

The 12th International Conference of National Trusts
New Delhi, India, December 3-5, 2007

An Integrated Approach to the Valorization and Management of Small Historical Centres in Italy: Good Policies and Good Practices

Manuela RICCI, Director

Fo.Cu.S. Centre (Formazione, Cultura, Storia) for the Integrated Valorization and
Management of Small Historical Centres, their Landscapes and their Hinterlands,
Sapienza Università di Roma
focus@uniroma1.it

Pietro GARAU, Director

Urban Research Centre for the Developing Countries, (Centro PVS), Department of
Territorial and Urban Planning (DIPTU), Sapienza Università di Roma
centro.pvs@uniroma1.it

KEYWORDS

Italy; small historical centres; valorization; integrated approaches; policies and practices.

ABSTRACT

The paper illustrates good policies and practices from Italy for the valorization and management of small historical centres. This topic has great relevance in our country since such centres cover a notable proportion of the country's territory and are the custodians of a significant portion of Italy's cultural and environmental heritage. From the end of the 1970s, Italian historical centres have been the focus of restoration activities, but mainly for the maintenance of single buildings, rather than for the centre as a whole. Recent good practices, however, show an increasing focus on valorization models based on the integration of sectoral and territorial aspects. Valorization strategies are particularly effective when they extend beyond a single municipality's boundaries to encompass "territorial networks", and when restoration activities are

accompanied by socio-economic development and “value creation” while respecting the landscape and the environment. Integration also means synergizing “material” actions (restoration, conservation) with “immaterial” elements (for example, the valorization of local culture and traditions).

One of the key sectors in this overall process is tourism. Faced as we are with the relentless march of globalization, it is vital to safeguard the “culture of place” and to nurture development models based on community participation and the re-construction of local identities. In this connection, a synergic approach for research and training has been created by adding to the existing Orvieto-based graduate teaching programme (Master ACT) a new centre devoted to national and international research on the integrated valorization and management of small historical centres, their landscapes and their hinterlands.

Introduction ¹

As many as 91.8% of Italian municipalities have no more than 15,000 inhabitants, with their total surface area accounting for 70.4% of the whole national territory. Within their jurisdictions, which contain 42.18% of the country’s population, one or more historical settlements are almost always located.

Many of these have been abandoned, especially by the young, seeking a job or better housing. Their progressive degradation would mean the loss of centres that are vital from the standpoint of maintaining the country’s landscape, environment and geomorphology.

¹ The raw material for this paper is drawn from a special *reportage* prepared by Manuela Ricci for the no.133 issue of the main town planning journal in Italy, *Urbanistica*, and containing, in addition to an introductory overview by the same author, numerous articles describing national, regional and local experiences and good practices for the valorization of small historic centres in Italy.

The imperative to avert this loss is coupled by the realization that physical renewal, restoration and maintenance of the existing urban fabric must be integrated with intangible actions in a number of other areas.

In addition, just as it does not seem sufficient to concentrate on mere physical rehabilitation, it does not seem sufficient to concentrate only on the scale of the small town (“borgo”) nor even the whole municipality alone. The required dimension is an inter-municipal one. There are two reasons for this.

The *first one* is the positive potential of cooperation among various administrations and various subjects carrying on their activity in the territory and sharing human resources and cultural assets. Reasoning in terms of *systems*, rather than *points*, could be the keystone. This is demonstrated by the French experience, where intermunicipality has become the key dimension of territorial governance and local development.

The second argument militating in favour of an intermunicipal approach is the need to harmonize and integrate measures for the protection of landscape and the environment. Physical rehabilitation, attention to the environment and to the new forms of agricultural promotion, actions aimed at creating employment and at promoting training and service activities, developing forms of sustainable tourism - all with the overall objective of keeping the inhabitants in the territory, or of bringing them back there – are some of the building blocks of the road to improvement.

So far, however, small historical centres have been looked upon from a number of separate perspectives – be they the built environment, local development, demographic issues, the environment, commerce and others. Only recently, regional legislation has attempted to harmonize and integrate them into coherent policies and actions.

