

Culture, environment and society. Strengths, weaknesses and challenges for Lecce city

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Abstract

Lecce city is considered to be one of the most interesting tourist destinations in southern Italy due to its rich cultural heritage: a sort of perfect delirium of architecture, light, colours, allegories and symbols. The explosion of baroque is joined by the renaissance elements and the magic appeal of the Norman period. Gems in the city are the churches, the amphitheatre and the theatre, and the unique tangle of ancient streets, courtyards and mansions illuminated by the characteristic Lecce building stone.

The city offers a broad range of cultural services, which have given rise to new entrepreneurial forms of urban governance in the cultural sector, but continues to be stressed by sustainability issues (pertaining to transport, waste and quality of life), which represent the major challenges of its future.

After an analysis of the city of Lecce's recent socio-economic, cultural dynamics and sustainability issues this paper analyses its urban development strategies with a view to achieving a more sustainable city.

Keywords

Cultural and socio-economic dynamics, sustainability, Lecce city.

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Introduction

Like many European cities in the last few decades, Lecce has supported cultural sectors and the arts as a means of urban regeneration. Since the “Urban” project, which redefined the image of the old town, it has activated projects to promote the regeneration of other urban spaces (the western sector, the railway station, recovery and promotion of the city walls, etc.) and project new visions of the city. Lecce has become a permanent laboratory of cultural initiatives.

Strong is the offering of research and innovative functions by the University of Salento, with its many university departments and spin-offs companies.

An interactive dialogue between administrators and citizens has begun. Many diverse initiatives, designed to promote new approaches to the management of urban spaces, have been launched. A broad range of cultural services is on offer in the city, including congresses and seminars, itinerant urban workshops and theatrical productions, which have given rise to new entrepreneurial forms of urban governance in the cultural sector and have enabled the city to propose itself as a candidate for “European Capital of Culture”.

Still uncertain however is the role of spatial polarisation in the city of Lecce and the influence it exerts over the entire province, whose economic and industrial structure is experiencing a severe crisis. Also unresolved, here and in many other cities in the Italian Mezzogiorno, are issues of sustainability (pertaining to transport, waste and quality of life). Such issues represent big challenges for Lecce’s future, and it is hoped that the recognition of the Italian capital of culture in 2015 and first in Italy among the 100 cities in the world to visit, after the failure to recognize of the European Capital of Culture in 2019, it is hoped will help solve.

The city of Lecce: Historic-cultural values

Situated in an area geographically known as the “Valle della Cupa” due to the karst depression that characterises it, Lecce is the main city of a fertile and productive region and the capital of a province that sees culture as an antidote to its undeniably peripheral geography.

With about 90,000 residents (December 2013), rising by 6.8% over the last ten years, the city is characterised by high cultural, physical and architectural quality and projects a strong symbolic and monumental image. Rich in natural and cultural resources, Lecce excels in terms of its considerable archaeological, architectural, historic and artistic heritage. To the archaeological finds from the Messapian epoch may be added the Roman theatre and amphitheatre, the latter monument perhaps the most representative of Lupiae, as Lecce was called in Roman times. The 17th century in particular was a time of intense promotion of the city in construction and artistic terms, as seen in the “Lecce baroque”, one of the most representative aspects of the city’s artistic identity, which today justifies its candidacy for official recognition as World Heritage by UNESCO. A valuable and unique example of the baroque style in Europe, Lecce baroque is the result of a combination of classical repertoires with the specifically Greek aspect of the Salento’s identity. Indeed, while the exquisite geometries and the recourse to elements such as decorated columns, lesenes with cornices and decorated capitals were inspired by classical models, the playful and at times excessive fantasy in the art of the Salento, a land of colours and sunshine, is to be attributed to its Greek heritage (Benini, Trono, 2001). The dichotomy between the two approaches, the expression of profound cultural differences, emerges sharply in the façades of the churches of Gesù and Santa Croce: the former reflects the austere architectural models of the Jesuits, and the latter a glorious triumph of forms and symbolisms¹. The bizarre whims of baroque were not however limited to large religious and civic complexes but were adopted throughout the city. In the 17th and 18th centuries a great many large private residences

were built, often decorated with splendid gardens, atria, courtyards and balconies.

