

RESTORING, REUSING RURAL LANDSCAPES. A CASE STUDY: THE AREA OF MENFI IN SICILY

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ABSTRACT

The contribution focuses on the potential of the rural landscape of Sicily, to cope with the depopulation of the smaller towns, by relying on an integrated conservation, which means not only the preservation of the endogenous territorial resource values, but also the production of surplus values. The Italian countryside is scattered with unknown and derelict “minor” heritage, this substantializes the European identity, and we should take action with a view to recovery and reuse it. However, in a time that sees a renewed interest in the potential of the agrarian landscape, it is believed that the current concept of restoration, which is now extended to the cultural and environmental heritage, can link to the operations of re-use and enhancement applied to the landscape, leading to a local self-sustainable development. With this in mind, the case study located in an area that has suffered partially the 1968 earthquake is to be read. Among (often-questionable) reconstruction choices, declining demographic dynamics, some significant restoration of important buildings and an extraordinary agricultural heritage, we focused on Menfi and the near urban centres. The analysis of the territory aims to present the natural and anthropogenic factors contributing to define the identity to be preserved and, simultaneously, to characterize the economic processes to produce a consideration based on the balance between preservation and development, in line with the current MiBACT strategy. This land project, overcoming traditional approaches of environmental protection and sector policies, draws a pattern of slow paths networking new features inserted on abandoned building, urban and rural landscapes of great value, with an innovative approach to the “restoration of landscape”.

Parole chiave/Key-words: Restoration, Integrated conservation, Land projects, Rural landscape, Sustainability.