In addition to innovative recent regional legislation, special attention should also be paid to new practices derived from programmes funded by the European Union: Urban I and II, which also contemplate measures for the revitalization of small historical centres; other programmes such as Life, addressing development issues in rural contexts; Interreg, which aim at identifying and sharing across the Europe good practices for territorial planning and development.

Thus, the inroads to improvement are numerous. At the same time, it is also useful to mention some of the main challenges facing possible approaches, solutions, and actions that may determine success or failure.

Integrating Sectoral and Territorial Dimensions

A crucial point emerges: the possible “cohabitation” or “integration” between the town planning regulations of the municipality’s master plan, on one hand, and activities, functions and actions on a broader administrative and territorial scale, on the other.

The experiences analyzed show that reasoning according to watertight compartments is not particularly productive, and in fact prevents from achieving the value added that only integration at sectoral and territorial levels can create.

Integration is now the road that many municipalities and local governments are pursuing, even alongside more “traditional”, consolidated, less innovative initiatives.

Anchoring Projects to the Territory

This approach, however, also poses the challenge avoid the mechanical adoption of recurrent, banal solutions, e.g. the network of paths; the wine and gastronomic routes; the “borgo”-museum; the hosting “borgo”; the “natural commercial centre”, etc.

Re-use and Accessibility to Counter Depopulation Trends

A basic condition for the rehabilitation and improvement of small historical centres is a reversal of depopulation trends. For this to take place it is necessary to provide these centres with the necessary services.

While on the one hand it might seem relatively simple to combine small historical centres and urban quality, on the other hand their rather rigid and calibrated structure creates no few readjustment and retrofitting problems concerning, for example, modern living standards and accessibility.

Conserving the Identity of People and Places

The key concept of improvement processes is identity. A large city or a small town is made up of physical objects that have their own history linked to the evolution of the relations between town and territory and to its economic and social transformations. But a centre does not consist solely of physical objects; it consists also of its inhabitants, of their way of interacting with the places, of perceiving them and identifying with them: it is necessary to be aware that any physical transformation leads to a reformulation of the mental maps of the inhabitants. Therefore, each project has to ensure that this reformulation is not laborious and does not create imbalances. At the same time, the urban identity of a territorial system is in constant evolution. Old identities have to come to terms with the new identities of new inhabitants, many of whom from outside Europe, who are the bearers of new ways of living the urban and domestic space.

Not just Commerce and Tourism

Promoting commerce and tourism are formulae very often banked on for the promotion and improvement of the (minor) historical centres. The risks of such policies, above all when understood in a sectoral sense, are evident: cases of lost identity, of the upsetting

of activities, in which the local community is relegated to marginal positions, are not infrequent. But does a possibility exist of proposing new models of development based on local resources? And what opportunities are there?

Certainly new technologies, biological products, cultural tourism and what is termed knowledge economics can act as a driving force for the re-development of these centres: repopulation, new activities for residents, old and new, and the promotion of quality tourism that gives heed to the places and to the needs of the users.

1. Good Policies: New Regional Laws and Programmes for the Revitalization of Historical Centres

Recently, many regional governments in Italy have enacted legislation and financed programmes for the conservation and valorisation of small historical centres.

A first important aspect addressed was the delimitation of historical centres for the purpose of channelling public funding. Of the regions that have chosen such a criterion, Sardinia and Campania have created their own definition of historical centre, while others have limited themselves to adopting the well-tested “A-zoning”, introduced by national legislation in 1968. Other regions, instead, have chosen to avoid a specific delimitation and to make use of different classification criteria (indicators, inventories, catalogues). These experiences share a vision of the historical centre as a vulnerable asset; hence the concern found in virtually all of the regions’ legislative experience is to arrest and invert the socio-economic and demographic exodus of population from historical centres. The most frequent goals of regional legislation and programmes are the conservation and enhancement of assets and the improvement of their utilization for

tourism purposes. Urban regeneration and support for cultural, tourist and economic development are also prominent on the list.

The commitment to strengthening social cohesion and to rehabilitating historical buildings for purposes of “limiting the consumption of territorial resources” are peculiar but significant features of Italy’s two insular regions, Sicily and Sardinia.