Lecce's substantial cultural heritage is clearly the product of enlightened patronage, both secular and ecclesiastical, which over the years invested in art and culture. It is however also the expression of the abilities, talents and extraordinary professional dedication of eminent architects and artists, together with excellent craftsmen, able to make skilled use of local resources. It is above all the fruit of the layering and gradual fusion of a succession of different cultures arising over the centuries that continue to enrich the city even today. Increasing numbers of foreign immigrants are now resident in Lecce (about 6,000, roughly a third of the immigrants present in the province as a whole). They are mostly Albanians (18% of the total), Filipinos (12%), Sri Lankans (12%), Chinese (11%), Senegalese (9%) and Romanians (8%) (Municipality of Lecce, 2011). Many migrants are in transit towards other destinations in Italy and Europe. Those who stop in Lecce work mainly in construction and trade or provide services to families. There are many ethnic companies, generally of small dimensions, active in trade and catering (Trono, 2011).

The central functions of the city

Considering the city's socio-economic dynamics, services account for about two thirds of the active workforce. The primary sector is negligible, accounting for 3% of total jobs in 2013, while the secondary sector accounts for almost a quarter. A special role is played in the manufacturing sector by artistic handicrafts, whose products help to guarantee the unique and characteristic nature of local production. The most representative crafts are based on papier maché (11), gold (9), ceramics (8), restoration (6), Lecce stone (3), iron (2), wood (1) and glass (1). They are part of the area's history, interacting with the local cultural context, adding extra value to the city's capacity for attraction. Some companies also exhibit great technical and/or craft skills, combined with managerial and innovative verve in the phases considered to be strategic for their survival

(research and design). Many companies innovate themselves in the process, others create new lines of products thanks to research². As the expression of local culture, artistic handicraft matures, consolidates and diversifies the wealth of components that make up local heritage and becomes an “asset” of the region and a high-end product for tourists. Promoting a substantial web of historic craft companies (be they workshops or retail outlets) dealing in high quality products linked to local culture and traditions means celebrating the cultural heritage of Lecce.

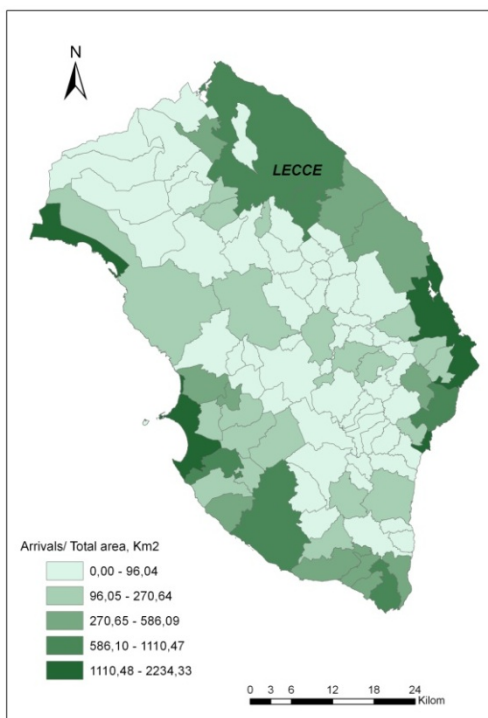


Figure 1: Tourist density in Lecce city and province in 2011.
 Source: Puglia Region, 2011; Istat, 2011.

The production of characteristic local products represents an important synergistic link with tourism and increases the value of local commerce. Also significant is the proliferation of small

workshops. The relationship between the supply of products for tourists and the city's craft activities is intense and deserves particular attention, especially if seen from the perspective of the tourism services supply chain. Artistic craft products become a key element for integrating regional production, with tourists flocking to the craft boutiques along the roads and alleyways of the old town.

Lecce is a favoured destination for tourists, together with the famous beach resorts of Otranto, Ugento and Gallipoli (Figs. 1 and 2).

