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Autor: Girot, Christophe / Duner, Isabelle / Kapellos, Alexandre / Rossano, Frédéric
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Autor: Siddi, Cesarina
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A PARADIGMATIC BEGINNING FOR A NEW LANDSCAPE APPROACH

by Cesarina Siddi

The workshop Santa Gilla 08 arose from the opportunities offered by the Visiting Professorship for Internationalization, financed by Regione Autonoma della Sardegna, which is directed to improve the scientific and didactic quality of the University of Cagliari by activating relationships with professors and experts that can encourage the university's methodological innovation and competitiveness. The scientific and didactic program with Professor Christophe Girot was activated as a part of the "Architecture of Open Spaces" course, and special emphasis was given to an intensive design workshop as the most effective framework for sharing theoretical and practical methodologies.

At a time in which the European Landscape Convention (Firenze, 2000) and Cultural and Landscape Heritage Code (DLgs 22/01/2004, N. 42) are being put into effect, landscape has gained prominence in regional planning with the Regional Landscape Plan (Piano Paesaggistico Regionale) defining landscape as the first resource to strengthen regional identity through the improvement of cultural, natural and productive heritage. In this context, it is important that we understand how we can transform general policies into real opportunities for territorial development. In this sense some topics become very important by virtue of their ability to clarify complex connections between nature and culture as well as the main role of landscape design. Moreover some places, due to their position, values, potential and/or critical state, can be considered as paradigmatic examples for explaining the contemporary meaning of landscape architecture and the importance of a clear and structured design method. Sardinia does

not have a solid landscape culture and the subject is relatively new in academic program throughout Italy, but the values of regional landscape force everyone to acquire a rapid awareness for creating new modus operandi that avert the danger of irreversible damage.

Santa Gilla lagoon contains the complexities, contradictions, and unrealized potential necessary for a very interesting experimental design: the site is a strategic part of metropolitan Cagliari, with strong landscape and cultural values that have made it extremely attractive since ancient times. During the last century the area has acted as a magnet for important infrastructures and production facilities, which nonetheless have not yet created a landscape with which communities can identify themselves. Today, Santa Gilla does not belong to the common imagery of the city, except for fragments: notwithstanding various environmental regulations, we lack efficacious policy tools for improving its livability and overall quality.

As ecology teaches us, there is more complexity, more potential, but also more fragility in edges or transition areas, and this also holds true when we speak about landscape. Along the edges of the lagoon we can find all the essential elements for a thorough reflection upon its future. Along the eastern edge are all of the important transportation infrastructures: the commercial and industrial harbor, regional bus station, railway station, Elmas airport, and the national road (SS 130) connecting Cagliari with Sulcis. Nowadays they appear self-referenced at the cost of intermodality and, above all, they have built a barrier that 'moves' the city away from the

water and leaves only residual spaces awaiting urban meaning. The industrial harbor is the most strategic element; oversized and underused, it could be one of the most attractive parts of Cagliari in the future. To the north are the estuaries of the Mannu and Cixerri rivers, now polluted and very close to the industrial area (CASIC) that characterizes the eastern side together with the Conti Vecchi salt pans. To the south we have another critical element, the national road (SS195) that connects Cagliari with southwest Sardinia and separates the salt pans from the sea. The concise reconstruction of these relationships helps to explain the necessity of rethinking the lagoon at the appropriate scale: reclaiming the water's edge and creating a new balance between nature and city, a healthy landscape where people are not only able to move around but, above all, where there are inviting places for people to stay.

These remarks make our expectations and the probable spin-off clear: thanks to the choice of the topic, and especially to the choice of the site, the workshop can produce an interesting basis for long-term research work through which it will be possible to modulate and modify the actions on the Sardinian landscape, theoretically and in real terms, from the perspective of real sustainable development.