

## LIVING IN JURASSIC PARK

Gabriele Tagliaventi

Every time I cross the Channel by Eurostar I have a strange feeling. Arriving to Britain gives me the sensation of landing in another planet.

I live today split between Italy and France. One week in Bologna one week in Paris. Both countries represent the conventional EU status in terms of architecture.

I write these notes after our project has been selected from the Bologna Football Team as the Masterplan to develop a 15 ha site including a 35,000 seats stadium.

However, I cannot be blind.

Britain looks to me the Land of Freedom. There is the Prince, the Prince's Foundation, TAG, INTBAU, a strong Tradition. There is Poundbury, a new Poundbury and a series of imitations of Poundbury.

In France nobody even imagine that Traditional Architecture has a stand in the contemporary world. The most succesful town-planning operation, Val d'Europe, is run by Americans: Disney. Still, even in VDE, all public buildings are Modernist.

Even if the architectural style is Traditional – for the time being – all institutional buildings must be Modernist.

Then, there is a kind of fantastic exception in Plessis Robinson, but that's done by an incredibly courageous man: Mayor Pemezec.

Then, nothing.

No place for Traditional Architecture.

I participated in an architectural conference in Paris and people were quite amazed by me. I think they liked me because they thought I was playing a joke. They don't even imagine that an architect can design Traditional buildings today.

How could it be? How could it be when 100% Public buildings are Modernist?

How can you run an office when all social housing projects must be Modernist. All schools, hospitals, museums, libraries, municipal Halls, etc.

100 %.

Recently, the Russian Orthodox Church was forced to organize an Architectural Competition for the design of the new Cathedral in Paris. We were selected among the “invited” ones. Then we discovered the story behind.

The site for the new Cathedral is close to the Eiffel Tower. Right in the center of Paris. The Russians bought the site for 25 millions Euro and tried to get a building permission for a Traditional Orthodox Church. The French Department for Historic Monuments told them: “forget it”.

It must be “contemporary”.

That's why they were forced to organize the Architectural Competition accepting that the winning entry should be Contemporary. That is: Modernist.

We didn't know the story behind.

All the 20 architects invited by Nicolas Sarkozy to design the Great Paris are Modernist. They all call for hundreds new skyscrapers.

On the Left side, the Mayor of Paris has recently won his battle to legally have new skyscrapers in Paris.

That's France.

Italy is in a complete chaos. Because Chaos dominates, Traditional Architecture has a stronger voice in the media. Also because of the mess we created in the last 20 years.

However, all the municipalities carry on Modernist policies. They want skyscrapers as a sign of Modernity, Richness, Development.

Last week, the Municipality of Milan has approved the Strategic Plan calling for 50 new skyscrapers to be built before 2030.

The Municipality of Rome wants to demolish some of the horrible slab-urbia built in the 70s, while, at the same time, announces new skyscrapers as a sign of Renaissance in the periphery.

What are the challenges?

1. the cultural one.

Modernism leads and dominates. Modernism has succeeded in establishing itself as the expression of the contemporary society

2. the economic one

in a Recession time Skyscrapers are perceived as the sign of Renaissance. Very difficult to beat. Of course, no doubt about style. When they talk about skyscrapers they assume the style is Modernist.

3. The political one.

EU is carrying on a policy that aims at creating ONE market. ONE unified market in a land subdivided into 27 countries finds Modernism as the perfect common ground. The simplest way to express the new political union. The most efficient one.

How can we fight?

By stressing the economic values of Traditional cities. The virtues connected to concepts like compactness.

By stressing the ecological issue. But Continental Conventional Modernism has managed to integrate the ecological issue within the general discourse.

You put green roofs, you put wooden panels over the concrete façades, and that's it.

By attacking the "Star System" because it becomes politically incorrect in a Recession time.

It is long way to Tipperary.

I believe that all those who are interested in Traditional Architecture should invent new ways to approach the public. At least in the Continent.

The Anglo-American way works perfectly in the Anglo-American world. Not in continental EU.

The Old Continent is deeply rooted in his Conventional Modernism.

We need intelligence, cleverness, courage.

Ultimately, true innovation.

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