

Abstracts

Living in the City of the Dead. A research-action project for an exceptional informal habitat, *Paola Bellaviti* (p. 7)

The article focuses on one of the most suggestive and controversial habitats of the Cairo megalopolis, the 'City of the Dead', as the vast areas of monumental cemeteries are collectively termed. Over time they have actually become a true and genuine 'city' within the city, inhabited by hundreds of thousands of people. It is a slum according to some definitions currently in use, but a very particular slum which is host to both a huge and special historical and architectural heritage and at the same time to a residential environment which is unique of its kind, in which a heterogeneous local society maintains the City of the Dead 'in life', by means of a specific residential culture linked to the sepulchral nature of the places. A research and action project intends to try and deconstruct the negative and destructive images currently adopted by Cairo's urban planning policies for this urban environment. It does this by exploring the possibilities of a more detailed portrayal from different viewpoints in order to stimulate action to conserve and enhance the City of the Dead that is based on recognition of its value given by the ineluctable links between the monumental necropolis and the living environment.

City of the Dead: slum or scenario of immaterial Egyptian heritage?, *Anna Tozzi Di Marco* (p. 20)

Cairo's City of the Dead consists of an ancient urban Muslim cemetery (642 AD). Al Qarafa, its Arabic name, still functions today as a burying place, but with the peculiarity that it has as many as eighteen urban neighbourhoods with approximately one million residents. Sector studies which rubber stamp the different areas as a single milieu, classify it as a slum. In reality this necropolis, one of the more liveable working class metropolitan districts, represents a stratification of traditions and customs that have accumulated in Egypt from the time of the Pharaohs until today. To unravel the complexity of that body of demographic, ethnic and anthropological values that are closely interwoven with the City's monumental heritage might be useful for further reflection on the future destiny of the City of the Dead. Under the government urban redevelopment project 'Vision 2050', it is to be demolished, partly for the construction of a park. Basically it is a question of valuing this co-existence of the living

and the dead as a distinctive feature, the product of a historical and cultural heritage that is unique in the world.

Through the City of the Dead. Visual and anthropological fragments, *Erika Lazzarino and Luca Francesco Garibaldo* (p. 23)

Every society expresses the conception it has constructed of existence through its burying places. The necropolis of Al Qarafa in Cairo, inhabited since it was established in the fifth century AD, reveals an intimacy between death and life, as witnessed by the residential buildings and customs. We wanted to follow the traces of these customs because they reflect the use of places, they determine the areas of sociality, they are a measure of the care and wear which inform the act of inhabiting a place and finally because they offer a chance to ask about and listen to the stories of those who live there, of those who cross it and of those who come to visit their dead. Light and shade, water and sand, flows and thresholds, gestures and geometries: these are the four essential keys to interpretation which bring together the fragments of an evocative story that emerged from a visual and anthropological study. If it is true that the City of the Dead is to be demolished, then it is not just the ancient mausolea, the illegal buildings and tombs converted into houses that are at risk, but also and above all the inestimable heritage of knowledge, rituals and daily customs associated with the worship of the dead and the survival of the living.

Meetings with the inhabitants of the City of the Dead, *Simona Sambati* (p. 37)

The monumental cemetery of Cairo, Al Qarafa, is an anomaly in the urban area of the city. For the citizens of Cairo it is a foreign entity, but for those who inhabit it, it is where they live. The architectures of the mausolea and the sepulchres of the deceased bring together the paths, the fragrances and objects of the occupants. Their life stories, their experiences and their adventures fill the space with a completely new meaning as occupation is transformed into housing and living.

The Sakan Project. Strategic instruments and governance processes for a culture-based urban development of the City of the Dead, *Costanza La Mantia* (p. 42)

In a world in which the classification of cities, disguised

under the word development, hides the slavish acquisition of heterotopic models, it is important to defend uniqueness and differences and to explain to local and national governments that a framework of development policies based on cultural resources and identity is the only path to follow for real and sustainable development. In this respect there are many and varied references in the theoretical literature to the direct and indirect ways in which the presence of cultural institutions and the enhancement of cultural heritage can bring widespread benefits, by strengthening the image of a city and above all by defining new development scenarios which combine economic, social and cultural dimensions and local resources with governance and community involvement processes. This is the approach that is taken in an attempt to define a new 'Vision for the City of the Dead'.

City of the Dead: a district of Cairo. Five interventions to enhance it, *Maria Luisa Daglia and Alessandro Colli* (p. 50)
The City of the Dead is to all intents and purposes a district of Cairo! Free from all the laws which seem to regulate other areas, it represents a possible exception and above all a great potential pool of resources for the sustainable development of all the city. Five specific and independent interventions, that form part of a single strategy, regulate the flows of people which connect the cemetery to what lies around it, locally enhancing resources that had never been considered: the urban districts (catalysers of activities, people and events) and the empty areas within them come into symbiosis with five autonomous systems (large on a metropolitan scale) which surround it, drawing advantages from processes already in progress.