As to the envisaged range of actions, they can be succinctly summarized by means of a classification based on a gradient of increasing complexity.

- a first level includes interventions limited to the physical improvement of historical assets.
- a second level refers to interventions on open spaces, often outside of the perimeter of the historical town walls, above all for reorganizing mobility and improving the general conditions of accessibility.
- a third level corresponds to the so-called “complex programmes”, introduced by national legislation to leverage public investment as an attractor of funding partnerships with the private sector.
- a fourth level includes initiatives particularly attentive to the territorial scale and designed to facilitate the creation of a coherent strategic plan on the part of networks of municipalities, defined as a necessary pre-requisite for funding. Sardinia is a case in point.

The increasing complexity of the strategic dimension of interventions corresponds to the progressive demise of the vision of the historical centre as a self-defined asset, in favour of a vision of its belonging to a broader territorial and cultural space. This certainly has to do with the evolution of the concept of safeguarding the landscape, but it is also in connection with the growing awareness of the necessity to act first and foremost on the

conditions of liveability of historical centres, as a crucial factor of economic and cultural survival. Of course, the decisive aspect in the regional governments' activities is the strategy through which the objectives are pursued.

In this connection, initiatives may be distinguished between those aimed at rehabilitation actions led by municipal-private sector partnerships and those addressed directly to private actors in support of economic development; however, the entity of the two groups is still quite unbalanced in favour of the former. The logic thus still prevails of the (physical) measure on the container rather than the intangible one on the content, favoured by a reliance on traditional approaches. The participation of private partners, in fact, is solicited only in half of regionally-funded initiatives, nor in this sense was the lever used of assessment criteria of the proposals, the majority of which refer generically to the quality of the design. Only in four regions is the accent placed on the integration of public and private resources.

Other important criteria concern the degree of concerted discussion and participation, technological innovations and energy saving, synergy with other renewal initiatives, feasibility and the impact on employment.

2. A Good Regional Initiative: the Regione Campania

In Campania, small historical centres have become depopulated and degraded. To reverse this trend, Regional Law no. 26/2002 instituted "Promotion Programmes", "Integrated Town Planning, Building and Environmental Renewal Programmes", and "Colour Plans for Historical Buildings", as well as modalities for cataloguing property of historical/artistic and environmental interest.

The law attributes great importance to this last aspect, and municipalities themselves are identified for the first time as the responsible actors in this area.

The *Promotion Programme*, which may be approved by single municipalities or by consortia of municipalities, consists in a programme document, reference maps, a description of the current state of the historical centre(s), the relationship of envisaged actions to the physical planning instruments in force and the building regulations to be followed, together with an economic-financial framework.

The strategic programming instrument for the promotion and conservation of territorial resources is the *Integrated Urban planning, Building and Environmental Renewal Programme*, dating back to Regional Law no. 3 of 19 February 1996. This programme defines guidelines for projects and measures for promoting the historical, artistic, cultural and environmental heritage, through the safeguarding of human presence as the basic assumption for the conservation of the historical-cultural identity. It also pursues structural, environmental and conservative renewal and rehabilitation; it foresees the upgrading of housing standards in historical centres through a variety of integrated measures regarding urban functions and services; and it introduces forms and procedures for direct implementation and management through public and private measures. The programme also establishes the typology of admissible interventions, by means of a detailed regulation.

The existence of an approved Integrated Programme, coupled with a feasibility study, is considered a preferential title for access to regional funding. Priority is given to applications submitted by Municipalities of less than 40,000 inhabitants.

Components of the Integrated Programme, in addition to the feasibility study, are the Promotion Programme, the Colour Plan, the Manual of Working Techniques and

Materials, the Maintenance Schedule Plan and the Catalogue of properties of historical/artistic and environmental interest.

The working techniques and materials manual aim at the rediscovery and reuse of traditional materials and working techniques in the interventions to be carried out in the historical centres. It specifies the techniques and the materials to be used and the various categories of measures admissible for the purpose of maintaining the material integrity of each property and for the conservation and protection of its cultural values.

