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# Cultural Heritage and Urban Health

New Perspectives for Cultural Heritage Conservation  
and Sustainable Urban Development in Tbilisi  
An Open Dialogue Between Georgia and Italy

*edited by*

**Nora Lombardini**

*Contributions by*

Mariam Botchorishvili, Federico Bucci, Stefano Capolongo  
Marco Gola, Irakli Gvilava, Nino Imnadze, Nino Jijilashvili  
Luka Kemoklidze, Nora Lombardini, Alessandro Luè  
Roberto Nocerino, Chiara Luisa Pellizzari, Andrea Rebecchi  
Nick Shavishvili, Claudia Suardi, Nino Tsertsvadze, Enrico Valvo  
Manana Vardzelashvili, Irakli Zukakishvili, Otar Zumburidze





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[info@giacchinoonoratieditore.it](mailto:info@giacchinoonoratieditore.it)

via Vittorio Veneto, 20  
00020 Canterano (RM)  
(06) 4551463

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## Foreword

MARIAM BOTCHORISHVILI<sup>1</sup>

It is a very great pleasure for me to have the possibility to contribute in this publication which is presented as the outcome of Tbilisi Arch Week that should have been held in February 2020 and unfortunately was interrupted due to COVID-19. The main idea of the week was to share the experience of Italian and Georgian specialists, collaborate between Georgian and Italian Universities and with different governmental or nongovernmental institutions in the field of architecture and design.

The main goal of the week is to give Georgian students the opportunity to get involved and be active in many different interesting activities: as lectures, workshops and exhibitions in the field of architecture and design.

I want to thank Politecnico di Milano first of all, for this great honour making possible this publication. I want to thank all invaluable participants of Tbilisi Arch Week. I am looking forward and keep this project active to host Italian specialists in Georgia in 2021 and developing interesting collaborations in the future.

<sup>1</sup> Young Ambassador of Georgia to the Republic of Italy; Architecture Master Program Student, Politecnico di Milano.

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IDS  
INTERNATIONAL  
DESIGN SCHOOL





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POLITECNICO  
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DA  
SOCIETÀ DANTE ALIGHIERI  
FONDATA NEL 1828  
per la promozione della cultura  
italiana nel mondo





## Discovering the Relationship Between Cultural Heritage and Urban Health (an Anthology Tentative)

NORA LOMBARDINI<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Cultural Heritage and Well-Being

According to the Namur declaration in 2015<sup>2</sup>, the cultural heritage is the fourth pillar of sustainable development:

v. Considering that cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions, including all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time; vi. Noting with satisfaction the support given to this approach by the actors of civil society which have been associated with preparatory work; vii. Noting the contribution of culture and cultural heritage to sustainable development, of which they form the “fourth pillar”.

And, as fourth pillar of sustainability,

this new approach addresses the relation between culture and sustainable development through dual means: firstly, the development of the cultural sector itself (i.e. heritage, creativity, cultural industries, crafts, cultural tourism); and secondly, ensuring that culture has its rightful place in all public policies, particularly those related to education, the economy, science, communication, environment, social cohesion and international cooperation<sup>3</sup>.

ICCROM<sup>4</sup> insists on the need to underline the social impact that the conservation of cultural heritage can have.

<sup>1</sup> Associate Professor, Department of Architecture, Built Environment and Construction Engineering, Politecnico di Milano, Milano, Italy.

<sup>2</sup> *Namur Declaration*, 2015 – Council of Europe.

<sup>3</sup> *Culture: Fourth Pillar of Sustainable Development* [[http://www.agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/files/documents/en/zz\\_culture4pillarsd\\_eng.pdf](http://www.agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/files/documents/en/zz_culture4pillarsd_eng.pdf)]. Accessed on September 2020].

<sup>4</sup> [<https://youtu.be/W7FGu2NX2OE>]. Accessed on October 2020].