Cairo, mega-city or mega-slum? Demographic trends and elements of the urban form of the Egyptian capital, *Francesco Chiodelli and Giulia Fini* (p. 60)
The paper gives an overview of the development of the main elements which various attempts at planning in the twentieth century had to face up to: the urbanisation of increasingly greater proportions of the population for which the quantitative (demographic) and qualitative (elements of the urban form) framework is given. The first part schematically reconstructs the demographic trends for the city since the middle of the twentieth century, when the urban explosion commenced which brought the population of the Egyptian capital up from 2.2 million in 1947 to twelve million today. The second part looks at the distribution of the population in space, identifying the main elements that characterise the present day urban form of the metropolitan area.

Policies and plans for the modernisation of Cairo, *Luca Salvetti* (p. 73)
The Egyptian capital immediately appears as a case full of indications for a more comprehensive study on the alternating recourse to what might be defined as the 'theoretical plan', as opposed to the prevailing priorities dictated by the contingencies of 'realpolitik'. At the same time, one distin-

guishing feature of urban planning policies for Cairo in the second half of the twentieth century is their ambivalence. On the one hand there is the literal presentation of urban models drawn from a sort of 'European catalogue' of past experiences. On the other hand, there is a pull towards a more profound implementation of those same schemes.

Five zoom-ins on Cairo. The projects implemented and those where work is in progress, *Maddalena Falletti* (p. 85)
The article considers five cases, the Sixth of October new town, the City of the Dead, the Zabbaleen neighbourhood, the Al Azhar park and finally the Nile Tower project by Zaha Hadid to give a review of current tendencies in the transformation of urban Cairo, looking at critical issues, the methodologies commonly employed and the large scale consequences. Although they appear very different, the cases reveal a common matrix and respond to an approach to the management of space which seems to move towards the consolidation of a policy of social exclusion.

Vision 2050. A surgical intervention in the heart of Cairo, *Haysam Nour* (p. 96)
Vision 2050, the most recent strategic plan for the Cairo mega region, has been going through a phase of preparation and modification for four years which has not yet allowed the Egyptian government to proceed with official publication of the plan. Despite this, the Gopp (General Organisation for Physical Planning) has started to promote Vision 2050 through participation in seminars and workshops and through interviews in order to create public agreement. The article that follows initially presents a general overview of the document, based on interviews published or conducted by the author with strategic planning consultants and experts in Egypt. The second part of the text considers judgements of Vision 2050, its strong points, failings and grey areas.

The construction of the map of the landscape in the environmental hinterland of Expo 2015: new general plan of the Groane, *Pier Luigi Paolillo (with Alberto Benedetti and Luca Terlizzi)* (p. 98)
The Groane: the only narrow passage that is free between Milan, Varese and Como, one of the most congested places in the country and nevertheless one of those that is most supported with Gdp and the productivity of all Lombardy, its commuters and Vat numbers. It is a sort of 15 km tunnel buffeted between the exceptional processes of urbanisation which have inevitably (and irreparably) impaired its valuable land resources, except of course for the protected area of the Groane Park, which has recently adopted our new general plan for the provincial 'General Co-ordination Plan'. Its contiguity with the cumbersome attraction of the Expo 2015 – which could have generated dangerous settlement repercussions even for the park – has not, however, caused a murmur to be raised, either because of the economic crisis or, more probably, because the environmental importance of the Groane Park is considered today as value added to be

preserved in all ways. In fact there has been absolutely no assault on the land of the park for residential purposes at all. On the contrary, 60% of the areas subject to the new plan increase the perimeter of protection (11% more than at present) on the basis of an initial landscape map which is presented in the article with the construction procedures and the relative methodology.

Gio Ponti, Hotel Paradiso in Val Martello, Giovanni Denti, Chiara Toscani (p. 113)

In 1930 Gio Ponti designed a cable car system to cross the Dolomites, which also involved the construction of hotels of three different types at the stations. One of these was built in 1936 at the bottom of the Val Martello valley at an altitude of 2,160 metres in front of Mount Cevedale. It was a facility designed to take customers belonging to different social classes with a careful hierarchy of communal and private services which gave rise to much criticism and debate at the time. The body of the building was partly linear and partly curved in shape, rising to three storeys with the main rooms located in the convex curve of the front. One distinctive feature of the interiors was the use of colour (Ponti developed his study of this in that period), which identified spatial fields and suggested visual lines and directions. In the years after the war the hotel was purchased by a Venetian shipowner Benati, who added two floors and partially enlarged it. It operated for a few years and has been closed down since 1955. Today it is in a serious state of disrepair, although the structure is still standing.