The *Maintenance Schedule Plan* is intended to provide municipalities with an effective tool for the management of their real estate assets, setting out the succession and frequency of maintenance operations and the monitoring actions necessary for conservation purposes and for preventing physical degradation.

The *Colour Plan for Historical Buildings* defines the aesthetic criteria for the chromatic restoration of façades based on existing historical records.

The *Catalogue of Properties of Historical/Artistic and Environmental Interest* is carried out concurrently with the Integrated Programme. It includes

historical centres, sites, monumental complexes or single buildings notable for their historical, artistic or environmental interest or for being part of a unitary landscape.

Specific software has been prepared by the Campania Region and by its Regional Directorate for Cultural and Landscape Assets, for the compilation of records and for their transfer to the Regional Catalogue of Cultural Assets, as well as the Catalogue's General Information System.

Since the enacting of the law, there have been four annual competitive bidding rounds that have enabled municipalities to access funding for the preparation of the Integrated

Programme and the Colour Plan or for the implementation of the rehabilitation measures included in the Promotion Programme, as well as for cataloguing work.

This activity has led to the acquisition by the Office of the Catalogue of the Campania Region of about 240 cataloguing campaigns for a total of 12,000 pre-catalogue cards (territorial and architectural cards), in addition to updated and geo-referenced maps. The cards acquired are at present being validated for inclusion in the Regional Catalogue of Cultural Assets being prepared by the Regional Directorate for Cultural and Landscape Assets of Campania.

3. Transboundary Networking: Lab-net (Sardinia)

The Sardinia region is the leading partner of a European Union funded project denominated LAB-net - Transboundary Network for Promoting Historical Urban Centres. The project involves three islands: Sardinia and Elba in Italy, and Corsica in France. The overall objective of LAB.net is to enhance the architectural/historical assets of historical centres. The project's outcomes include the identification of thematic tourism circuits and the creation of a workshop network for cataloguing traditional building typologies and supporting locally-based rehabilitation capacity.

Additional results expected from the project are:

- Cataloguing traditional construction techniques and building materials to safeguard local identity, upgrade housing units to acceptable modern standards and improve the capacity of local governments in the correct management of rehabilitation measures;
- Exchanging experiences among various local realities in order to share good practices and build on the common features of historical centres of the three partners;

- Carrying out rehabilitation projects in the municipalities covered by the project;
- Contributing to the reuse of the built environment in historical centres with the consequent reduction of greenfield use for new development;
- Promoting job creation through the rediscovery and updating of traditional skills and the conversion of the building sector in terms of urban sustainability.

In Sardinia, a *Network of Workshops for the Rehabilitation of Historical Centres* has been created with the task of studying local situations, providing technical support to municipalities, and promote local-to-local peer exchange. The network consists of five workshops located in Alghero, the Province of Sassari, Laerru, Tempio Pausania, and the Province of Nuoro.



Restoration of traditional housing in Tempio Pausania, Northern Sardinia

Each workshop, staffed by specialized technicians, operates as a focal point for territories presenting a high level of homogeneity from a historical, environmental and cultural point of view.

The activity of the workshops can be summarized as follows: analysis of local situations; formulation of models, sectoral projects and operational guidelines compatible with appropriate materials and construction typologies and techniques; and the preparation of standard operational procedures and contracts.

Rehabilitation measures concern the connective fabric in the urban context and, in particular, the restoration of urban infrastructure, as well as the rehabilitation of historical buildings of particular interest to the local community, such as places of worship, civic markets and above all residential buildings connected with the culture of the local habitat to be used as museums or service centres for tourism and citizens.

Communication activities promote exchanges of experiences among the various partners; help acquire an effective level of partnership with the end-beneficiaries: make the public aware of project activities; disseminate the results obtained involving the local communities on the themes of sustainable development in terms of identity, environment and landscape.

For this purpose a website (www.lab-net.eu/it) has been set up. In addition the survey data sheets of the urban planning and architectural structures are being defined, targeted on publication on the web portal, and likewise the database (SIT) which acts as support for the portal.

