After the long seismic sequence named “Amatrice-Norcia-Visso”, a large part of the Italian population realized the difficulty to obtain adequate safety levels for the diffuse building heritage. During the earthquake, characterized by a limited magnitude level (about 6.3), a large part of the building heritage, even if restored following the most recent technical codes, collapsed suddenly. The consequences for the population concerned were devastating. Several hundred people died and about 30,000 people moved to other locations by the sea without knowing if they could have returned to their native places, considering that some historical towns were completely destroyed. The particular extension of the damages with the collapse of entire urban centers has shown that the damage recorded can only be partially attributed to specific defects of some buildings or non-compliance with existing technical rules. More generally, the particular seismic sequence gave evidence of the difficulty to grant, at the same time, the preservation of the historical identity of these towns and the use of historical buildings with modern standards and adequate safety levels. As a consequence, the basic concept of the seismic codes relating to seismic with respect to intervention on the historical building heritage (improvement instead of adaptation) has been questioned and at the political as well as technical level a debate has emerged regarding the forms with which to face the emergency, envisaging the possibility of an extensive process of demolition and reconstruction.

The shock of the damage extension and the possible abandonment of entire areas of the nation, with important social and economic consequences, has once highlighted the centrality of said issues and the need to further deepen research areas such as those related to the issues of the seismic safety of the diffused building heritage to avoid the supremacy of simplified and purely...
technological (an therefore completely partial) approaches to adequately preserve the identity and the image (which is also part of the constructive culture) of these places, not only for cultural reasons but also for economic reasons, considering the touristic appeal of these places.

After this earthquake the need to give a further and significant impulse to research in this area emerged strongly, to the analysis of specific cases with the aim of finding solutions, which hardly will be general or generalizable, but which will be useful to highlight useful orientations to guarantee security, adequate levels of life in the buildings that characterize the smaller centers, without losing the cultural identity that characterizes these places.

Marco D’Orazio
Editor