

# *Evaluation science. Natural structures, technological infrastructures, cultural superstructures*

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## THE SIEV COMMITMENTS

The 2019 SIEV Conference, held on 11-12 July in Syracuse, at the Special Educational Department of Architecture of the University of Catania, frames – together with the conferences of 2018 in Cagliari on “The future of rent”, and in Rome on the “Assessment of the Architecture project” – in a set of dissemination events aimed at addressing some fundamental aspects of the identity of the economic-estimative discipline – the science of value and valuations.

These three experiences have initiated and consolidated a specific area of reflection, coplanar with two others: the first is aimed at the constant updating of the fields of interest of the discipline, of its methods and tools; the second, that starting from two important targeted initiatives held in Enna in November 2017 and at the Milan Triennale in November 2018, addresses the placement of the discipline in the institutional scenario and in particular in university teaching.

Following these initiatives and their primary aims, the Syracuse Conference, starting from the title, “Science of evaluations. Natural structures, technological infrastructures, cultural superstructures”, encourages our scientific community to start a vertical or “pyramidal” path from the fundamentals, concerning the distinction/complementarity between estimation and evaluation, and between methodology and science, and leads to the consideration of economic, social and civil categories which preside over the harmonious development of social capital, in its three complementary and consubstantial forms of natural, artificial and cultural capital.

The central part of this discussion, characterised by the constructive confrontation between complementary visions, has been dedicated to the reflection on the value, in its most extended dimension, the social value, precisely in relation to the challenges that the “age of change” addresses to the human kind, for two reasons: on the one hand, its specific responsibilities, on the other its unlimited capacity concerning the possibility of a radical reorganisation of the socio-economic and political-cultural development patterns. Knowledge and experience of value contribute to this hope.

## CONTENTS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

The idea of this conference stems from the many evidences of the large and irreversible changes – structural, infrastructural and superstructural – disorientate the public,

giving rise to significant modifications of the individual axiological profiles and a progressive reduction of confidence in the fundamental values that inspired the creation and progress of the most advanced, liberal and supportive democracies.

The question of the crisis of values such as sharing, inclusion, pluralism, which make the safeguarding of individual rights the basis of civil coexistence, looks upwards, to the categories of thought referable to judgment, truth and value, and downwards, to the progressive concentration of wealth and social polarization that affect the human community on a planetary scale.

The negative effects of the environmental question, the consequent socio-economic impoverishment and the parallel reduction of individual and collective anthropological value, even in the most advanced communities, result in a specular advancement of totalitarianism. The scientific community responds by introducing the many meanings of the concept of sustainability and proposing models of circular economy, on the environmental front, and of civil economy, on the socio-cultural and political side.

The science of evaluations does not escape this commitment due to the specific characterization of its scientific tradition, for which it is distinguished from other branches of applied economics: the search for distributive justice by means of highly relevant value judgments for the public.

## PROGRESS

The conference was divided into two plenary sessions, held on the first day, and three parallel sessions on the second day, and concluded with a round table summarizing and reflecting on the research development perspectives concerning both the theoretical and methodological premises, and the themes and areas of their application.

The first session – aimed at the theoretical fundamentals, then at considerations on judgment, truth and value – was introduced and coordinated by Paolo Rosato, and concerned the constructive confrontation between scholars of our scientific community, philosophers of language, aesthetics scholars. In particular, on the part of the estimation discipline:

- Paolo Rosato highlighted on the one hand the continuous search, by Appraisal, for a solid economic theory reference to support the evaluations; on the other hand he remarked the role of the market as the primary source of information to determine the most probable price. Moreover, he emphasized how the specificities of some

goods, strongly characterized in a qualitative sense, induce different behaviors on the part of the economic actors, legitimizing the recognition of several equilibrium prices, somehow contingent, and a hermeneutic and narrative characterization of the evaluations, whose robustness depends on their internal and external coherence, rather than on the statistical verification;

- Salvatore Giuffrida argued about the connection between the fundamentals and the implicit civil commitment of Appraisal, due to its two original dimensions, judgment and value. Judgment is a cognitive faculty, constituting: natural reality, usually represented by factual judgments; social reality, arising from decisions, the judgments of merit; both depend on an overarching matrix, the reality of values, represented by the value judgments, indeed, that is evaluations. The adaptation of the Appraisal theoretical fundamentals, therefore concerns the integration of this awareness in the recognition of the pervasiveness and human depth of the economic acting – for better or for worse – thus characterizing the Appraisal as the most adequate cognitive and operative sphere for a robust representation of the relationship (in some cases conflictual) between values and prices;
- Antonio Nesticò reiterated the solidity of the classical estimating paradigm consolidated according to the distinction between generally and specifically valid judgments, the former supported by structured observations of real estate markets, the latter referred to the subject of the project evaluation, which represents the contingent relationship between business and the social, economic and territorial context. Even the multidimensional qualitative assessments, which join the wide range of civil issues, can consequently be referred to the original estimation premises, extending the explanatory and normative potential in the allocation processes of the territorial resources.

