

POGGIOREALE OLD TOWN IN SICILY: STRATEGIES, MEMORY, KNOWLEDGE AND PLANNING PLACE

R. Guglielmini

Ph.D in *Recovery and Use of Ancient Contexts*, D.P.C.E., Department of Project and Building Construction,
University of Palermo, Viale delle Scienze, 90128 Palermo, Italy
rossanaguglielmini@msn.com

KEY WORDS: Cultural Heritage, Urban, Planning, Management, Thematic, System, Value-added.

ABSTRACT:

Present study analyze the building structures in the *Ancient Poggioreale (Architectonical Site)*, it's situated in Trapani's province), destroyed by an earthquake in 1968 and actually abandoned. The aim is to transform the country in a *study-yard*, an *open-sky laboratory*, which should be articulated to different aspects: historical, architectonic, economics and cultural.

THE KNOWLEDGE PROJECT

Introduction

In the within of the research activities of XVIII cycle⁸ of Ph. Doctorate in *Recovery and Use of Ancient Contexts*, has been stipulated a Convention between the Communal Committee of Poggioreale and the D.P.C.E. (*Department of Project and Building Construction*) of the University of Palermo, in order to develop a scientific work, aimed to the enhancement of the *Ancient Poggioreale Architectonical Site*, destroyed by an earthquake in 1968 and actually abandoned.

The aim is to transform the country in a *study-yard*, an *open-sky laboratory*, which should be articulated to different aspects: historical, architectonic, economics and cultural. The outline proposal is inspired from the physics and environmental characteristics of the site and previews a series of actions on the same district aimed to preserve the *ruderal outlook* already taken by the town. What gave the input for the project survey were the parameters of the recovery and re-use, which involve urban-reclassification matters and the characteristic's analysis of the existing decay; in this project survey the urban area has been subdivided in three different typological-functional zones: *Ruins zone*, *Recreational and accommodation facilities zone*, *Public space zone*.

Historic Background: from foundation to earthquake

Poggioreale Old Town in Sicily offers one of the most evocative screen in the whole "Belice Valley", it's situated in Trapani's province (Figure 1).

The Town was born in 1942 and rises upon an hill on the stratum of "Le Rose Mountain", commonly called *Castellaccio*, in the ancient area of the Elimi people, nearly 400 meters above sea level. The inhabited nucleus was born as a detachment of the near Gibellina, in the old feudal area of Bagnitelli, property of Marquis Don Francesco Morso. Poggioreale's name derives from Latin etymology *Puteus-Realis* or even *Podius-Regalis*.

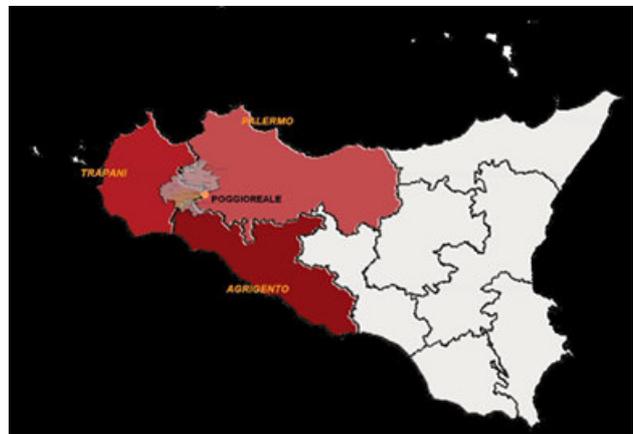


Figure 1. The territorial organization

The urban organization

Poggioreale has been classified as "Historic Centre of new foundation" by the "Regional Landscape Plan". It introduces a urban system geometrically planned and ordered by orthogonal streets. Built under the *quadrillage* system, it does not present important urbanistic variations, extending itself in a homogenous and compact way (Figure 2).



Figure 2. The historical City, 1932.

* The research activities about the Ancient Poggioreale have been developed by: Archh. Rosalia Guglielmini, Alberto M. Lucchesi Palli, Lorenzo Lo Dato

The texture can be defined at the point as an *isomorphic textures*, characterized by a regular scheme of blocks aggregations.

The Isomorphic rule has been applied to control the urban space for a fair division of the building areas and for hygienic and climatic reasons. The urban system, a wide rectangle of m. 61,50 for 32,50, is compact with a high-building density, polycentric in its inside, formed by various urban contexts, which come trough the central square and the main street. The whole urban housing is characterized by *sticks - block* and a harring - bone structure (Figure 3).

