et al, 2003) could read:

"The notion of recycling—and that of re-information, which today is associated with it—introduces the need to devise new more complex procedural responses (multi-layer and multi-level) to those pre-existing compilations and systems, with both values and conflicts, that can be made more precise through necessary strategic and qualitative reconsiderations. Old fabrics (historical or traditional), new development zones (functional, productive, or residential), intense

landscapes (referential), and important eco-systems (environmental) constitute an immense natural and anthropic legacy—sometimes rich, other times more obsolete or deficient—that today presents important socio-cultural and environmental challenges in understanding its possible evolutionary condition.

Beyond the heritage value of those scenarios which formulate explicitly 'active/ attractive/operative' contexts, the majority of our own *spatial-cultural* inheritance suffers from deficits and/or programmatic, constructive, and environmental pathologies that need, in functional and informational terms, to be addressed through forceful 're-activating' operations. Old historical fabrics, modern residential zones, tourist megalopolises, non-functional peripheries, and waste or marginal landscapes would be some of the possible settings—usually too 'linked' to other environments or too 'recent' to be comprehensively analysed— called to accommodate new projects of empathic reactivation, renewal, and/or re-information; projects capable of curbing possible processes of wear, densification, mismatch, stress, and/or maladjustment, through actions—global and local—of strategic redefinition and reformulation (spatial, iconographic, and urban) able to foster new qualitative relationships between 'realities in processes of change' and 'accelerated changing environments.'

All this reflects the existence of a much deeper debate about the desire for 'preservation' and the need for 'intervention' in our environment (and the consequent concern around the forms of occupation, performance, and colonisation 'of' and 'in' the contemporary *multi-city*—but also 'of' and 'in' the contemporary *multi-landscape)* that indicates, in short, the collapse of the old disciplinary *(re) creative* inertias and paradigms—and their replacement by new, more complex, interactive systems and interrelations, far from the comfortable parameters within which, until recently, traditional urban planning had been discussed."

Bibliography:

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