From philosophy, epistemology and aesthetics:

- Massimo Dell’Utri, has argued the civil and moral importance of the inseparability of judgments of fact and value judgments, and has argued, with particular reference to the contribution of H. Putnam, at first on the need to update the notion of fact and objectivity, then on the interweaving of description and evaluation both in the common language and in the scientific one, also pervaded by epistemic values, superordinate to the judgment of factual truth. Consequently also the “objectivity results a continuous acquisition that must be constantly rethought” in the perspective of judgments whose truth value is not extraneous or contradictory with respect to the fact that they intrinsically prefigure the achievement of a better condition;
- Stefano Caputo provided the references of truth theory (correspondence, coherence, assured assertability) and a taxonomy of the types of judgment – factual, moral, aesthetic, taste – that allow to identify the different ways (in what sense, and in what extent) the evaluation of value in appraisal can be considered true, according to the

achievements of “alethic pluralism”; he introduced the concepts of “cognitive authority”, dependent on the ability of statements to represent objects independent of the mind, and, at the other extreme, the concept of “disagreement without error”, in which statements, rather than being considered true, represent states of individual and collective minds (Booh - Hurrà Theory). The different questions and areas of evaluation can therefore usefully be framed in the chessboard defined by these criteria of its justification;

- Franca D’Agostini, in the prospect of the constant updating of the fundamentals – “what do we do, why do we do it, how do we do it?” – in particular of a discipline aimed at values, proposed “the point of view of truth”, the founding dimension of social communication, a right for all, as well as a duty of everyone. On the basis of these premises, she outlined the main aspects of the “alethic evaluation” and its fundamental contents, the super-concepts *unum, verum, bonum* established in the long development of the philosophical tradition. They aren’t common evaluation criteria, but of “extraordinary words”, “powers” capable of redefining the enhancing substance long investigated by classical economic thought. The possibility of reducing the hyper-complexity of the system/environment relations of organised human communities, through representation in terms of value, legitimises the identification of these “powers” – for example: utility, preferability, well-being, happiness, beauty are specifications of “bonum” – supports alethic evaluations, both because they use the truth as a logical-formal verification tool, and because they assume their authenticity as the foundation of justification. As such, these assessments “are simplifying, they reduce redundancy, they are eliminative without sacrifice”;
- Simona Chiodo presented the fundamental elements of the aesthetic value judgment, as a general framework of the validity of the architectural artefact and, in a broader sense, of the architectural and city design. Important connections with the economic-estimative discipline can be identified in the idea of beauty as capital, keeping in mind that it has a social axiological dimension and a validity for the public, which are based on the essence of the human species, characterised by traceability to a specific space-time collocation, from a typical aspiration tension, from an evolutionary perspective. These essences define a social subject in the same way that the judgment on beauty (as addressed to a way of the all-embracing and omnipresent value) is capable of increasing and progressive objectification.

The second session, aimed at the forms of value and the way in which assessments affirm their relevance in the perspective of the civil economy, was introduced and coordinated by Rocco Curto and Elena Fregonara, and focused on the relationship between the order of the values and the creativity of planning action in the land policies, also increasing the role of the traditional tools for the economic-urban values analysis, such as the mapping of real estate markets. The main points of reflection were proposed by:

