

l'azione di soggetti privati con un disegno pubblico di rivitalizzazione di un'area di una scala urbana. In questa linea strategica sono pertanto confluite quelle iniziative che hanno come focus la valorizzazione e in alcuni casi il restauro di un ricco patrimonio artistico, culturale e edilizio, che va da abitazioni private a monumenti, edifici e spazi pubblici, fino al Teatro Solis, luogo carico di storia italiana per aver visto i grandi nomi della lirica e del teatro italiani nel Novecento e che già era stato oggetto di restauro da parte di uno specifico progetto di intervento sostenuto dalla Cooperazione italiana. Gli interventi principali erano i seguenti:  
Progetto 2.1 Restauro e rifunzionalizzazione degli edifici pubblici e privati e dei luoghi pubblici;  
Progetto 2.2 Identificazione di edifici progettati e costruiti da italiani e loro valorizzazione con interventi di restauro, manutenzione e tutela;  
Progetto 2.3 Riqualificazione e valorizzazione delle testimonianze del periodo garibaldino.

Linea strategica n. 3: Rilancio e sostegno continuo delle attività economiche esistenti nella Città Vecchia e nel Centro, stimolo all'apertura di nuove attività. Per il rilancio economico dell'area si è puntato sulla riconversione di edifici abbandonati o sottoutilizzati, spesso di proprietà pubblica, per nuove iniziative imprenditoriali in campi tra loro complementari, quali la ristorazione, la produzione artistica e l'artigianato, con il coinvolgimento di giovani universitari ma non solo.

Le iniziative previste sono le seguenti:  
Progetto 3.1 Nuova imprenditorialità nel campo della ristorazione e catering, del commercio e dell'artigianato  
Progetto 3.2 Forme di cooperazione aziendale ed economica per la istituzione di attività di impresa nel campo dell'artigianato artistico, della musica, della pittura e del teatro.

L'attuazione del Piano. La Cooperazione italiana ha sostenuto il Piano d'intesa con le istituzioni locali di Montevideo e con la Segreteria della Presidenza della Repubblica dell'Uruguay perché erano evidenti le numerose opportunità di interazione che il Piano poteva offrire. Tali opportunità, nella fase attuativa, forse non sono state colte appieno per un insieme di fattori, non ultimo il venir meno di risorse minime iniziali per far partire la riqualificazione dell'area del Mercado del Puerto, vero progetto pilota insieme al nuovo piano del traffico, per dare nuova vita al centro di Montevideo. Tale opportunità è stata colta dalle cooperazioni di altri paesi europei, che non a caso si sono concentrate sull'area che il Piano aveva ben individuato come la più strategica per fare partire la rivitalizzazione della *Ciudad Vieja* e del Centro di Montevideo.