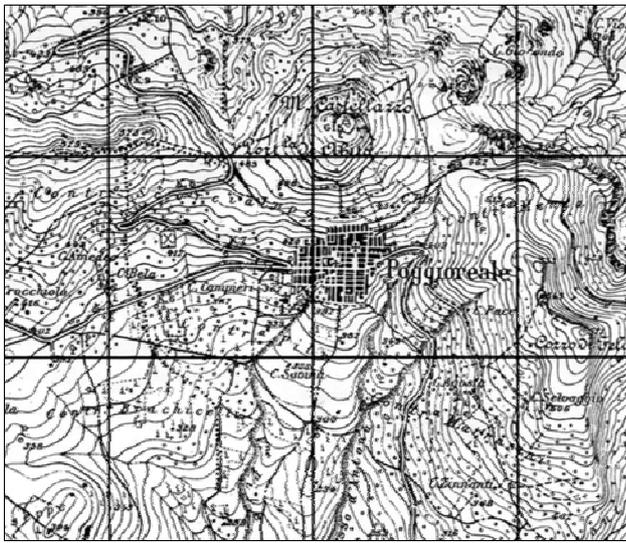


Figure 3. The urban organization (I.G.M.I., 1932).

Housing typology

The block is fundamentally long-shaped, almost rectangular, and is characterized by the constant dimension of the smaller side, caused by the thorn-type organization of the blocks.

Block's orientation is defined by the ground hanging. Blocks are orthogonally disposed on the level-curves, to facilitate the meteoric-water outflow.

The typical Poggioreale house (Figure 4) is called *terrana*: it is made of a unic room of constant width (mt. 6), and depth (nearly mt. 6-7).



Figure 4. The typical Poggioreale house.

It's a single floor building with stratums roofs, built of stone and soil, called *taju*, and has a very essential architectonic scheme. The successive demographic rise caused these

buildings to have been built with more than one room. In particular, the building-scheme evolution (Figure 5) introduced a different use of the spaces: at the ground floor was placed a small shop, while at the first floor was placed bedrooms, restrooms and kitchens. An internal stair was making possible to step from one floor to another trough a trap-door (*catarrattu*). The same result was guaranteed even from an external stair put against the perimetrical wall.



Figure 5. One example of the building-scheme evolution.

Building Materials

In the construction of the new foundation's centres in the "Belice Valley", were used materials coming from geological formations surrounding the town, extracted from open-sky quarries. The stone-works are made of shapeless rocking mixed with big amounts of gypsum concrete or lime, resting directly on the ground, without foundations (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Building's edges made of large dimensioned squared rocking.

Building's edges and space's openings are made of large dimensioned squared rocking. The load-bearing walls, made

with bag-masonry and rocking or soil (*taju*), are well thermally-insulated.

The internal white-washes are fundamentally made with lime water or gypsum; coverings consist in a main strut-assy on which lay a weaving of tied dry canes (*giummarre*), usually covered with gypsum mortar (Figure 7 - 8).



Figure 7 – 8. Some example of roofings and some example of internal plaster.

Over the attic are disposed brick-tiles (*ciaramidi*). Balconies, brackets and design details are made of hard materials. The floor are made of compacted concrete or gypsum (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Balconies, brackets and design details made of hard materials.

PRELIMINARY PLAN FOR THE RE-USE OF THE SITE

Although the area is in condition of total abandonment from over 37 years, it seems to be placed out of time and space; the whole housing system, nearly intact in its urban configuration, shows visible damages caused by the earthquake and by degradation in consequence of the abandonment. (Figure 10)



Figure 10. The abandoned City, 2007 (© googlearth)

The outline proposal is inspired from the physics and environmental characteristics of the site and previews a series of actions on the same district aimed to preserve the ruderal outlook already taken by the town.

This urban landscape, however, needs to be reinforced relatively to the principal avenue and the square, now the rest of the town is not accessible for the collapses.

What gave the input for the project survey were the parameters of the recovery and re-use, which involve urban-reclassification

matters and the characteristic's analysis of the existing decay; in this project survey the urban area has been subdivided in three different typological-functional zones: *Ruins zone*, *Recreational and accommodation facilities zone*, *Public space zone* (Figure 11).