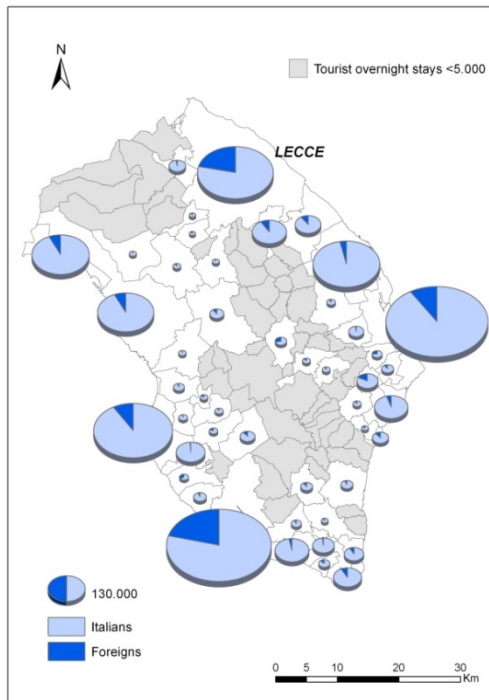


Figure 2: Lecce and province overnight stays in 2011.

Source: Puglia Region, 2011; Istat, 2011.

In the last fifteen years (from 1996 to 2011) arrivals in Lecce have doubled and presences have increased by 52%.

Domestic tourism still prevails, but foreign tourist numbers are also growing, accounting for 22% of the total, having risen by 62% compared to 30% for Italian tourists.

It is certainly not the beaches of the desolate coast near Lecce that attract Italian and foreign tourists to the town³ and explain their growing numbers in all seasons of the year (although 48% of the presences are still concentrated in the months from June to September).

The most interesting aspects of Lecce baroque are its architectural components, including façades with many orders and the bossage and window/door frames that ornate churches and *palazzi* (see the beautiful diamond-point bossage of Palazzo Adorno and the windows of Palazzo dei Celestini). The figurative repertoire includes naturalistic models, mythical ancient beasts, arabesques, the heads of nuns, men with enormous hats and bands of angels, as well as the numerous, sinuous volutes of the baroque idiom. It encapsulates the city's cultural heritage, understood not just as a historic, natural and built environment, but also as material culture and intellectual inheritance.

Lecce attracts visitors thanks to its rich artistic and historic architectural heritage, but also its lively cultural scene linked to the university, the Academy of Fine Art and the T. Schipa Conservatory. Their contribution is expressed in a myriad of high-level scientific and cultural initiatives (congresses, exhibitions, concerts, seminars) and a series of appointments and events worthy of a large and beautiful city. The provincial and municipal administrations, public and private organisations, cultural and other associations working in the world of art, fashion, music, theatre, dance (for example Cantieri Teatrali Koreja, Officine Cantelmo, Manifatture Knoss, Ammirato Culture House, Scuola di Moda) all contribute to the range of cultural services on offer in the city.

The strong tertiary sector in Lecce mainly involves companies active in the distribution and consumption of manufactured goods (transport, trade, tourism, etc., accounting for 40% of the total). These companies are skilled at organising normal tertiary activities, attracting flows of users and consumers from the

surrounding area, in accordance with the gravitational logic of cities.

As well as local urban activities, the city produces goods and services that are not for local consumption, contributing to the city's positive trade balance. These include professional, scientific and technical services provided by micro and small local companies that account for more than a quarter (27.3 %) of the total number of active companies in the Municipality of Lecce⁴ (Archivio Statistico delle Imprese Attive.ASIA, 2009).