## **LUANG PRABANG 2002-2010 THE CITY OF SHORT PATHS THE CITY WITHOUT THE POWER**

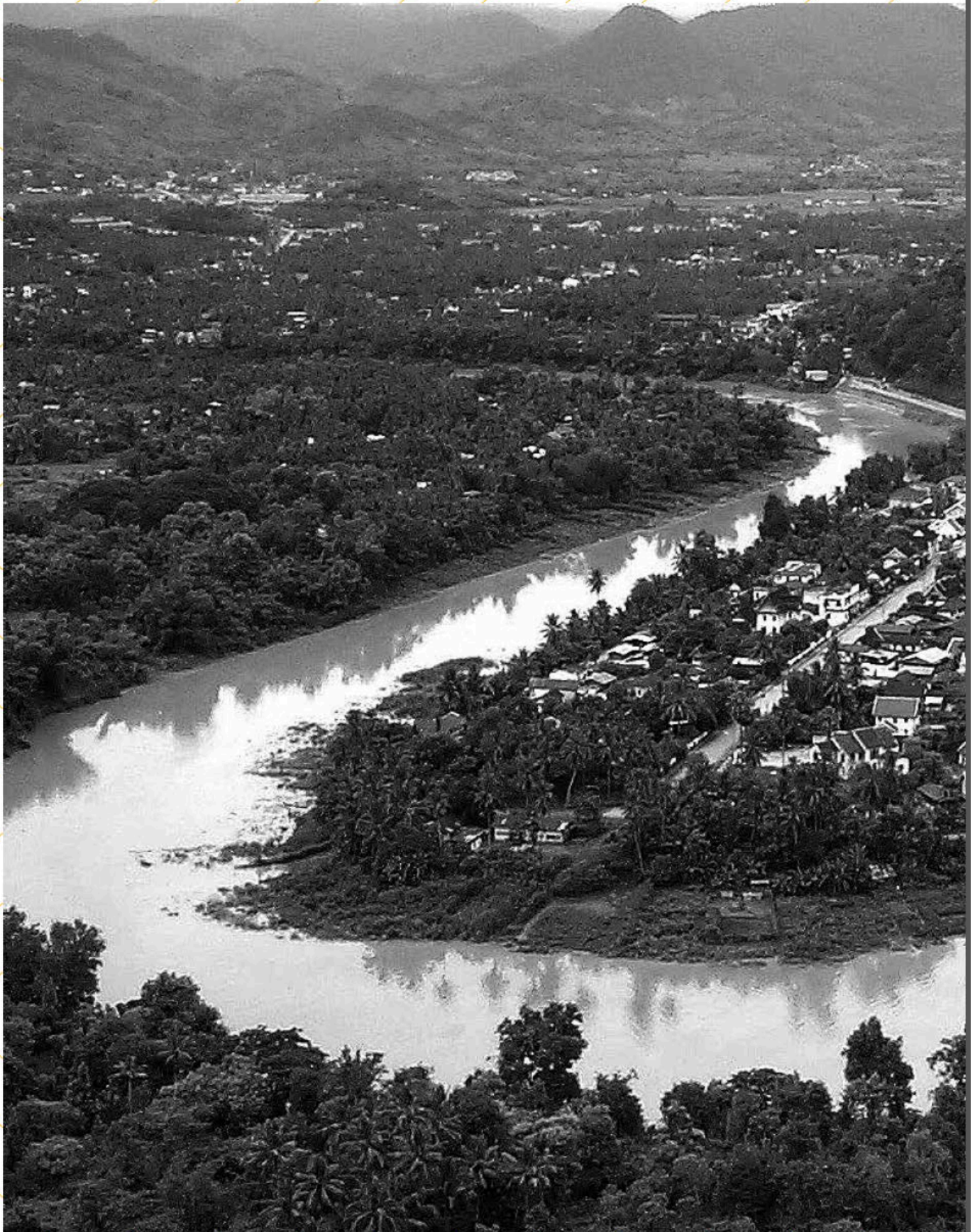
Felipe Delmont

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Once upon a time there was a Prince... Fa Ngum, who upon being exiled from the Khmer empire settled to the north of Laos, in the middle of rugged highlands, the wild and mountainous terrain of Zomia <sup>2</sup>, a land with no ruler. There, he founded Lan Xang Hom Khao, the kingdom of "The Million Elephants under the White Umbrella". The million elephants, an animal difficult to subdue, symbolizes the indomitable and secluded people living in those inaccessible lands of freedom. While the white umbrella is, let's say, a symbol of cover, a small and desolate place in the middle of two great rivers, Luang Prabang. It was there where the prince, who refused to be governed, reigned through the close ties he made with many of the local chiefs. The prince could not govern any other way, lacking the flat lands for rice paddies with which to accumulate wealth and feed an army. Luckily, his free and tolerant spirit gained the respect of his neighbors in Zomia who adopted him as a worthy representative of their independence and freedom.

His Palace in Luang Prabang belonged to everyone, and no one. A place, where two rivers converged and people who exchanged products and ideas, who shared their customs, mixed like water. Under the name of the White Umbrella, the place where villages crowd converted into neighborhoods: the city of everybody, the city of the Short Paths. A fragile umbrella that would never become a symbol of conquest, exploitation, domination, or even development.

As time went by, engrossed with power, the prince decided to move to more docile and productive lands, the plains of Vientiane, today capital of Laos. The rice paddies of the Lao Lum people gave him the power to temporarily sustain an army that would soon dominate the vulnerable villages, located downstream of the Mekong at the foot of the plateau. The Million Elephants ceased to be crowned by the White Umbrella, a sweet symbol of refuge and comfort. An ambitious and armed despot perched atop the elephants under the umbrella, now symbolized his growing thirst for power. This new symbol no longer represented an organic city, sustaining a myriad of homelands and its people, but a pretentious capital that, while obedient and submissive, was built to exploit the resources of a country that was no longer attached to the landscape.