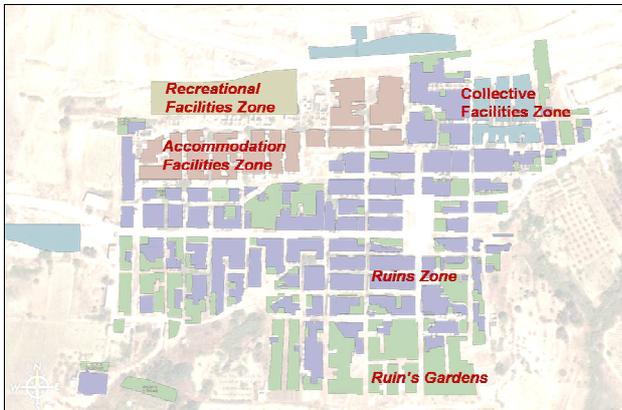


Figure 11. The urban park: subdivision in different typological-functional zones.

- *Ruins zone*

It's the principal element of the whole district, includes blocks from Umberto I Avenue and Elimo Square until the Church and the other blocks in the Southern part. Area's recovery, with access from the Western hillside and with an appropriate parking near the entrance, consists in: protection of the ruderal condition of the buildings, in accordance with safety and facility-using regulations; recovery of the road network through pedestrian walk-ways; creation of green areas (*ruin's gardens*) defined by low walls made of collapses resultant materials, which will highlight partially collapsed or no longer existing blocks; requalification of buildings in better state of preservation, which will become museums a Visitor Center located inside the first building near the western entrance (*Agosta House*).

- *Accommodation and recreational facilities zone*

Located on the North-West hillside, against the Ruins Zone, this area has an excellent landscape visual on the entire land context. Recovery of this area provides the renewal of the better-preserved buildings and the reconstruction, after the demolition, of the collapsed ones, according to the typological and volumetric unit of the context.

The main access to the area (in which is applied the accommodation solution (*casa- albergo*) is granted in the Northern hillside, through an existing road network which consent the touristic means of transport to transit over there. For the integrated connectivity, a wide parking zone has been disposed, at North, directly linked with an ex-novo project of a panoramic tower (*Torre Belvedere*) with a pedestrian under-crossing. From the tower it will be possible to read the original urban assets and its generatrix mesh. Some recreational facilities (swimming-pools, paly fields, etc.) will take place in a shielded band, located between buildings and the municipal avenue.

- *Public space zone*

To obtain the full recovery of this zone, it has been figured out to assign some blocks, located in the North-East extremity of the country, to collective facilities (conventions halls, extensions, expositions, etc.). This area is directly accessible from the Western hillside and is served by a specific parking located in the near surroundings. Because of the worst conditions of the involved factories, it has been

figured out a recovery action through reconstruction. Given the new destinations and the distinction between the various functional-areas, *Old Poggioreale* would assume an accomodational connotation according to its own self-expositive specifics (Figure 12).



Figure 12. Preliminary Plan for the re-use of Ancient Poggioreale

This site has a series of characteristics which can help its touristic development, which, thanks to its strategic collocation in the Belice Valley, makes it simply reachable from the main historic and artistic centres of the West Sicily.

The principal project target aimed to create a city park recomposing a country-system in which is re-established a positive connection between the urban environment and people's needs, a trimmed relation between human activities, physical aspects and climatic factors; this can be possible acting sinergically over *History, Society, Work and Environment*. Every proposed actions will have external causes at the same time over the three zones.

Interventions will take place simultaneously without interfering from each other, according to a Plan of Action established, supervised and controlled by a General Operating Plan (Figure 13 – 14 / Schedule 1).

Therefore, it will be proceeded ,within the three areas, according to these categories:

- *Recovery of the existing Housing*
- *Recovery and improvement of open spaces, connectivity and roading*
- *Renewal of the residential housing to be destroyed*
- *Renewal of technological facilities*
- *Recovery of productive activity*
- *Right and rational exploitation of natural resources*



Figure 13. Plan's do & chek: stage of the actions.