- Domenico Patassini, who highlighted a further important opposition of the evaluation, starting from its practice – the opposition between limited and extensive evidence; the first refers to the specific area delimited by the context in which the evaluation is requested and operates, and is in some way aimed at an a-critical representation of the reality that determines the evaluation; the second, instead, assumes extensive evidence, as an enlarged boundary of the heuristics of the social sciences, playing the role of guide with the corresponding responsibility. It achieves a generative capacity of new knowledge and new social contexts;
  - Patrizia Lombardi and Giulia Sonetti who, with reference to the concept of “historicity”, argued the constitutive role of evaluation in the formation of the reality of values; the need for the extension of this reality to the broader and deeper dimensions of the human sphere; the connection between this enlarged sphere and the objectives of sustainable development; the definitive overcoming of the neoclassical approach; the formation of a systemic thought adequate to recognise and face the main challenges of complexity;
  - Ezio Micelli, who emphasised the dialectic between practical evaluation knowledge and abstract speculation, the latter asking historical-statistical verification to the applied sciences; the main places of social communication, the city and the market, face their conflicts and their contradictions with the support of the theories that preside over the representation and justification of the forms of civil life, especially in a historical-cultural climate in which the digital technological abstraction, is able to modify more quickly than motorisation, the perception of space, distance, presence, interpersonal relationship;
  - Giovanna Acampa, with Mariolina Grasso and Claudia Parisi, who – recognising the importance of Appraisal and its theoretical and methodological commitment in the connection of objects and values – have outlined a critical framework of the presence of this subject in the international academic panorama, in the highest educational level schools of architecture and engineering, compared with the Italian situation. In particular, relevant differences concern the fact that in Italy the tradition of Appraisal has been consolidated, laying the foundations for its constant updating; in the international sphere, instead, Appraisal does not have the same disciplinary identity and sectoral positioning; this prefigures notable differences between the personal and professional profiles of the graduates, and on the way in which they will affect the construction of the lived space of which the changes in value will face with different awareness;
  - Vincenzo Bentivegna and Marta Berni, who continuing the discussion on the complex value of social capital, highlighted the centrality of the common goods for the renewal of the estimation discipline – traditionally aimed at quantitative-monetary evaluations, and currently evolving rapidly. These goods constitute a unitary subject superordinate to the private ones, which take their value primarily from the context rather than from their intrinsic characteristics. In this sense it is observed that the physical space is replaced by the “civic space”, which contains the vital energies capable of spraying the social fabric in the perspective of its temporal continuity, in contiguity with its natural support and the infrastructures that regulate this balance;
  - Grazia Napoli, which highlighted the aspects through which the science of evaluations addresses the temporal continuity of ordered communities, with reference to the inter-generational dialectic measured by the social discount rate. The specific application of this dynamic distributive variable – the investment project – resolves, for better or for worse, in conservation or transformation, in the prevalence between individual interest and collective value, which is an internal conflict within a two-faced subject, the social one, whose civil identity is represented in the inevitable inter-temporal substitution between needs and hopes;
  - Alice Barreca, Rocco Curto and Diana Rolando, who proposed a representation of the privileged socio-economic space, the city, with the tools of the consolidated estimation discipline, the analysis of real estate values. The study focused on the relationship between the latter and the significant characteristics of the contemporary city with its contradictions and divergences: vulnerability and vitality. The fascination of abstract quantitative-monetary representations of qualitative and social value terms, stands also due to the application of advanced geostatistical tools, supporting not only the technological advances but also the multiplication of the contents of the most general measures of governance of the flows of wealth and the forms in which this is consolidated in the structures of common living.
- The third session, divided into three parallel sessions, was introduced by Giulio Mondini, who highlighted the complex and constructive relationships between environment, technology, and cultural growth that the multidisciplinary approach typical of the science of evaluations adopts in the reconstruction of a conscience of solid and pervasive value. Observations, projections and critical reflections on the concepts and models of sustainability that coordinate the relationship between natural structures, technological infrastructures and cultural superstructures have therefore provided the background of the many contributions presented in the three parallel sessions: the first, inspired by the relationship between “Bearers of value and normativity”, coordinated by Giulio Mondini and Maria Rosa Trovato, the second dedicated to the “Evaluation heuristics”, coordinated by Elena Fregonara and Grazia Napoli, the third, addressed to “Evaluation between rules and creativity”, coordinated by Giovanna Acampa and Salvatore Giuffrida.
- The final round table was introduced and coordinated by Enrico Fattinanzi, who highlighted one of the main aspects of the economic-estimative discipline, its primary relation to the architectural project for the interpretation and trans-

formation of physical space, and through a complex of project management tools that envelop all the functions of evaluation, from cost to real estate to product quality, to the liveability and expressiveness of the reference urban context. The idea that every evaluation act constitutes a more or less extended portion of this process, and therefore, that defines its profile or deepens a detail, constitutes a significant aspect of the renewal of the discipline both in its foundations, and in its particular and general objectives.

The interventions that have followed have contributed to: outlining the more general finalistic context that in human and social sciences has been extended and specified with reference to studies on well-being and individual and collective happiness, to which the project makes implicit reference in the attempt constant to increase them through the combination of rigor and creativity that characterises it (Caputo); underline the links that the value categories define between functions of evaluation and philosophical speculation in view of the concrete action on human space, with the responsibility that information incompleteness and context uncertainty require activating heuristic functions and defining axiological profiles capable of curbing the progressive cultural and civil impoverishment of our communities (Dell'Utri); specify, in the broad sphere of the interests of the science of evaluations and in the vast range of evaluation questions, the aspects that mainly concern the associated life in a climate in which the social, environmental and urban issues revolves around the questions

of the progressive polarization of the social structure and the conflicts to which it is exposed, thus avoiding a dispersion of resources unfavorable to the discipline (Curto); redefine the points of contact and constructive differences between appraisal and evaluation according to the notion of social capital, as the primary target of the evaluations; restoring to the notion of space taking into account concepts of multi-belonging and relationality, and justifying the relationship between stocks and flows, with reference to the notions of wealth and value, and of knowledge and information; lastly, the question of distributive justice which recalls the non-neutrality of the evaluator which – even if impartial, in the absence of relevant axiological and ethical references – practices militant evaluation as a figure of his civil commitment (Patassini); to indicate a new perspective of the *modus vivendi* between the foundations of economic science and the questions of production, transformation, management of the physical space of the city and of the human relations that animate it; to bring the complexity and breadth of the themes of change back to a constantly revised operational environment for the processes underway; take seriously the effects of the rapid emergence of digital, both in the management of processes and in the production and extraction of value; to take into account the deep modification of the macro-territorial arrangement in which the big cities, having increased their attractiveness, have also drained resources from fragile territories, zeroing their income (Micelli).