▶ Luang Prabang, Foto di Pierre Guedant, 1999  
(Archivio personale Felipe Delmont)





Nevertheless, the city of Luang Prabang continued to belong to no one and to everybody. Its iconography, the chair atop the elephants, was left empty under the white umbrella. Standing upright in perfect balance, sustained by the will of its elephants/people who share a kingdom that continued to be part of the land. Luang Prabang also survived the French 'protectorate' in the 19th Century. In their attempt to make the kingdom valuable for a treaty, l'Ecole des Beaux Arts of Paris invented a court and a protocol, a Palace, a history, attire and symbols, a school and a home for the teacher, a prison for the bad and a hospital for the sick. Much effort, money, urban planning and labor went into the new French colony that only required a dozen officials to keep the appearance of rule. The protectorate designation was a completely unnecessary endeavor since Luang Prabang and its landscape continued to govern themselves. Its inhabitants were still living in an order without power, in neighborhoods made up of distinct ethnicities, embassies of a vast territory where their economy and knowledge, language and culture, history and riches, beliefs and differences, lay in tolerance and liberty.

According to Jean Michaud: "runaway, fugitives and 'Marooned' communities have learned to live in peace and tolerance by developing the art of escaping power. People who are wrongly designated as 'primitives' or 'savages', who have historically chosen to live outside the state, and thus manage the cultural feat of establishing an order outside the margins of power" 2.

As Pierre Clastres explains: "what the savages show us is their constant effort to prevent chiefs from becoming chiefs, the rejection of unification, the effort to conjure the 'We are all one' of the State. The history of peoples with history, is said, to be the history of class struggle. The history of peoples without history is, said with the same truth, the history of their fight against the State" 3. Clastres calls the "peoples with no history" people who reject power in contradistinction to "peoples with history," people of power, 'civilized' and dominant. According to James C. Scott, the strategies employed by the people of Zomia to develop the art of not being governed, to remain stateless, although in peace and order, escaping slavery, the recruitment, forced labor, epidemics, war or indoctrination, are: physical dispersion in rugged terrain; agricultural practices that enhance mobility; pliable ethnic identities; devotion to prophetic, millenarian leaders; and maintenance of a largely oral culture. Tactics that have allowed them to reinvent their

histories and genealogies as they move, hiding in the highlands or narrow valleys of a 'rugged' geography, erasing their footsteps, always at the margins of the State no matter how close 4.

In any of the numerous micro-regions of Zomia, from ancient times until today, a wide array of ethnic groups have coexisted harmoniously without mixing, its people dressing, speaking, and praying in their own way, living in different, although light, easy to assemble and dismantle, mobile houses. That is how they are able to disappear from one day to the next, able to escape or eventually join the city. This type of village, called in Laos Ban, rarely have more than 200 homes, over which point they would divide to form another village. The Ban, alone or in agglomeration, is the base unit of the system of land use, inextricably tied to a rural economy.

Each Ban has a board of chiefs, elected by universal suffrage. They practice direct democracy by holding open meetings, chaired by the board, to discuss common problems. Bans located by the banks of a river, are generally Buddhist and are organized around a monastery, the *Wat*. The *Wat*, in addition to a place of worship is above all a public square, a place to gather, to teach, play, for sports and leisure. It belongs to the community, not the monks who are considered its guests. The people of the Ban, who use the space, maintain it. The *Wat* is open to all, the monks live in the light of day with very little privacy, they eat what the neighbors provide them through a daily ritual offering known as *Binthabat*. In the *Wat* the monks give advice and teach religion, language, geography, math, agriculture and artisan trades. They follow the oldest precepts of Buddhism the *Theravada*, the small vehicle whose teaching presents a dogma of individual analysis and introspection to reduce, not suffering, but displeasure. Theravada monks also probably arrived long ago, seeking refuge in the rugged region of Luang Prabang. In Laos there is no word for 'city'. What comes closest is *Meuang*, which means 'control' or 'power'. The *Meuang* is then a pretention of governance of a casual concentration of Bans, each keeping intact their rural structure around the *Wat*. It's for this reason that the City-Meuang has never lost its human scale. In Luang Prabang, each Ban or let's say neighborhood is organized around a *Wat*, as do the rural Bans who live alone within the landscape. This structure has allowed Buddhism to maintain its power and influence in a country where the Authority is the Party. The combination of the "art of no displeasure" the *dukkha* of Theravada Buddhism and the "art of

not being governed” that ‘order without power’ that have been cultivated by the residents of Zomia is what has preserved the value of this ancestral culture. In Luang Prabang, a city contained in a homogenous heterogeneity, a city within a city, city in all its parts, for anybody, everything, everywhere, at any time, at walking distance or by bike: rest, work, and play. A compact city with clear countryside limits, preserving a rural life, its very ecosystem and local economic base, at a human scale. It is The City of Short Paths.

