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The two historical cities of Ivrea

Paolo Galuzzi

Not all of the towns have a recent past as important as the earliest times, as regards cultural tradition, livability, architectural values. Ivrea is one of this city, thanks to the particular and extraordinary period characterizing the short century of Olivetti, that left indelible traces of urban and architectural culture of Italian modern age, beginning from the thirty years in which Adriano Olivetti worked. Therefore, it wasn't difficult to agree to the direction taken by recent plans about historical city subject, consisting in new technical and cultural remarks in order to make it emblematic.

More than thirty years ago, Italian town planning began to consider existing city redevelopment, through protection and improvement of historical centres. In order to understand better the value system of contemporary city and general values of existing city, it was necessary growth came to an end, and a new approach to historical values took significance for a strategic choice of urban redevelopment.

Definition of historical city, instead of the more traditional definition of historical centre, regards not only the historical fabrics included inside the ancient walls, but it is used probably for the only case in the world: three unitary modern and quite big neighbourhoods, built during the maximum splendour of Olivetti period, to which the extraordinary architectural, urban and environmental quality give them a unique historical value.

The ancient historical city

The widening in space and time of town planning policies as concerns protection of historical city

involves the research of a more complex operational system than that one used only for historical centre, able to lead different levels and typologies about protection of both Medioeval, Renaissance, baroque fabrics and neoclassic fabrics, as well as modern fabrics.

As regards the ancient historical city, a new analysis was carried out; it took into consideration the four factors that identify the historical-economical phases of creation and transformation of an ancient fabric: landed structure, distributive and organizing system of building units, its building and structural framework, its consistence and imagine towards public and private space. The crossing between these factors and the great historical phases of creation of the city allowed to identify main seven typological classes and four groups of special settlement models, all of them referable to the main four fabrics in which the ancient historical city has been articulated. These fabrics aim to increase the value of all the buildings belonging to urban framework and to open/built spaces.

The modern historical city

In Ivrea, the Olivetti modern city fully belongs to the city. In fact, it represents the only case in the world as a tangible document of a unitary and manifold project event for modern city. Here, some of the most excellent examples of Italian modern architecture and town planning are present and young and less young architects, activists in modern movement, experimented architectural languages, building types and building systems, town planning frameworks, that today represent a unique cultural heritage in Europe and in the world.

In numbers, modern city represents 70% of historical

city in the new plan and more or less 8% of whole urbanized territory. Industrial and polyfunctional fabrics of modern city represent almost 70% of industrial and service sector activities of the city. Residential fabrics anticipate more or less the settlement of 25% of resident population.

It is a precious heritage that, because of its extension and dimension, has to take part of transformations involving fabrics and the life of the city.

The two dimension of protection of modern historical city

In Ivrea, the principles used for modern architecture classification allowed to relate the innovative control regarding protection and improvement of this heritage both to fabrics and to the single building, belonging to a modern fabric or block. The analysis of town planning fabric allows to increase the value of specific architectural and typological features of buildings, but also of the whole structure of urban space in which they are built by focusing on relationship between empty and built areas, public and private spaces, individual and collective zones.

As regards fabrics and neighbourhoods of Olivetti modern city, plan pursues the most suitable action modalities, proportionally to the value and quality, in order to emphasize, protect and preserve the documentary depth of modern architecture, as well as to increase the potential of recycling; plan defines the main town planning features and uses to be maintained.

The specific rules concerning 'Buildings and complexes of modern historical city' are subdivided into four different classes, on account of their architectural value and their primary uses, and they include also valuable open spaces surrounding these

buildings as well as the luxuriant vegetation of parks and gardens, typical approach of Olivetti architecture.

The open space of modern historical city represents a precious framework, important to appreciate and value the Olivetti city.

The proposal of the Quality Charter

Town planning and building regulations relevant to historical city and, in particular, to modern city are based on Quality Charter. Three types of quality are present, with reference to the different meanings they have in Ivrea history.

Qualities concerning particular aspects of urban environment, that are morphogenetic and structural features of urban framework; particular architectural aspects, that are typological and morphological aspects, composition and uses aspects relevant to single fabric and building; particular environmental aspects, such as the characterization of open spaces, the peculiarity of sceneries and views that frame and value the city; in order to highlight the main and distinguishing features of urban identity of Ivrea, as physical and cultural basis for redevelopment project of contemporary city. Quality charter will begin to be implemented as soon as plan will be implemented and then it should be tested, integrated and corrected. The flexible characteristic of charter and of its rules will permit to follow the actions interesting the modern historical city time by time, in order to measure aims, actions policies, protection policies. A further purpose consists in giving a concrete operating reference, maybe not complete but surely clear, where qualities of transformations are appraised or valued. A manifesto aimed to an

active protection of modern
architecture in Ivrea,
wishing to preserve the
indelible heritage of Adriano
Olivetti, protecting without
embalming it.