It is not a longer question, therefore, of using heritage by exploiting it “only” for economic purposes (as could happen with the management of tourist flows), but of recognizing, by parameterizing it, the value that cultural heritage has on the well-being of persons, bringing a benefit in terms of social value, something that can have, but not only, an economic impact too. Greater well-being (in Italian, here, in the meaning of being well in moral and physical terms) can and must share a greater propensity for social and civil respect. It could be summarized, in a superficial way, that a lower malaise (or greater well-being, playing on the use of opposites) understood in the broad sense as a state of apprehension and discontent, means fewer diseases related to this state, less violence and greater awareness of the value of diversity.

People’s health can be affected by taking care of something that is recognized by society, that is useful for and of which one is a part. In a recent study, Grossi *et alii*, underlining how medical — scientific research still needs to be developed to better understand the dependence of physical and mental well-being on cultural heritage, mark that:

If the arts and culture would gain enough credit as key factors of promotion of health and wellbeing, and therefore as a new major field of public health research and policy design, that would make a significant difference. The more we manage to successfully involve individuals in regular forms of cultural participation, and to embed such participation in stable social networks providing the right social incentives..., the larger the likely long-term societal impact in public health terms. Therefore, cultural participation should be regarded as a key structural factor in evaluating the individual and social effects of arts-and culture-focused health policies<sup>5</sup>.

It is impossible, according to who is writing, to define how much well-being can really have the influence on what it is described below and, through a possible measure of well-being, real predictions can be made, even in quantitative terms. The fact remains that it is an ancient awareness so, perhaps, it is worth remembering Belisario’s speech to Totila, famous and often used in architectural restoration lessons:

How to furnish a city with new ornaments is the thinking of men sensible and educated in civil life, thus destroying the ornaments that are there is a foolish

<sup>5</sup> E. GROSSI, G. TAVANO BLESSI, P. L. SACCO, *Magic Moments: Determinants of Stress Relief and Subjective Wellbeing from Visiting a Cultural Heritage Site*, «Cult Med Psychiatry» 2019, p. 21.

thing that they are not ashamed to leave such a document of being theirs to the future; and of all cities, as many as there are under the sun, Rome is recognized as the largest and most magnificent; since, not through the work of the genius of a single man nor through the strength of a short time it became so great and so beautiful, but so did many emperors and many consortia of great men and a long passage of times and enormous wealth that like everything else, artists from all over the earth could collect there, so that little by little building that city you see, they left it to posterity as a monument of the value of all; hence, the inveighing against it must seem a great insult to men of all times; for in this way the memory of their virtue would be removed from the dead, the spectacle of their work from the future. This being the case, you must reflect that one of the two cases will necessarily have to happen: it may be that in this enterprise you will be won by the emperor, and it may even be that you will win it. In case you be the victor, if you destroy Rome, you will not have ruined the city of another, or valiant man, but your city; keeping it instead, you will be rich in the most beautiful of all possessions. In the event that the worst fate happens to you, by reserving Rome, you will keep a great grace for yourself in addition to the victor; if you destroy it, there will remain no reason for humanity towards you, besides doing this will not be of any benefit to you. The due name is reserved for you for your work, which is already assured for any of the two parties you choose. since what are the works of princes, such must be the name they enjoy<sup>6</sup>.

In reality, it is precisely the difficulty of sharing the meaning of well-being and culture in different social, economic and geographic contexts, which requires particular reasoning to determine indicators that are as shared as possible.

In Italy, as pointed out by Cicerchia, ISTAT with CNEL have developed a “a fair and sustainable welfare system measures”, based on extensive consultations to individuals, known as BES (Bisogni Educativi Speciali/Special Educational Needs as expression of equitable and sustainable wellness).

Again, as Cicerchia points out, the BES is based on “basic determinants”: the adoption of a single synthetic index was excluded and, instead, “12 domain indexes and a dashboard of 130 indicators” were built. It is recognized that:

BES is, on a global scale, the only measure of well-being that recognizes a decisive role in culture. The latter, in fact, defines a specific domain: landscape and cultural heritage, which joins the others: health, education and training,

<sup>6</sup> PROCOPPIO DI CESAREA, *La Guerra Gotica* (The Gothic War), edited by E. Bartolini, Italian translation by D. Comparetti, TEA, Firenze, 1994, pp. 463–464: Letter from Belisario to Totila.

work–life balance, economic well–being, social relations, politics and institutions, safety, subjective well–being, environment, innovation, research and creativity, and quality of services<sup>7</sup>.