In December 2005 the competition “Kaleidos – your city: a kaleidoscope of discoveries”, was also launched, aimed at the pupils of elementary schools .

The Kaleidos project is intended, principally, to contribute towards improving the affection of the communities for the places, making them aware of their own territory and hence making possible their participation in enhancing and developing it. Children are formidable catalysts for the involvement of other age groups. The competition stimulates them to consider the historical places of their city and to redesign them through their own means of expression.



Awareness building: Kaleidos project in Nuoro, Sardinia

Eighteen classes from as many elementary schools and the children of 3 towns entered the competition. The prize for the winning proposals consisted in taking part in an initiative having as its educational objective that of enabling children from the three islands to meet and learn from each other's transboundary situations.

The validity of the Lab-net experience consists in the capacity to combine the technical-scientific support activities conducted by the Workshops, the implementation of

rehabilitation measures in the historical centres themselves, and the awareness building of citizens, and above all the new generations, of the connection between the historical environments they live in and their own identity.

This makes it possible to envisage a continuation of the project also in future years given that the network of LAB-net Workshops is becoming, at the regional level, a governance model for the regeneration of historical centres.

4. Applying European Guidelines for the Conservation and Enhancement of Local Identity in Historical Settlements: the Case of a Small Municipality in Basilicata

The Krakow Restoration Charter and the European Landscape Convention represent the most important European guidelines for the safeguarding and development of cultural assets. They are currently seen by planners as the main inspiration for the transformation of the territory-landscape.

Both documents identify cultural heritage as the resource to focus on in order to foster local development, and recommend that they be safeguarded by means of actions and measures capable of combining re-use of cultural heritage assets with the protection of the values they embody.

Moreover, they urge communities to regard their historical centres as an ensemble of structures, space and human activities immersed in the territory and in the landscape, and introduce new principles as the basis for every transformation:

- Identity: each community acquires an awareness of its own cultural heritage and identifies with it;
- Memory: each community gives a sense to its own present, based on an awareness of its own past;

- Choice: assumption of responsibility with respect to what is chosen to be remembered and pass on to future generations.

In particular, in view of the current lack of procedures and instruments for implementing local development processes aimed at the promotion of cultural property, the Krakow Restoration Charter recommends the need to integrate cultural property conservation policies in town-planning instruments and to activate processes of participation which involve the community in a shared vision of territorial development and management processes, with a view to achieving sustainable development.

The methodology for drawing up the Programme Document and the Integrated Conservation Plan of San Chirico Raparo, coming under the Operative Programme for Val d'Agri, Melandro, Sauro, and Camastra, is based on these recommendations.

San Chirico Raparo is a small municipality situated in the inland territory of the Lucan Appennines (Province of Potenza). San Chirico presents little anthropic pressure and a weak settlement system, in the centre of a complex system of parks and protected areas and in a landscape context in which the features of settled and natural areas are perfectly integrated.

This historical hill town consists of an ancient nucleus around the remains of a Norman castle and of a more recent settlement which developed around the old walls between the 17th century and the first half of the 19th century. It is characterized by various *palazzi* displaying excellent typological and decorative elements and by terraced buildings arranged along concentric roads connected by steep flights of steps and lanes.

In order to access funds made available by the Val d'Agri Operational Programme, the Municipality created two strategic instruments for local development: the Municipal Programme Document, to establish territorial development actions through urban

projects, and the Integrated Conservation Plan (PIC), to define the procedures and modalities for financing the rehabilitation of the historical heritage.

The preparation of these two instruments was based on “urban workshops” designed to activate forms of participation from the local resident and student community and to identify shared strategic choices on the project’s objectives. The Integrated Conservation Plan identified the town’s most significant environmental and architectural features. Its objective was to enhance local building tradition and the remarkably cohesive physical and chromatic connotation of the town, stemming from the use of local stone – brown travertine – bonded with a mortar of golden colour.

Supported by technical data and performance standards, the Plan constitutes a guide for the rehabilitation of the existing fabric through a system of rules for the conservation and upgrading of historical buildings and the definition of prerequisites for accessing the financial support provided by the Regional Operational Programme.