The innovative and research functions of the University of the Salento are conducted by its numerous departments and spin-off companies. The latter, which now number 31, were introduced by the University's Academic Senate in 2006. They operate in sectors ranging from the environment to culture, food-processing, pharmaceuticals, engineering and High-Tech. In terms of culture and the environment, worthy of mention are ARVA srl and CRACC srl, which provide integrated services for the promotion of cultural heritage; GEOMOD srl, which provides integrated consultancy in the fields of geology, geophysics, engineering and the environment in the service of cultural heritage, archaeology and environmental monitoring; BIOTOXEN srl, which performs eco-toxicological analyses and provides services, products and innovative technologies for the environment. Many are involved in providing consultancy and innovative and technological services on local, national and international levels. The many spin-off companies include EKA srl, which provides consultancy to the industrial sector regarding processes and technologies associated with Product Lifecycle Management and Business Process Management. Another success story is that of ADVANTECH srl, which operates in the management and automation of simulation processes, data retrieval and storage and analysis of product performance characteristics with reference to the Modelling & Simulation paradigm. Also of considerable importance is the work by APPHIA srl in the fields of control and automation systems, innovative manufacturing and engineering analyses.

However, the considerable capacity for scientific research of the University of the Salento has not enabled the city to play a

leading role in the regional economy. The city's (and the province's) companies still show little capacity for real specialisation, based on a highly qualified labour market. Research & innovation and the lively cultural scene of the university contribute to this, but are not sufficient to give the city a generative centrality that only the quaternary functions can confer in terms of spatial organisation giving it supremacy over the entire province.

The city of Lecce and its hinterland are not yet able to play a clearly dominant role in the province. It lacks a sufficiently dynamic economic system, medium-to-high tertiary services and significant commercial specialisation able to create a dense reticular web of spatial interaction. There are no clear signs of integrated development affecting the urban area as a whole that might lead to a functional reorganisation of the region from both an infrastructural and a services point of view, in line with the times and with the new social and cultural needs.

Urban development policies

Despite the “extraordinary beauty” of the old town and “the marvellous landscape that surrounds it”, Lecce remains a “problematic city”, whose «centre is separated from the natural environment by a ring of problematic suburbs» and therefore struggles to provide its «inhabitants [with the right to] a life that reflects in terms of quality the beauty of its old town and the spectacular landscape» (see Lecce2019, 2013). It follows that the city's ability to recover its influence over the area depends on the enhancement of its cultural and managerial functions. This entails the city committing itself to urban planning strategies and the renewal of its various districts and, at the same time, to the construction and implementation of a network of international relations with reference to European funding.

The city's activism and entrepreneurship have given rise to a system of interregional, extra-regional and international relations with reference to the regional policies of the European Union.

Also important here have been the managerial skills of public and private local players.

Over the last ten years the municipal administration has focused on three main areas:

- town planning with a view to urban renewal
- promotion of cultural relations on an interregional and trans-regional level
- promotion of cultural heritage (exhibitions, events, conferences, etc.).

The first macro-area involved modernisation of the city, in accordance with principles of continuity and consistency. The measures enacted in the 1990s as part of the URBAN Project (1996), aimed at the recovery and reuse of municipal buildings, relaunched the old town and were continued without interruption in the following years. After the measures in the old town, the municipal administration turned to the suburbs, with measures financed under the Contratti di Quartiere (2004), focusing on the districts known as 167 B and C (“Quartiere Stadio – Verde Centro”) and 167 A (“Quartiere San Sabino–L’altro Centro”). With this “public planning of urban transformations”, combining and mobilising resources and public and private players, the municipal administration sought to strengthen the quality of local contexts by acting against processes of urban blight and social marginalisation. In concert with regional planning (Bando P.I.R.P. Regione Puglia, 2006) it subsequently intervened in two areas of interest adjacent to the Centro district (“IV° circoscrizione Rudiae – Rione San Pio” and “Via dei Ferrari: Oltre la ferrovia” behind the railway station), with reference to the Piano Strategico di Area Vasta *Lecce 2005-2015*, which envisaged Programmes and Projects for Integrated Urban and Regional Development. Subsequently this was extended to other suburban areas of the city “affected by physical, social and economic decay”, planning “targeted measures to improve environmental quality, boost employment and the use of local companies”. These strategic projects, still being implemented today, also envisage plans for improving the landscape and environment of the urban area around the disused

Marco Vito quarries (an area of public green space, the first stage of the ecological network linked to the Leuca district) and the urban renewal of a stretch of waterfront near the marina of San Cataldo.