Constructive environmentalism. The improvement of the South of the Bergamo motorway ring road, Marco Adriano Perletti (p. 126)

The project for the south of the Bergamo motorway ring road is the result of a commitment to problems of mobility which Wwf Italy has intensified in recent years. As a result of an initiative taken by the Bergamo Wwf, a master plan was studied for the area in 2007 to identify possible measures to lessen the impact of the road infrastructure by means of forestation and redevelopment with vegetation. The proposal has involved municipal and provincial administrations so that they can learn the contents and concretely implement this green project. As a result of further study of the project conducted by one of the municipalities concerned, the Region of Lombardy granted funding for a contract tender entitled '10,000 hectares of new woodland and multi-functional parkland', to be used to implement an initial lot of the project. The work planned and recently started will be completed by the end of 2010 and will constitute the start of a long process of environmental and landscape redevelopment which should be followed by other intervention in the agricultural area of Plis del rio Morla and Rogge.

Le Grand Pari(s) de l'agglomération parisienne. Elements for reflection on the city and urban planning, Valeria Fedeli (p. 137)

The consultation entitled 'Le Grand Pari(s) de l'Agglomération

Parisienne' launched by the French Ministry of Culture at the start of 2007 is providing material for a significant public debate within that rich workshop for thought on the contemporary city which Paris and the Ile de France have constituted for at least a decade. Many initiatives have in fact helped since 2000 to invigorate discussion on the urban region of Paris, with questions asked on urban transformations in progress on how to understand, describe, plan and govern the social, environmental, economical and political changes they bring. The article proposes some observations on the meaning of consultation, on its procedures and on its emerging issues with a focus in particular on objectives and outcomes, trying to direct thought to the contribution (to ways and contents) which urban planners (but also architects) can make to urban design seen as an exercise in thinking about the future of contemporary cities.

Different people, different wishes? Can heterogeneity of the population cause more and different kinds of economic activities?, Aleid E. Brouwer (p. 149)

The objective of the article is to empirically test the hypothesis that the heterogeneity of an urban population influences the creation and the development of the businesses and economic activities ('organisational diversity') of a city. More specifically, the heterogeneity of a population is measured in terms of religious pluralism, while organisational heterogeneity concerns the different economic activities, both manufacturing and services, present in a city. The influence of religion on economic demand is based on the 'new paradigm' (Christiano *et al.*, 2002), according to which individuals who belong to different religious groups have different values with regard to education, social ambition and attitude to work. As a consequence, they tend to choose different professions and prefer different economic activities. The empirical analysis, which is conducted on the town of Zwolle in northern Holland in the period 1851-1914, tests the hypothesis and finds a real and significant impact of religious pluralism on the economic structure of the town.

The Florentine plan: urban growth and reorganisation around collective transport nodes, Marco Facchinetti (p. 154)

This research study sought to understand the real dynamics of urban growth, the forecasts existing in local urban plans and supra-local plans, the development projects and hypotheses of growth in infrastructure networks in a limited but central area of the general plan in the western province of Florence and the province of Prato. While there has been a substantial increase in planned infrastructures, for which the programmes have been verified by research studies, there has been no equally important co-ordination of forecasts of growth, expansion or urban transformation. On the basis of these assumptions, the research conducted asked whether it was possible to design a type of development with respect to the forecasts of current plans, which attempts to reorganise the Florentine metropolitan area by means of collective transport networks. This would be done by identifying a sustainable growth strategy, by examining which urban planning

model would best meet that objective and at the same time by addressing issues such as containing land use and reducing the demand for private transport by increasing densities around the nodes.

The efficiency of processes for granting concessions in local public administrations, *Maria Luisa Del Gatto and Marzia Morena* (p. 161)

The Permanent Observatory on the Local Public Administration (Pal) was established in 2008 by Assoimmobiliare, DS&P Studio Legale Associato and Laboratorio Gesti.Tec of the Polytechnic of Milan. It was created with the objective of mapping and analysing the procedures and times for the approval of measures to implement urban planning decisions by Pal which plays a decisive role in urban redevelopment and transformation processes because by intervening in the decision-making phase of plans, it influences the feasibility from many points of view (architectural, social, environmental, time, economic, financial, etc.). The bureaucratic and administrative difficulties represent the first obstacle to overcome for those who intend to invest capital in the property sector. Streamlining those bureaucratic procedures therefore constitutes one of the main objectives which Pal must pursue to attract investors to its

area and demonstrate that it is able to manage urban planning and building formalities efficiently and effectively.

In altered perspective: the representation of objects in perceived space, *Claudio Umberto Comi* (p. 168)

In recent years we have seen students of architecture experience increasingly greater difficulty in representing objects in space. There may be many causes of this. Certainly one of them is the progressive loss of the habit as protagonists of using the language of graphics as a tool for communication. There has then been a change in the iconic context with the assumption since infancy of figurative models, which are basically without depth or with an altered, degenerated perspective. It is also reasonable to consider that changes in visual and spatial abilities are also due to a different way of using both represented and real images. Taken together these factors are of interest to different disciplines and as such subject to debate. It must be added that if it should be demonstrated that changes have effectively taken place in the capacities of the very young to perceive and therefore depict space, then it is advisable to rethink the methods of teaching drawing as a means of delineating and planning architectural design.