The BES indicators can be used in order to understand how much cultural heritage can affect citizens' health. For instance, it is possible to quote:

2–Density and importance of the museum heritage: number of permanent exhibition structures per 100 km<sup>2</sup> (museums, archaeological areas and monuments open to the public). Values weighed with the number of visitors, both at 10. Dissatisfaction with the landscape of the place of life: Percentage of people aged 14 and over who declare that the landscape of the place of life is affected by evident deterioration. 11–Landscape Deterioration Concern: percentage of people aged 14 and over who point to landscape ruin caused by overbuilding among the five most worrying environmental problems<sup>8</sup>.

The possible parameterization and involvement of the population in the process known as participation in the “governance”, in the management and safeguarding in this case of cultural heritage, has a relatively recent origin.

<sup>7</sup> A. CICERCHIA, *Paesaggio e patrimonio culturale come determinanti del benessere*, «Eticaeconomia–Menabò» n. 101, 1 April 2019, p. 2. [<https://www.eticaeconomia.it/paesaggio-e-patrimonio-culturale-come-determinanti-del-benessere/>. Accessed on September 2020].

<sup>8</sup> Ivi, p. 2–3 The indicators are: Residents' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the cultural landscape in their place of life and concern for the depletion of landscape resources complete the conceptual elements of the domain with the subjective component.

The indicators describing the domain are: «1. Current expenditure of the Municipalities for culture: Payments on account for the protection and enhancement of cultural assets and activities, in euros per capita; 2. Density and relevance of the museum heritage: Number of permanent exhibition structures per 100 km<sup>2</sup> (museums, archaeological areas and monuments open to the public). Values weighted with the number of visitors; 3. Unauthorized building: Number of illegal buildings per 100 buildings authorized by the Municipalities; 4. Erosion of the rural space by urban dispersion: Percentage incidence of the agricultural regions affected by the phenomenon on the total regional surface; 5. Erosion of the rural area due to abandonment: Percentage incidence of the agricultural regions affected by the phenomenon on the total regional surface; 6. Pressure of mining activities: Volume of mineral resources extracted (cubic meters) per km<sup>2</sup>; 7. Impact of forest fires: Forest area (wooded and non–wooded) covered by fire for 1,000 km<sup>2</sup>; 8. Diffusion of farms: Number of farms per 100 km<sup>2</sup>; 9. Density of historic greenery: Surface area in m<sup>2</sup> of the areas of historic greenery and urban parks of considerable public interest per 100 m<sup>2</sup> of urbanized surface (inhabited centres) in the provincial capital municipalities; 10. Dissatisfaction with the landscape of the place of life: Percentage of people aged 14 and over who declare that the landscape of the place of life is affected by evident deterioration; 11. Landscape Deterioration Concern: Percentage of people aged 14 and over who point to landscape ruin caused by overbuilding among the five most worrying environmental problems» (Translation by N. Lombardini).

The production of art and the preservation of heritage, in every period and in every place, has taken on ideological and political meanings and, finally yet importantly, has been used for the control of the masses.

In Italy the management of the heritage, in its birth, after the unity of the Country and the constitution of only one Nation, in the second half the XIX Cent., is highly centralized.

The state takes care of its study, its conservation and restoration but, above all, of its definition, identification and recognition. In fact, cultural heritage is defined as:

«Things of historical and artistic interest» and «the immovable things that have conspicuous characters of natural beauty or geological singularity; 2) villas, gardens and parks which, not covered by the laws for the protection of things of artistic or historical interest, are distinguished by their uncommon beauty; 3) the complexes of immovable things that make up a characteristic aspect having an aesthetic and traditional value; 4) the panoramic beauties considered as natural pictures and also those points of view or belvedere, accessible to the public, from which one can enjoy the spectacle of those beauties»<sup>9</sup>.

All these things, it is necessary to repeat, have the function of educating the population, to whom the new Italy is committed to also giving a common language and an undivided culture.