The second macro-area included projects inspired by a multi-level model of governance and a Broad Area approach, bringing together institutions and economic and social partners in the management of projects with Balkan and Mediterranean countries. The municipal administration arranged for Lecce to be twinned with other European cities and launched plans for regional cooperation. There are many diverse fields of intervention: from projects for the integration of immigrants, to intercultural youth exchanges, industrial cooperation and tourism, all with a view to the environment and cultural heritage. The third macro-area, concerning the promotion of cultural heritage, involved policies linked to “Creativity”, “Integration”, “Participation”, “Smart” practices and “Youth in Motion”, in line with the principles of cohesion set out in Europa 2020.

Of the other measures of cultural interest, worthy of mention are the various exhibitions at the MUST, the Historic Museum of the city of Lecce; the opera and drama productions at the Paisiello Theatre; the conferences held at the Officine Cantelmo and the Charles V Castle; the exhibitions and promotional activities showcasing local businesses in the Convento dei Teatini, the Conservatorio di Sant’Anna and Palazzo Turrisi Palumbo. Involved in this considerable and variegated cultural spectrum are public bodies and associations, with a substantial commitment in terms of investment, infrastructure and organisation, useful for the creation of a Lecce system.

Of particular interest are the more recent projects called “Lecce smart city and European Capital of Culture 2019”, which involve all the key regional players: the university, research bodies and entrepreneurs. The first of these projects, aimed at the creation of the “Lecce smart community”, seeks to meet the needs of the citizens by offering them services linked to innovation, research and technology. The second of these projects had the task of managing Lecce’s candidacy as “European Capital of Culture

2019". It envisaged investment in culture and the involvement of all, in accordance with the logic of sharing, cooperation and good governance.

Lecce, sustainable city?

Pursuing sustainability is an essential goal of any city, especially if recognized Italian capital of culture in with a commitment to reformulate, "reassess", "redesign" and "reinvent" Lecce and reinvent its development.

For many the idea of a sustainable city does not seem unachievable, because cities are beautiful, they are built to meet the needs of human beings and they are testimony to human commitment. By definition they provide space to all social groups. In contrast, many others argue that cities cannot be sustainable. They are the source of pollution, consumption and waste, and "sustainable city" is thus a contradiction in terms, utopian and hence unachievable. However, it might well be precisely utopian thinking that leads to an ecologically more suitable form of human settlement, because the future, as Blassingame (1998) suggests, should not be thought of purely as an extension of current tendencies, a projection of the past (highly improbable), but as a possible achievement of utopias that are well structured in ecological and ethical terms, with reference to new technologies and behaviours inspired by principles of civic responsibility.

Ensuring the city's sustainability means helping to reinvent itself, adapt to external dynamics, evolve and live.

Like any other system, the city is vulnerable, and, as Egger points out (2006, p. 1237), "*... even if a balance was achieved between inputs and outputs, the city could not be considered sustainable due to the consequences of unexpected disturbances. It is the ability and capacity of cities to adapt to dynamic externalities that will ensure their sustainability*".

It should also be considered that since the city is not an isolated system, the impact on its sustainability concerns not just the systems that are generated within it, such as its districts, transport system, economy, etc., but also the systems and

ecosystems of which the city is a part (region, state, etc.). Its sustainability should not be understood only with reference to a single system, which develops and is managed in a manner that is acceptable to its inhabitants (“the Self”), but should also be considered as an element within the global network, in which sustainability is measured on the basis of its capacity to develop and operate in a way that is compatible with the common global good (“the Network”) (Egger, 2006).

The fundamental parameters that define a city’s structural capacity for sustainability are: *“its potential - to determine what the city is capable of, its connectedness – to determine to what extent the city can control its own destiny and finally its resilience – to determine how vulnerable a city is to unexpected disturbances”* (Egger, 2006, 1238).