The detailed analysis of the construction elements of each building, the overall interpretation of the whole territory and a rational cataloguing process were the instruments that proved useful for *re-knowing* (recognizing) the local building characters and materials to be safeguarded and for working out the historical-typological congruence of the buildings (assessment of the qualifying and critical factors).

The procedure used (analysis-evaluation) analyzed in depth the construction characters of the buildings and compared them with the context, enabling a normative and design apparatus to be set up, subdivided into general rules and detailed prescriptions.

Consequently, interventions were defined for each building in relation to the quality and state of conservation and/or the existence of traditional construction features, or in the presence of situations of degradation and alteration.

To recover the traditional construction logic and to reconstruct a common technical idiom, the normative apparatus also includes performance standards (materials, techniques and performance pre-requisites) defined on the basis of the cognitive work carried out in detail on all traditional construction typologies.

5. A National Observatory for the Commercial Revitalization of Historical Centres and Urban Areas

As in many other countries, Italy, starting from the eighties, started witnessing the rapid growth of large-scale commercial structures which modified peri-urban landscapes, affected shopping habits and lifestyles, impacted on development patterns of major cities and weakened the vitality of urban neighbourhoods and smaller autonomous centres. The pace and scale of this phenomenon varied from place to place and from region to region, but it became significant enough to warrant a nationwide initiative aimed at comprehending it and facilitating corrective actions.

At the same time, the role of commercial integration in improving the level of liveability and vitality of urban centres, while by now beyond question, has not yet been sufficiently understood. Policies to improve commercial activities in urban areas as carried out in Italy have been heterogeneous in various ways in terms of theoretical and conceptual basis, design solutions, managerial choices, norms and regulations.

The challenge was taken up by three nationwide institutions: The National Institute of Distribution and Services (INDIS) of the National Association of Chambers of Commerce (Unioncamere), the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI).

Together, and in cooperation with the regions' coordinating body, they set up a multidisciplinary technical committee and assigned the Guglielmo Tagliacarne think tank the task of setting up a permanent national observatory on the commercial revitalization of historical centres and urban areas.

The basic reason for establishing the Observatory was the need to strengthen the points of comparison and verification at national level, and then to make known throughout the territory the knowledge gained, "organized" in the form of instruments of analysis and intervention. In many quarters there is, in fact, a growing demand to assess and record diversified experiences, carried out in the specific Italian situation, in a sector populated by many public and private actors: regional, municipal and provincial Administrations, autonomous functional bodies, representative associations and cultural bodies.

The first survey conducted by the Institute concentrated on historical and urban centres, semi-central and peripheral areas, high-value containers, traditional commercial centres, long-established retail outlets, and small municipalities. A number of the most significant commercial revitalization options, in all these sectors, were thus organized by problem area: general, managerial and functional.

The Observatory also provides a Tool Box" designed primarily for local administrators, in order to help them improve the quality of the interventions mix required in micro commerce revitalization and evaluate successes and failures.

The Observatory's first results enabled a better understanding of the territorial spin-offs deriving from the support policies carried out by individual regional governments. 185 commercial revitalization measures are under way in Italian urban areas. 52% of them are in historical centres, 23% in traditional historical shops and markets, 11% in "natural commercial centres" (urban settlements historically characterized by the

presence of diffuse activities), 9% in semi-central areas and 5% in small municipalities. All of them follow a number of guidelines regarding: strategic situation, urban marketing plans, town revitalization programmes, and projects for the historical centre; structural problems, such as renewal of public spaces, refunctionalization and rehabilitation, upgrading of infrastructures; animation – promotion – communication, customer securitization and actions normally of short-term type; coordination, *town centre management*, control room for policies and actions, development agencies and mixed promotion companies.

A first survey level is the typological sector. The experiments carried out cover a diversified range of geographic, orographic and settlement typologies (towns in the plains, in the hills, by the sea, large, medium and marginal centres) and are the expression of requests made separately by public, private and associative actors or by their collaboration right from the planning stage. Consequently, the variety of the types of measure adopted deserves attention, in order to compare, verify, and monitor the effects and results.

