The project’s overall strength lies in increasing the performative capabilities of the landscape and giving its inherent qualities added value. The proposed intervention through the introduction of new functions uses for the recovered structures located on the site. Although proposed for a large area of the selected region, the work is scale independent and therefore applicable to other projects. It also needs to be realized in the collaboration between university, private industry and local representatives. The project demonstrates a high ethical standard in combining historic preservation and contemporary architectural expression to conserve the identity giving latitude of the structures. The concept for self-sustaining buildings – waterpower – is ecologically sensitive while at the same time introduces a convincing financial model for long-term improvement of the economic condition of the region. While the ensemble of the buildings was given special attention, the individual interventions exhibit a successive, continuous impact, thus making a revitalization of the valley easily conceivable. With acute contextual awareness, the project displays a high degree of skill in coordinating diversity as well as maintaining an aesthetic balance between existing and new structures.

Relevance to target issues (by author)

Comment of the Holcim Awards 2005 jury for Europe

The landscape and industrial model of the past indicates how the energy of falling water can be ingeniously transformed and utilized. In this scheme the original channels for irrigation and power are restored to provide clean energy sources. All the technology has an imposed limit to be water-formed and utilized. In this scheme the original channels and social forces and thus avoid the museumification of a landscape. In this way a close participation by the community is guaranteed and the local identity is reinforced.

Ethical standards and social equity

Memory and collective identity can be revitalized through architecture and landscaping in the experience of the community of that place. The moral obligation to conserve these important buildings as testimony of ancestral working life is echoed in the response which nevertheless, corresponds to our times.

Ecological quality and energy conservation

The long term public-private investment programme for lifts, cranes, pumps, transport systems, air cooling and energy production is envisaged within the strict ethical, ecological and social forces and thus avoid the museumification of a landscape. In this way a close participation by the community is guaranteed and the local identity is reinforced.

Economic performance and compatibility

The term - public-private investment programme amounts to 100 million euros. The modest public contribution already activated serves to found the infrastructure, transport and essential consolidation works for a huge benefit to the local community.

Contextual response and aesthetic impact

The powerful content provokes answers and strategies to adopt in a dialogue where landscape and history are living participants. The instrumental reading of history translates into projects capable of maintaining themselves economically in a continuity of use with the past interpreted through an idea of architecture as catalyst: lightness, contrast, transparency and simplicity.

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Project description by author

Set in the magnificent context of the steep valley of the river Carnito rising between Amalfi & Scala, this project aims to recover a landscape and a system of pre-industrial water mills (mulin) currently in danger of collapse beyond repair. As described with a wealth of illustrations in Diderot and D’Alembert’s Encyclopedia, from the early 18th century the paper mills, iron mills and later hydro-electric power stations exploited water power through ingenious systems of channels, tanks, level drops, funnels and water wheels to produce energy to make things. The water was carefully directed one from the next to exploit the height differential and hence the potential power. From the port of Amalfi the sequence of mills rises 2km inland and 70m in height. Water was the moving force of the past and continues to be so in this strategy.

We chose 3 aspects:

1. Restoration - of the system of water channels to irrigate the man-made terraces
2. Water Power - as a source for hydro-mechanical engines for lifts, cranes, pumps, transport systems, air cooling and energy production and to illustrate the importance of water as a political issue in the world today.
3. New Energy - the production of renewable energy in the form of hydroelectric power to be used as an infrastructural resource to sustain the project as a whole.

The exclusively pedestrian access, once responsible for the demise of the area, that led in a splendid isolation, can now be considered as one of the strongest characteristics in its preservation. The waterfalls, the pools of clear, cool water, the paper mill channels together with the extensive terracing, woods and the typical species of flora (felsic rara) constitute a unique legacy of biodiversity marking the respectful co-existence of man with nature.

The individual schemes are divided into privately and publicly financed projects. The privately funded ones are those cases where the size, condition and accessibility ensure a financial return. A complete renewal, catering to the architecture and landscape, is envisaged within the strict ethical, ecological and historical criteria governing the overall project. Public financing goes to those elements of the terrain or buildings with infrastructural or public functions. The public initiative is directed to bring the geographical, economic and social forces to focus on a realisable future.

The re-use and re-evaluation of Amalfi’s heritage in which its natural and man-made histories are an asset to new forms of tourism based on cultural and environmental interests. Through an idea of architecture as catalyst: lightness, contrast, transparency and simplicity.