The indicators of sustainability make reference to the complex interactions between environment, economy and society, as well as the capacity to maintain a good quality of life for its inhabitants (Rogerson, 1999), without compromising that of other locations. Environmental sustainability, a sustainable economy and social equity are achieved by fighting the environmental, acoustic and atmospheric pollution caused by traffic; by rehabilitating blighted urban areas and districts, and clearing up derelict environments and poor housing; by creating open spaces for play and recreation, increasing the number and the size of accessible green areas, improving the eco-efficiency of cities; by counteracting the unequal distribution of wealth and creating long-term employment.

The sustainability of the city is one of the toughest challenges for 21st century society, which has generated a rich literature seeking to identify the type of city closest to the ethos of sustainability (see, among others, Bresso, 1993; Haughton, Hunter, 1994; Alberti, Tsetsi, Solera, 1994; Bettini, 1996; Rotmans, van Asselt, Vellinga, 2000; Romei, 2001; Tanguay, Rajaonson, Lefebvre, Lanoie, 2010; Seto, Sánchez-Rodríguez and Fragkias, 2010; Song, 2011).

Many important suggestions have been made over the last twenty years concerning how to win this challenge, starting with the “Aalborg Charter” of 1994, followed by the “Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities” of 2007, the “United Nations

Human Settlements Programme” of 2009, the Toledo meeting of 2010, and the more recent *Reference Framework for Sustainable Cities – RFSC*, an online resource designed to assist local administrations that feel the need to draw up and publicise new integrated approaches to all issues associated with sustainable urban development.

Cities are invited to use all technical and political means available in order to achieve urban management that is attentive to ecosystems, with reference to risk prevention and the fight against pollution of waters; waste disposal; development of a sustainable transport system with the reduction of unnecessary movement and use of motor vehicles and the promotion of ecologically compatible means of transport (particularly walking, cycling and public transport), facilitating their combined use. The use of individual means of transport in cities should only have an auxiliary function, useful for access to local services and performing business activities. Also important is the creation of new sustainable plans for greener cities that produce renewable energy. Strategic regional planning must be open to new forms and processes of management, using the widest possible range of legal, economic and information mechanisms, including directives, taxes and initiatives to raise awareness of environmental problems and facilitate the participation of the inhabitants, with reference to Participatory Urban Appraisal (PUA) (Hens, 2010).

The concept of sustainability is linked to the individual context, each city having its specific characteristics, and each case thus needs to find its own route to sustainability. However, the applicability of the sustainability paradigm cannot ignore certain basic principles of regional management, summarised by Elliott in the following axioms: Ecologically sustainable; Technologically feasible; Economically viable; Socially desirable/tolerable; Legally permissible; Administratively achievable; Politically expedient; Ethically defensible (morally correct); Culturally inclusive; Effectively communicable (Elliott, 2013).

Many of these principles are extraneous to the city of Lecce, which fails on a number of counts, including the sustainable economy, environmental sustainability and social equity.

Sustainable development in Lecce is burdened by factors such as the low economic importance of the city, which has no tradition of entrepreneurship⁵. Nor is the city's positive trade balance in 2013 (+1.52) particularly reassuring, considering the negative situation of the province as a whole (-0.17), with big deficits also affecting its area of gravitation as provincial capital⁶. Unemployment is worryingly high, a problem which is shared with the province (and the south) as a whole, which has worsened during the current recession and affects all age groups but particularly the young. In the city and the province, even highly qualified university graduates struggle with the low number of graduate hires, obliging them to move to other regions and often abroad.

The environmental situation is also worrying, in urban, rural and coastal areas.

The coastal areas of the municipality of Lecce (San Cataldo, Frigole, Torre Chianca, Spiaggiabella, Torre Rinalda), situated along the Adriatic Sea, show symptoms of severe degradation of the landscape due to unauthorised building, responsible for blocking watercourses, the poor functioning of the drainage network and intense coastal erosion. The coastal morphology, already somewhat compromised by the general instability of the shoreline, has been exacerbated by intensive exploitation for tourism purposes. The intense anthropic pressure exerted on the dunes, linked to the growing presence of tourists and the bathing services provided to them, has involved systematic flattening of the dunes, with substantial reductions in the area they cover and irreversible damage to the natural equilibrium (e.g. the disappearance of psammophile vegetation). The general erosion of the dunes, together with the lack in many cases of their characteristic succession of plants, shows the actual degradation of the habitats and the urgent need for intervention to ensure their restoration (Irono, Russo, 2009).