Since the 2000s, there has been talk of participation in the process of enhancing cultural heritage, as sanctioned by articles 111 and 6 of the Codice dei Beni culturali (the Italian law for the protection of Cultural Heritage) promoted in 2004 (and its updating), there is a beginning to speak of participation from the bottom, with the aim of guaranteeing a different and better distribution of human resources and public finance.

The construction of sharing took and takes time, also due to the different social conditions imposed by the globalization process.

The aforementioned ICCROM report argues that the defence of heritage must become a lifestyle conscious and democratic. This, in fact, could help to recognize and respect the different identities.

<sup>9</sup> Law 1089/1939 and Law 1497/1939 on the Protection of Italian “things” of art and history and of the historical and aesthetic values of the landscape. These laws were preceded by the laws enacted in 1909 and 1913, and by those implemented in the different States in which Italy was divided before its unification.

When culture is reduced to a recreational past, when we do not recognize heritage as a way of life that combines livelihoods and identity, opportunities to increase the meaning and value of our lives are lost. To address this forgetfulness, the impact of culture on sustainable development and well-being must be more clearly articulated and emphasized, ...<sup>10</sup>.

## 2. Public Health, Urban Planning and Architectural Heritage

During the XIX Century, public health enters management of the industrial city, workers' villages and the garden city from a socio-political perspective.

At that moment it tries to exercise control over the single person to get to the group and, therefore, to the entire social system. The care of the individual, through medical research and the improvement of hygienic and housing conditions, presupposes the well-being of the group and therefore of a specific social system. It is the commitment of an external entity, who takes charge of the health of persons.

In these very general terms, urban health must be understood with respect to Nineteenth-century laws, such as the *English Public Health Act*, which took place from the mid-Nineteenth century to the Eighties of the Twentieth century.

In the new social order are the people and, with their commitment to the same society, properly contributing their well-being, in collaboration with the relevant authority, mostly public.

This principle is advocated by international organizations and acknowledged by cultural and national policies, to the overwhelming revival of individualism.

The care that people, as an element of a society and as part of the same culture, must have towards their own assets contributes to the achievement of their own well-being.

Mattei states that:

Wanting to use a language that makes me understandable to the dominant constitutional culture, I will interpret in this paper the common goods as a type of "last generation" fundamental rights, finally disconnected from the "reddito domenicale" (individualistic) and authoritarian paradigm (welfare State). In fact,

<sup>10</sup> A. HERITAGE, A. TISSOT, B. BANERJEE, *Heritage and well-being: what does it mean to live well?* ICCROM [<https://www.iccrom.org/it/projects/patrimonio-e-benessere-cosa-vuol-dire-vivere-bene>. Accessed October 2020].



it is precisely the pincer between the individualistic and the authoritarian dimension that completely inhibited — after the fall of the Berlin wall — any potential for emancipation linked to the notion of social rights<sup>11</sup>.

On the other hand, the ICCROM report says that:

Focusing on well-being implies a popular approach, that is to say, considering people's opinions. If applied to cultural heritage, this approach requires decision-making processes that respect what is meaningful to people and their communities...<sup>12</sup>.

In an apparently opposite approach to the practices of the past two centuries, currently, through policies aimed at the social system, we want to achieve the well-being of the individual.

This last process starts from a conception of the role of the social system on public health, because prevailing social rights where individual ones should necessarily meet.

Therefore, the prescriptions that require the construction of healthy living and working environments are replaced by policies that are able to «facilitate the healthy behaviour of people» or

spread and facilitate the choice of proper lifestyles... The growing risks of disease are mainly caused by causes external to the environment of the health sector: from the use of transport in a world that is rapidly urbanizing, to construction, to environmental risks and to changes in lifestyles, consumption and in nutrition as a result of the globalized economy and culture<sup>13</sup>.