For this reason, when safeguarding the diversity that characterizes a World Heritage Site, both physical and intangible, comes the case example of Luang Prabang: a city that finds its own reason for being in its lived territory; a landscape that gives meaning to the city, because it exists in close symbiosis with it, taking care of one another and supporting each other; an example of urban planning and governance; a model for urbanity. In today’s world the city and its landscape have become separated, the city has abandoned the country. It depends on other lands, despising its own territory and that is why it’s lost. It must be rebuilt in synergy with its natural territory, to reach a sustainable harmony between the landscape and its people, using the shortest Paths. The City of Short Paths is the best understanding I have for the future of our cities.

1. Zomia is a geographical term coined in 2002, by historian Prof. Dr. W. van Schendel. Cfr. *Profile: Selected publications since 2000*, “International Institute of Social History”, Retrieved November 28, 2010.

2. J. Michaud, “Journal of Global History”, special issue *Zomia and Beyond*, Editor W. G. Clarence-Smith, 2010. “Journal of Global History” 5 (2). Cambridge Journals Online., ISSN 1740-0228. Retrieved September 7, 2011. “Published for London School of Economics and Political Science”.

3. P. Clastres, *La Société contre l’État. Recherches d’anthropologie politique*, Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1974.

4. J. C. Scott, *The Art of not Being Governed, an Anarchist History*, “Agrarian Studies”, Yale University Press, 2009.

## **SANA’A 2003-2006 SANA’A, UNO STRUMENTO DI CONSERVAZIONE URBANA**

Viola Bertini

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*Se l’idea di Venezia è nata in qualche punto dell’Oriente, questo punto è lo Yemen. Sana’a, la città più bella dello Yemen, è una piccola, selvaggia Venezia posata sulla lurida polvere del deserto, tra giardini di palme e orzo, anziché sul mare.*  
(Pier Paolo Pasolini, *Corpi e Luoghi*)

Così Pier Paolo Pasolini racconta Sana’a, “una Venezia selvaggia sulla polvere, una città-forma, la cui bellezza non risiede nei deperibili monumenti, ma nell’incompatibile disegno”<sup>1</sup>. In conclusione al cortometraggio del 1970 *Le Mura di Sana’a*, girato utilizzando la pellicola avanzata dal *Decameron*, egli rivolge un accorato appello all’UNESCO affinché salvi la bellezza di questo luogo: “Ci rivolgiamo all’UNESCO perché aiuti lo Yemen a salvarsi dalla sua distruzione, cominciata con la distruzione delle mura di Sana’a. Ci rivolgiamo all’UNESCO perché aiuti lo Yemen ad avere coscienza della sua identità e del paese prezioso che esso è. Ci rivolgiamo all’UNESCO perché contribuisca a fermare una miseranda speculazione in un paese dove nessuno la denuncia. Ci rivolgiamo all’UNESCO perché trovi la possibilità di dare a questa nuova nazione la coscienza di essere un bene comune dell’umanità, e di dover proteggersi per restarlo. Ci rivolgiamo all’UNESCO perché intervenga finché è in tempo a convincere una ancora ingenua classe dirigente che la sola ricchezza dello Yemen è la sua bellezza; che conservare tale bellezza significa oltretutto possedere una risorsa economica che non costa nulla, e che lo Yemen è in tempo a non commettere gli errori commessi dagli altri paesi. Ci rivolgiamo all’UNESCO in nome della vera, se pur ancora inespressa, volontà del popolo yemenita, in nome degli uomini semplici che la povertà ha mantenuto puri, in nome della grazia dei secoli oscuri, in nome della scandalosa forza rivoluzionaria del passato”.

Nel 1986, malgrado le mura siano ormai in parte distrutte, l’UNESCO dichiara Sana’a patrimonio mondiale dell’umanità, inserendola nella World Heritage List. La città, sita sull’altopiano che orla a sud-ovest la Penisola Arabica, formando il monte Hadhur, è stata per millenni tra i più importanti centri politici ed economici dell’intera regione. Protetta da possenti mura in terra cruda, essa è rimasta isolata per oltre 200 anni, impedendo l’ingresso ai visitatori stranieri e, insieme a loro, all’avvento della modernità. Solo con la proclamazione nel 1962 della Repubblica Araba dello Yemen, della quale Sana’a diventa capitale e con la conclusione della guerra civile nel 1969, essa si apre al mondo esterno. Ha così fine quell’isolamento che aveva conservato intatto il suo peculiare paesaggio urbano, fatto di minareti, monumenti, orti e case multipiano, costruite in pietra e terra cruda e geometricamente decorate in gesso bianco. La città, complice la rapida crescita demografica, si espande enormemente. Tra l’antico nucleo di Sana’a, cinto da mura e la sua città gemella di Bir Al Azab, nota come quartiere turco, s’inserisce il nuovo distretto economico. Questo, premendo