The area governed by the Municipality of Lecce is not particularly free of refuse, either in the rural or the urban districts!

Waste dominates the countryside around Lecce, especially along the access roads leading to the ring road and along the roads linking the city with outlying towns.

Stalls selling food products transform the city's prestigious central square into a tented city and itinerant vendors crowd the streets of the old town with no regard for the location's aesthetics!

The purported environmental sensitivity of the city's governors sits poorly with the blight affecting certain parts of the suburbs, which are filthy and poorly served, "the slums of another Lecce, that of the excluded, where darkness is both the reality and a metaphor for the existential condition of unemployed immigrants" (see Via Birago in the Rudiae district). These are the "non-places", stripped of the normal anthropological features of places: "identity, historic roots and social stimuli" (Augé in Augustoni, 2000, p. 115). This is city's fringe-belt, where the urban area meets the countryside, where the ruins of traditional stone farmhouses and country residences built by the Lecce nobility of the early 20th century remain as sad indicators of an urban decay that is worsened by both neglect and ill-judged attempt at reoccupation.

The whole city suffers from deplorable delays in waste management and the local community's lack of civic spirit. The system of door-to-door differentiated waste collection (RD) in the city of Lecce, launched in 2011, is still in an experimental state⁷. The rate of differentiated waste collection is thus still very low (about 16%, one of the lowest in the province of Lecce). The service urgently requires a more unitary and integrated configuration, in which the differentiated waste collection is a central element of the system and not just a additional component of "ordinary" collection. There is no plan in Lecce for the elimination of architectural barriers for the disabled; there are few cycle paths and few pedestrianised area in the old town; public transport is inadequate.

Problems pertaining to the social organisation of the urban space also remain resolved. There persists a strong social polarisation (many rich and many poor and marginalised persons), with consequent deviance and conflict.

Final considerations

Despite strong pulses of urban planning and cultural development, Lecce still has huge socio-spatial imbalances that already characterised the city in the 1990s (Trono, 1996), the expression of unsolved housing problems, long-term unemployment, poverty and marginalisation and socio-spatial injustice, which continue to be reflected in the overcrowding, poor housing and social problems of certain districts. Associations and local bodies have not yet succeeded in grasping the opportunity of becoming a national and international model for the management of international migrant flows crossing the Mediterranean and the Mezzogiorno of Italy.

Lecce's inability to play a leading role in the region has been aggravated by the unfavourable economic conditions of recent times (the crisis of small and medium-sized companies, unemployment, etc.), but the pace of regional development has also undoubtedly been slowed by the lack of any integrated organisation of infrastructure, of urban and extra-urban services and of areas for meeting and exchange. More generally, there is no planning of mobility and traffic in a more strategic sense. Indeed, a salient feature of Lecce (and the Salento as a whole), from an economic point of view, is the wastage arising from congestion. Journeys between the city and its hinterland and inside the city itself are hampered by the basic lack of an integrated transport system able to eliminate the current communication 'bottlenecks', mitigate the Salento's geographical and economic marginalisation and relieve congestion for the private traffic of the city. Regional organisation is affected by the problem of a 'disorderly' road network and the lack of a rapid and efficient local and national transport system, indispensable

for overcoming the biggest natural impediment to the development of the province, i.e. its geographical remoteness⁸.

The local transport system is unable to enhance the already weak capacity for attraction of the provincial capital. The railway network is poor and inadequate, having barely improved since the Bourbon era! The last station on the Adriatic line of the national railway system, Lecce still today provides a limited service.

The socio-economic reality of the urban area and the province as a whole highlights the weak capacity of the provincial capital as a driving force. Its inability to serve the Salento means that the province maintains a broadly multi-polar organisation, with a large area that gravitates towards the capital (the area of Lecce's urban influence) and other areas of attraction centred on other towns to the south (Galatina, Gallipoli, Maglie and Casarano).