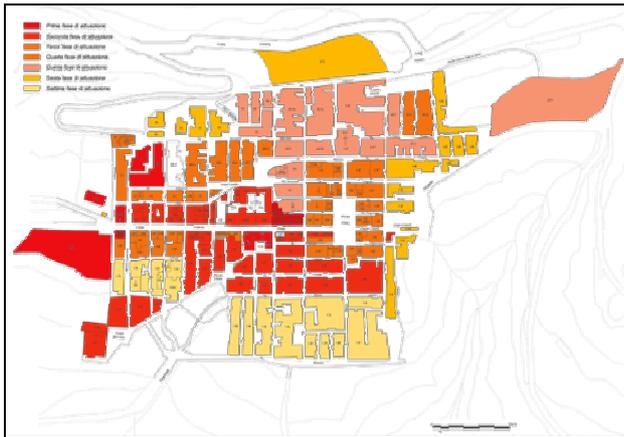


Figure 14. Plan of Action's diagram

		MILESTONES		BUDGET		TIMES
Stage 1	U 1	mq	274,16	€	1.138.312,32	2 month
	U 11;11a	mq	338,24	€	1.534.290,48	18 month
	U 12; 13; 14 e15	mq	221,55	€	456.736,20	5 month
	U 42; 43 e 44	mq	662,71	€	2.394.950,69	9 month
	U 58 e 59	mq	126,00	€	12.640,00	1 month
	A.R. 1;2 e 3	mq	2,673	€	4.116.420,00	24 month
	I 76	mq	302,45	€	952.717,50	9 month
	AP 1	mq	2,181	€	436.200,00	4 month
					€	11.042.267,19
Stage 2	U da 9 a 10 h	mq	3.039,45	€	4.626.660,57	30 month
	U da 35 a 41	mq	620,69	€	1.436.487,81	14 month
	U da 49 a 51	mq	335,28	€	2.969.648,82	11 month
	I 54	mq	589,28	€	1.237.488,00	6 month
	U da 2 a 8	mq	1.245,17	€	3.295.866,68	24 month
					€	13.566.151,87
Stage 3	U da 16 a 18	mq	469,95	€	1.934.574,44	18 month
	U da 45 a 48	mq	262,24	€	461.221,62	12 month
	U da 52 a 57	mq	759,16	€	2.592.722,97	6 month
	I 65; 66; 69 e 70	mq	1.633,99	€	2.037.599,00	8 month
	I 1 e 2	mq	1.218,00	€	2.051.800,00	24 month
				€	9.077.918,03	24 month
Stage 4	U da 19 a 35	mq	1.348,55	€	3.744.544,12	24 month
	I da 11 a 14	mq	1.698,11	€	1.840.966,68	12 month
	I 18 e 19	mq	1.007,00	€	920.518,74	20 month

		MILESTONES		BUDGET		TIMES	
	I 28; 30; 31; 51; 52 e 54	mq	1.952,19	€	4.172.481,50	14 month	
	AR da 4 a 8	mq	3.732,00	€	5.747.280,00	24 month	
	SC 2 e 3	mq	1.728,00	€	2.661.120,00	24 month	
					€	19.086.911,04	24 month
Stage 5	I da 7 a 10	mq	1.717,08	€	4.602.268,00	24 month	
	I da 15 a 17	mq	4.563,00	€	7.428.300,00	36 month	
	AR da 9 a 12	mq	3.031,00	€	4.667.740,00	24 month	
	SC 1 e 4	mq	3.682,00	€	5.670.280,00	24 month	
	AP 1	mq	2.181,00	€	436.200,00	2 month	
	SC 5	mq	225,00	€	346.500,00	4 month	
				€	23.151.288,00	36 month	
Stage 6	I da 20 a 26	mq	3.925	€	5.218.500,00	12 month	
	I 29	mq	406,00	€	867.150,00	8 month	
	I da 32 a 35	mq	1.501	€	2.255.900,00	8 month	
	AS 1	mq	5,953	€	1.190.600,00	36 month	
	AP 3	mq	1.769	€	353.800,00	3 month	
					€	9.885.950,00	36 month
Stage 7	I da 36 a 45	mq	11,674	€	5.757.300,00	12 month	
	I da 46 a 50	mq	4,139	€	6.574.150,00	16 month	
	I da 53 a 58	mq	3.267,28	€	7.149.888,00	10 month	
	I da 59 a 71	mq	7.167,75	€	8.584.495,00	16 month	
	I da 73 a 75	mq	1.852,25	€	1.453.225,00	10 month	
				€	29.519.058,00	16 month	