Urban planning is the discipline that technically supports territorial planning with objectives that include the improvement of the community quality of life, relationships, social cohesion and the healthiness of settlements. More than ever in this context, the term “healthiness” is to be understood in the sense of “health promoter” concept which, according to the WHO since 1948, is not

<sup>11</sup> U. MATTEI, *Beni comuni. Un manifesto*, Laterza, Roma–Bari 2012, Kindle Edition. «Volendo utilizzare un linguaggio che mi renda comprensibile alla cultura costituzionale dominante, interpreterò in questo scritto i beni comuni come una tipologia di diritti fondamentali «di ultima generazione», finalmente scollegati dal paradigma dominicale (individualistico) ed autoritario (Stato assistenziale). Infatti, è proprio la tenaglia fra la dimensione individualistica e quella autoritaria ad aver completamente inibito — all'indomani della caduta del muro di Berlino — qualsiasi potenziale di emancipazione legato alla nozione di diritti sociali» (translation by N. Lombardini).

<sup>12</sup> A. HERITAGE, A. TISSOT, B. BANERJEE, op. cit..

<sup>13</sup> E. BEDESCHI, *Promozione della salute e pianificazione del territorio*, «Migliorare la salute migliorando le città: nuovi percorsi per l'urbanistica», Special Issue 02, 10° Inu Study Day “Crisis and Rebirth of Cities”, edited by F. Domenico Moccia and M. Sepe, UI – Urbanistica Informazione, 272, a. XXXXI, Marzo–Aprile 2017, p. 733 (translation by N. Lombardini).

identifiable with the condition of mere absence of disease, but represents the state of complete physical, mental and social well-being of the individual<sup>14</sup>.

If it is possible to associate the physical and social well-being of the individual with the “contemplation” and “awareness” of cultural heritage, it is clear that this must be safeguarded and preserved.

The safeguarding and sharing of cultural heritage, as stated in the ICCROM document, serve to improve the person and the environment, in relation to the fact that prosperity and the improvement of the standard of living is not only indicated by financial wealth, which can indeed constitute a threat to environmental stability.

Wealth creates those inequalities that today, as reported by the UNESCO 2030 agenda, it is necessary to overcome and which are determined both by the cultural and religious promiscuity that the movements of populations cause and by the inequitable distribution of wealth<sup>15</sup>.

These are the new relationships that link urban planning to cultural heritage through well-being and public health.

The urban development model of a territory can directly influence the main determinants of health in a positive or negative sense, such as: the availability and accessibility of housing for different social groups and for different age groups; the presence of car-free neighbourhoods; the different possibilities of accessing public transport; the levels of crime in a community; access to education, employment, services and basic necessities. The assessment of the impacts that the planning model and design choices can have on people's health and their quality of life is entrusted in many European countries, and not only, to specific instruments and strategies, sometimes integrated into planning tools, whose task is the evaluation of the choices of plans and projects, correcting them or guiding their implementation<sup>16</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Ivi, p. 734.

<sup>15</sup> A. HERITAGE, A. TISSOT, B. BANERJEE, op. cit..

<sup>16</sup> R. D'ONOFRIO, E. TRUSIANI, *Città, salute e benessere*, FrancoAngeli, Milano 2017, Kindle Edition, p. 67, pp. 69–70. «Il modello di sviluppo urbanistico di un territorio può direttamente influenzare in senso positivo o negativo i principali determinanti della salute, come ad esempio: la disponibilità e l'accessibilità alle abitazioni per le diverse fasce sociali e per le diverse fasce d'età; la presenza di quartieri car-free; le diverse possibilità di accedere al trasporto pubblico; i livelli di crimine in una comunità; l'accesso all'istruzione, all'occupazione, ai servizi e ai beni di prima necessità. La valutazione degli impatti che il modello di pianificazione e le scelte progettuali possono comportare sulla salute delle persone e sulla loro qualità della vita è affidata in molti paesi europei, e non solo, a strumenti specifici, a volte integrati negli strumenti di pianificazione, che hanno il compito di valutare le scelte dei piani e dei progetti, correggerne o orientarne l'attuazione» (Translation by N. Lombardini).

The relationships between issues related to urban health and the protection and conservation of the historical and artistic heritage may not be immediately visible.

It must start from the fact that urban health is closely connected to urban planning, and it was one of the issues that urban planning had to address, as well as its relationship with the presence of so-called monuments.