Lecce and the Salento's expectations for development have also been hampered and let down by undisputed «political mistakes» made by the local elites and ruling classes, by the parties that have monopolised public functions and control over public money, and above all by the regional administration. The «short-sighted and exaggerated bureaucratic neo-centralism» of Puglia Regional Administration have left people's expectations unfulfilled and have contributed to the destruction of the development potential of a local system that is regionally organised into subsystems with long-standing relations and much in common from the cultural and administrative point of view.

The candidacy of Lecce as «European Capital of Culture 2019» was source of great pride, firstly, as is the recognition of the value of the city's cultural assets and the possibility of cooperation between public and private partners. Running a candidacy in a European context however means exposing oneself to criticism, carrying out a detailed analysis of one's weak points and the challenges to be faced, so that achieving ECOC status represents a turning point for the life of the city and its inhabitants.

Indeed, Lecce's candidacy presented elements of extreme weakness, such as its limits in terms of environmental sustainability.

The same philosophy that was behind the candidacy made use of abused and empty terminology (modernity, autonomy, identity) by now considered “essential” in «cultural policies, especially when they operate in the sector of diffuse heritage, popular traditions and intangible legacies», whose distinctive features and local characteristics are frequently adopted in order to use the past as a tool for achieving present objectives (Imbriani, 2011, p. 96).

Proposing a city as a candidate for “European Capital of Culture” means recovering the value of its cultural heritage and its creative dimension, starting from the past and looking to the future, by means of initiatives and projects of an international character that serve to promote cooperation, social inclusion and intercultural dialogue on a European level. Unfortunately, Lecce did not take care of these issues.

¹ The façade of Santa Croce is the result of three distinct phases of construction (1549-90, 1606, 1646), differing yet harmonious. On the architecture of Santa Croce see Manieri Elia, 1992, p. 27 and *passim*.

² 11/41 companies have short-to-medium term investment plans (1 in the restoration sector, 2 in gold, 3 in ceramics, 5 in papier maché) for purchasing/refurbishing workshops, acquiring raw materials, machinery, and participation in shows and trade fairs) (Lezzi, 2012).

³ Germany, France, Mexico, the United Kingdom, Hungary, Canada, Denmark and Switzerland account for 52.9% of total foreign presences.

⁴ Their small dimensions (mini and micro companies) have clear consequences for volumes (only 2% exceed 2 million Euros) and turnover (83.2% have a turnover below 200,000 Euros).

⁵ The absence of an entrepreneurial tradition (the «entrepreneurial class in the 15th century was mainly composed of outsiders, i.e. ‘those from outside the Kingdom’», Vetere, 1993, p. 152) still weighs on local development today, constituting one of the main obstacles to the development of small and medium-sized companies (Trono, 1994).

⁶ Company closures in the Salento continue, as does the demographic decline, with just 122 companies left in 2013, a fall of 0.17%, according to recent estimates by Confindustria of Lecce.

⁷ Urban waste disposal in the Municipality of Lecce is currently entrusted to an “ATI” (temporary joint venture) composed of two Salento companies – AXA

and Ecotecnica – and is characterised, regarding the dry recyclable fractions, by a mixed collection system (door-to-door in a part of the old town and in the San Pio district and collective roadside waste bins in the rest of the territory).

The tender organised by the Municipal Administration of Lecce in 2011 regarding the 140 million Euro contract for the city's new waste collection service (involving door-to-door differentiated waste collection) has been held up by a series of legal cases initiated by companies who are dissatisfied with the outcome of the tender's adjudication process. This situation is preventing the new service (set to run for about nine years) from starting up. The introduction of "door-to-door" collection would eliminate the collective waste bins from the city's streets, and it is hoped that in this way the general standard of urban cleanliness may improve, increasing differentiated collection and hence recycling and lowering the costs of disposal in dumps.

⁸ Still far from being resolved, since the end of the last century the transport issue has been one of the most hotly debated among the city's rulers «plagued by intense internal conflict and conditioned by poor negotiating skills in their dealings with central government» (Denitto, 1996, p. 97). See also Pasimeni, (1990; 1996).

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