Schedule 1. Action's price list

In conclusion, is to be considered that: every city, even the smaller and lost one, has been inhabited, founded, transformed by humans, and every inhabitant loves his own city as it represents memory of himself, of its forefathers and future living location of its descendants. A city which loses forever its history, is a city without memory, identity and culture.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Argan, G.C., 1984. *Storia dell'arte come storia della città*, Editori Riuniti, Roma, Italy.
 Barbieri, G., Gambi, L. (cur.), 1970. *La casa rurale in Italia*, L. S. Olschki Ed., Firenze, Italy.
 Barnes, T.J., Duncan, J.S. (cur.), 1992. *Writing worlds. Discourse, text and metaphor in the representation of landscape*, Routledge, New York, USA.

Becattini, G., Sforzi, F., 2002. *Lezioni sullo sviluppo locale*, Rosenberg & Sellier, Torino, Italy.

Benevolo, L., et alii, 1993, *Principi e forme della città*, Scheiwiller, Milano, Italy.

Benevolo, L., 1993. *Storia della città*, Laterza, Bari-Roma, Italy.

Boccianti, C., Miliatti, R., 1953. *Fabbricati rurali nei territori della riforma*, Ente Maremma, Roma, Italy.

Cardamone, G., Giuffrè, M. *Città nuove di Sicilia XV-XIX secolo. Per una storia dell'architettura e degli insediamenti urbani nell'area occidentale*, Vittorietti, Palermo, Italy.

Carozzi, C., Rozzi, R., 1971. *Centri Storici. Questione Aperta*, De Donato Editore, Bari, Italy.

Carrera, F., 2002. *City Knowledge*, MIT, Ph. D. Dissertation Proposal.

Cervellati, P.L., Miliari, M., 1977. *I centri storici*, Guaraldi, Firenze, Italy.

Dematteis, G., 1985. *Le metafore della Terra*, Feltrinelli, Milano, Italy.

Di Vita, G., 1906. *Dizionario geografico dei Comuni della Sicilia*, F. Pravatà Edizioni, Palermo, Italy.

Finley, M.I., 1989. *Storia della Sicilia antica*, Laterza, Bari, Italy.

Fondi, M., 1978. *Deruralizzazione e modifiche della casa rurale italiana*, L.S.E.B., Napoli, Italy.

Gambi, L., (cur.), 1970. *La casa rurale in Italia*, Olschki, Firenze, Italy.

Gambi, L., 1982. L'evoluzione storica delle città in Italia finì agli inizi del nostro secolo: eventi urbanistici e loro rapporti con gli eventi demografici, in Società Italiana di Demografia Storica, *La demografia storica delle città italiane*, Clueb, Bologna, Italy.

Gangemi, G., La Franca, R., 1987. *Centri Storici di Sicilia*, Palermo, Italy.

Giuffrè, M., (cur.), 1997. *L'architettura del Settecento in Sicilia*, Sellerio, Palermo, Italy.

Guidicini, P., 1976. *I centri storici*, Nuova Universale Studium, Roma, Italy.

Guidoni, F., 1979. *Indicazioni di metodo per lo studio storico-urbanistico dei centri siciliani*, Palermo, Italy.

Infranca, G.C., 1992. *Il restauro di necessità. La valle del Belice*, Gangemi, Roma, Italy.

Leévi Strauss, C., 1960. *Tristi tropici*, Mondadori, Milano, Italy.

Lynch, K., 1990. *Progettare la città. La qualità della forma urbana*, Etaslibri, Milano, Italy.

Mazzamuto, A., 1986. *Architettura e stato nella Sicilia del '500. I progetti di Tiburzio Spannocchi e di Camillo A. Camilliani del sistema delle torri di difesa dell'isola*, Flaccovio Editore, Palermo, Italy.

Mumford, L., 1977, *La città nella storia*, Bompiani, Milano, Italy.

Schmiedt, G., 1970. *Atlante aerofotografico delle sedi umane in Italia*, (second part), *Le sedi antiche scomparse*, I.G.M, Firenze, Italy.

Sereni, E., 1961. *Storia del paesaggio agrario italiano*, Laterza, Bari, Italy.

Toschi, U., 1966. *La città* (Geografia urbana), UTET, Torino, Italy.

Vallega, A., 2003. *Geografia culturale. Luoghi, spazi, simboli*, UTET, Torino, Italy.