If we refer to the international documents that first referred to both urban planning and architectural heritage, namely the Athens Charter for Monuments of 1931<sup>17</sup> and CIAM's Athens Charter of 1933<sup>18</sup>, we realize how, in fact, is the second to touch on the theme of urban planning, trying to give, without resolving it, a solution to the relationship between planning, which is based on the predictions we want to contest today, and the presence of the monuments.

The forecasts, as stated in the CIAM Charter, refer specifically to both the "automation" of the life, the increasingly widespread use of modes of transport, and the consequent adaptation of the road section, and the demolition of neighbourhoods, inadequate for public health.

The two charters do not enter into dialogue one with each other.

The restoration charter of Athens subscribed in 1931 is totally focused on the monument and its preservation, supporting its aims. At that historical moment, also supporting the policies and culture of the commission that drafted it, the need to point at the question of their conservation, is arising, focusing on international collaboration, underlining the need not to prescribe any style and recognizing how the difficulty of this management depends, in fact, on the reconciliation of public and private interests.

This, in fact, concerns the monument, as the architectural emergency is also defined, considering that the Charter is issued, at least as regards Italy, at a time when the protection law is being perfected without losing sight of its specific aims, among which there is the problem of the reconciliation of private property, a juridical institution to which many of the Italian monuments are subject, with the public (and social) interests.

<sup>17</sup> *The Athens Charter for the Restoration of Historic Monuments, 1931*, Adopted at the first International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments.

<sup>18</sup> *CIAM's The Athen Charter, 1933*, translated from the French by A. Eardley, Grossman, N.Y., 1973 [<https://modernistarchitecture.wordpress.com/2010/11/03/ciam%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9Cthe-athens-charter%E2%80%9D-1933/>. Accessed on September 2020].

The commitment made by the Italian government, in this sense, is really high, from the Italian unification and throughout the first thirty years of the twentieth century, at least until the promulgation of the laws of 1939 (in force until 1999).

The first Italian urban plans are aimed at rehabilitating the hygienic situation of the cities of unified Italy (as it is happening in the most important capitals in Europe).

The admonition by Matilde Serao<sup>19</sup>, and the debate that follows, has as its topic the civil and social rehabilitation of Naples. From this basic fact, planning is extended to the definition of use of the areas not yet settled. The interventions on the existing architectural heritage as well as those of new construction are confronted with public and private interests. In particular, two important questions arise: the one related with the expropriation and the other one connected with the protection of the gardens/park of the villas against their privatization and urbanisation.

Evidently, the processes of gutting the ancient parts of the city, carried out in line with the policies of the major European capitals, ends up clashing with the cultural heritage, not only emerged but also underground such as the archaeological one.

The real debate on the impact of urban plans, created precisely to heal the issue of public hygiene, on the management of monuments (and, also, of the widespread building heritage) dates back to the first twenty years of the Twentieth century.

Among the major Italian protagonists, as is well known to Italian scholars, is Gustavo Giovannoni, who actively participates in the construction of a new approach capable of reconciling urban planning needs, monuments and ancient centres.

Giovannoni, referring explicitly to Camillo Sitte and Charles Buls<sup>20</sup>, does not underestimate the needs of urban development with respect to the new requirements imposed by the creation of the image and culture

<sup>19</sup> M. SERAO, *Il ventre di Napoli*, Fratelli Treves, Milano, 1884.

<sup>20</sup> C. SITTE, *L'arte di costruire le città. L'urbanistica secondo i suoi fondamenti artistici*, translated by R Della Torre, Jaca Book, Milano 2007 (first edition 1981), (original title: *Der Städtebau nach seinen Künstlerischen Grundsätzen*, 1889. English version: *The Art of Building Cities: City Building According to its artistic fundamentals*, translated by C. T. Stewart, Martino Publishing Mansfield 2013); *Camillo Sitte e i suoi interpreti*, edited by G. Zucconi, Franco-Angeli, Milano 1992; D. WIECZOREK, *Camillo Sitte e gli inizi dell'urbanistica moderna*, Jaca Book, Milano 1994; C. BULS, *Esthétique des villes : l'isolement des vieilles églises*, Librairie Nationale d'Art et d'Histoire G. Van Oest et Cie, Bruxelles 1910.