6. Synergies Between Research and Training: Orvieto , Fo.Cu.S.

A New Research Centre Devoted to Integrated Approaches to Valorization

Fo.Cu.S. (<http://w3.uniroma1.it/focus> - focus@uniroma1.it), is a recently established research centre of Sapienza, Università di Roma. Its goal is to pursue the valorization, rehabilitation and management of small historical centres and their landscape through appropriate policies based on an integrated sectoral and territorial approach, both in Italy and abroad.

The mission of Fo.Cu.S is to fill a gap created by the wide articulation of valorization processes (regional and landscape planning, environment, infrastructure, economic development....) through systematic interdisciplinary research.

The new Centre aims at becoming a resource for all those engaged in this field, both in Italy and abroad, by identifying, analyzing and disseminating appropriate and innovative models and practices for the valorization, rehabilitation and management of small historical centres .

Accordingly, Fo.Cu.S adopts a strong interdisciplinary approach. Its strategy is to establish links with other research centres, academic institutions, government entities, international organizations, donor agencies, practitioners and private-sector operatives to achieve the best possible synergies.

An important component of the Centre's work will be the evaluation of ongoing policies and strategies as well as integrated programmes and plans inspired to its interdisciplinary approach. Similarly, one of the Centre's goals will be to inspire innovative institutional reform.



Orvieto: ramps leading to the hill town

On the operational front, Fo.Cu.S is currently helping the city of Orvieto organize a local participatory process which will lead to viable options for the re-use of a building complex located in the ancient nucleus and previously occupied by the military. The consortium of the Castelli Romani has also engaged the Centre to assist in the formulation of a new strategic plan for the valorization of all the historical centres of this unique territorial system just south of Rome.



Orvieto: the historical walls

A Training Approach (<http://w3.uniroma1.it/arcorvieto>)

Six years ago, an innovative post-graduate programme was created to train professionals and administrators in the new skills required to implement an integrated approach to the sustainable revitalization of small historical centres. The programme was, and is, a partnership between the Sapienza Università di Roma and the Fondazione per il Centro Studi “Città di Orvieto”. A vast majority of graduates from this programme, denominated Master ACT (Ambiente, Cultura, Territorio) on the valorization,

rehabilitation and management of small historical centres, are now engaged with private firms or public administrations in the implementation of the integrated approaches championed by the programme.

The master is open to holders of second-tier degrees, and from all nationalities. The course lasts 11 residential weeks (one week each month in Orvieto, from May through April, August excluded). This formula allows sufficient time for lectures and studio work, without neglecting one's professional and personal commitments.

The first part of the course, from May to December, consists in thematic presentations on the part of academics, professionals, consultancy firms and administrators.

These lectures are combined with studio work. The goal is to produce by the end of the course a thesis on a valorization programme for an area chosen in the Orvieto region, which can vary from a single municipality to broader territorial contexts. This method allows utilizing the knowledge and the specific materials offered by the course, to have a dialogue with administrations and private-sector operators in the region and to take part in organized field visits in order to build strategic frameworks for contextualizing individual programmes.

To make the thesis work more realistic, a role-playing game is organized in which students, divided in groups, are invited to simulate the role of professionals called by administrations or by economic actors to design a programme.

The course's second part, beginning in January, consists of lectures and workshops aimed at detailing the themes approached by students in their thesis programme and enabling their further definition. The Master reaches its conclusion in April with the finalization of the thesis which, as illustrated above, is prepared in the studios during the rest of the year.

The Orvieto post-graduate programme and the new research centre, devoted to the same theme, are likely to build important synergies over the next few years. New interdisciplinary research carried out by Fo.Cu.S. will strengthen and enrich the graduate programme curriculum, while the training and operational activities conducted by the master programme will provide a precious verification of the direction and content of ongoing research work. Expanding internationalization is an obvious goal of this new partnership, with a view to exploring possibilities for a continuous sharing of experiences on the theme of integrated approaches to the valorization and management of our common tangible and intangible heritage.