

Monica Amari

**Progettazione Culturale – metodologia e strumenti di cultural planning**

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*Review by Pierfranco Pellizzetti*

The recent book by Monica Amari, a Milanese professional in the field of cultural planning, is considered a manual (in line with editorial policy), although it often reads like an essay. The author tackles the central issue of “how culture might become a resource for the valorization of a territory” by examining the efficient and effective organization of managerial activities. However, she doesn’t neglect to analyze some of the more political aspects: in particular, the new local strategies for sustainable competitive development of an area.

Over the last two decades, this theme has attracted serious attention in most of Europe, but has been almost totally ignored in Italy. The disastrous results of Bologna as European Capital of Culture in 2000 and those of Genoa as Capital of Culture in 2004 remind us of this sad fact.

Instead, Amari proposes a long-term strategy. Considering the words of the author, “cultural planning is gradually becoming an independent field of study based on a multidisciplinary perspective in which standards, knowledge and abilities interlace with administrative, economical and social processes related to territorial and market planning” (p. 9).

This view now appears to be accepted around the world . For Europeans, the most important case study concerns Bilbao. Of course, the renaissance of this Basque town, which is currently coming to grips with a crisis of deindustrialization, is a more complex phenomenon. However, there is unanimous agreement that the city’s cultural policy has been influential in bringing about positive changes, both symbolic and concrete.

Professionals in the field often cite the “Bilbao Effect”, whose icon is the famous Guggenheim Museum, realized by the architect Frank Gehry and inaugurated in 1997 – now a common destination for crowds of tourists from all over the world. The *Financial Times* estimated that the museum generated a turnover of about 500 million euros in the first three years of its existence, 160 million in 2002 alone. But it is essential to point out that the museum was part of a comprehensive plan that included other large-scale projects (a 35-kilometer subway whose stations were designed by another great architect, Norman Foster; a bridge and a new airport by the Catalan Santiago Calatrava). The physical realization of these works ran parallel to intensive promotion of cultural activity and collective sensitization to hospitality services.

Other important examples are the Central Library in Seattle, designed by the Dutch Rem Koolhaas and visited every day by 12 to 15.000 people, and the Contemporary Arts Center in Cincinnati, designed by the Iraqi architect Zaha Hadid, which immediately became an exciting attraction.

Can Italy boast of any examples that even resemble this type of modern cultural initiative? Unfortunately, this country envisions the creation of infrastructures in the same way that they were conceived at the end of the nineteenth century.

Monica Amari's book gives hope to many local administrators and this is certainly to be applauded. However, the primary value of this volume is her clearly outlined challenge to Italy's out-dated system. This means to train technical and administrative personnel who are able to implement local public policies for the valorization of territorial resources.

We frequently hear that Italy should deal with its enormous artistic patrimony more economically – perhaps by starting with better conservation. To do this, we should learn to manage our heritage. *Progettazione Culturale - metodologia e strumenti di cultural planning* explains how to go about it.