Learning from Bologna: Heritage Planning in Italy
flirting with urban heritage

EnsapBX

Bordeaux

Master in Architecture
Unife - Ferrara

Master Thesis
Shahjahanabad, Delhi

born in Bologna

Ph.D. at UdeM
technical assistance and urban heritage

Cultural heritage
Jericho Master Plan, PAL

EnsapBX
Bordeaux
“ [...] there wasn’t enough evidence to point to the historical value of the home, whether it be architectural value or an indication that Payson conducted important work at the residence.”

“ [...] neighbors who wanted to protect the aesthetic of their street, those who felt Payson’s legacy was historically significant to the neighborhood, and another set of neighbors and Berkeley locals who decried attempts to block housing.”

“The landmarking commission has dealt with similar conflicts over development in the past and Adams on Thursday tried to distance landmarking from the zoning and housing process, but several speakers said landmarking can’t happen in a vacuum.”

Landmarking fails for 130-year-old Berkeley house in passionate debate over housing, history

Those in favor spoke about the house’s beauty and charm, but others raised the issue of a Bay Area housing crisis and exclusionary neighborhoods.
The premises

Forget about “monument, landmark”

Forget about “preservation”

Forget about “Washington slept here”

Forget about “neighborhood character”

Forget about “identity, architectural style”

Forget about “aesthetic, charm”
The roots of the American approach: historic preservation

A municipal entreprise:

New York City’s landmarks preservation law

New Orleans’s French Quarter conservation district

landmarking as a reaction to threatened buildings

The demolition of Penn Station building, NYC (1963)
Source: NYT
The roots of the American approach : Historic preservation

What is missing !?
Built heritage and its preservation: the 19th century roots

Camillo Boito
Philological restauration

John Ruskin
Pictoresque, ruinism

Eugène E. Viollet-le-Duc
Stylistic restauration

Too decadent !!

Historical fake !!
Major monuments are protected since the 18th century, more systematically since 1902...

... but this is not the case for the minor or vernacular heritage that is frequently demolished in city’s modernisation schemes.

The demolition of Borgo Alessabdrino to make room for Via dei Fori Imperiali, Roma (1930s)

Source: Folia
The fast urbanization of post-war years

Article 9. “The Republic shall promote the development of culture, and scientific and technical research. It shall safeguard the natural beauties and the historical and artistic heritage of the Nation”
The theoretical foundation of heritage planning in Italy: the typo-morphological approach

- Beyond the **monument** concept
- How to **integrate the industrial and pre-industrial** city?
- Take into account the importance of **minor or vernacular heritage** in defining the quality of the historic urban environment
- Not only a tool of preservation but a **tool of urban design**
Understanding the hidden logic behind the evolution of the basic components of the city’s fabric: *processual morphology*

the parcel and the building as the basic modules, patterns of modularity and densification through saturation over time...

Typological studies of the elongated plot at different level of saturation  
Source: Conservation Plan of Bologna

Studies on the evolution of the basic urban cell  
Source: Conservation Plan of Bologna
Understanding the logic behind the evolution of the **basic components** of the city’s fabric: *processual morphology*

...their aggregation in **blocks**, the urban process of densification along primary, structural, saturation **roads**, etc.

*The aggregation of the base “module” in a block*
Source: Conservation Plan of Bologna

*Studies about the different pattern of saturation of the urban environment*
Source: Caniggia, Maffei. “Lettura dell’edilizia di base”
Toward the 1969 Bologna conservation plan. Early experiences

Assisi’s walled city detailed plan
Giovanni Astengo
1959

Source: IAUv - Archivio Progetti
Bologna. Toward the 1969 conservation plan

The 1955 Piano Regolatore Generale (Masterplan)
Source: Comune di Bologna
Bologna. The 1969 conservation plan

Piano Operativo della Conservazione.
Conservation plan for Bologna’s historic core
Source: Comune di Bologna
Using the PEEP** legal tools to **reuse and restore** dilapidated housing blocks in low-income neighborhoods. A typomorphological approach is used to renovate the built fabric.

**PEEPs** are operational plans giving cities the power to expropriate land at reduced prices for social housing.

Areas targeted by the 1973 PEEP plan, Bologna
Source: Comune di Bologna
Bologna: the 1973 PEEP plan

Via Mirasole
One of the areas renovated under the 1973 PEEP plan

Areas targeted by the 1973 PEEP plan, Bologna
Source: Cervellati 1973
Not a just a tool for preservation but also for modern city design

Ex Staffa
neighborhood
Venice
1981-2001

Gregotti e associati
Not a just a tool for preservation but also for city design

Mazzorbo social housing
Venice
1980-97

Giancarlo de Carlo
Largely a globally renowned “success-story”...

During the 1970-80s, this approach has become the norm in almost every historical city in Italy and it spread, to some extent, to France, Spain, South America and the Middle East.

Sana’a, Yemen
Quito, Equador
An example of application of the typo-morphological approach at the urban scale in Québec

Plan d’Implantation et d’Intégration Architecturale (PIIA) of Saint-Eustache

Courtesy of Danielle Labbé

...not very much known in North America (with exceptions)
... but with many trade-offs

The major trade-off is a sometimes very **conservative approach to urban heritage** opposing the insertion of modern architecture in historical context.

*The idealized image of the Italian city*

“Allegoria ed Effetti del Buono e del Cattivo Governo”
Ambrogio Lorenzetti
1338-1339
Though, the debate is open, and many thinks Italian cities aren’t and should not be museums.

*Arata Isozakis’s pergola for the secondary entrance of Uffizi.* Works will finally start next year, 21 years after the Japanese architect won the design competition.
Can a similar approach work in Berkeley? 
(or elsewhere in the US)

The answer is probably **YES and NO**

- **In Italy, densification is less important: historic fabric is already dense and compact**, often even more than post-WWII expansions.

- Processual morphology, as a tool to organize urban heritage planning, works at its best in **deeply stratified environments**.

- **General population growth** is low, there is less pressure for more housing.

- In Italy there is a **diffused expertise in dealing with heritage among** practitioners, developers, the public administration, developed over a century.
- **Switch to a proactive approach:** identify what is worth preserving. Not on a building by building base, but as comprehensive urban planning strategy taking into consideration all the connected aspects (i.e. need for densification)

- **Avoid fetishizing single buildings**, their particular history or characteristics, etc.

- The accent is on the **qualities of the historic urban environment**, not on the single buildings

- Pay more attention to the overall **urban quality of new developments** (do not make us all regret what we lost) and how they can improve the built environment
Thank you!

Questions?

marco.chitti@umontreal.ca

116-year-old brown-shingle home moved through the streets of Berkeley

This brown-shingle duplex had to be moved to make way for the construction of the 205-unit Acheson Commons complex.