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Calling ‘Values’ by ‘Name’. Historical Analysis and Critical Discernment for the Interpretation and Regeneration of Underused Religious Heritage

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Olimpia Niglio *Editor*

Regenerating Cultural Religious Heritage

Intercultural Dialogue on Places of Religion and Rituals

Springer

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Calling ‘Values’ by ‘Name’: Historical Analysis and Critical Discernment for the Interpretation and Regeneration of Underused Religious Heritage

Andrea Longhi

Abstract The debate on the reuse of religious cultural heritage necessarily revolves around shared meanings and values: heritage communities will be able to discuss and design a future for their religious properties only if they share common languages and criteria of discernment. Nonetheless, there is a risk that a generic call to common ‘values’ will continue to be superficial, rhetorical or ‘appeasing’. Conversely, the dramatic nature of the subject calls for rigorous assessment and selection criteria, the ability to make decisions—including painful ones—without euphemisms, and the courage to embark on ambitious paths of social and architectural regeneration. As a theoretical contribution to the debate, a taxonomy of values is proposed here, based on a process-centred historical approach, founded on the investigation of the ‘formative processes’ behind heritage and its multiple meanings. The aim is to begin to build a shared lexicon—mainly in the field of the relationship between history, memory, and society—capable of accompanying innovative narratives and critical assessment tools. The possibility of assigning specific ‘names’ to ‘values’ will allow a positive interaction between the processes of community discernment and external expertise: in this perspective, each reuse will be considered an additional and creative step, incorporated in a long process of adaptation and resilience, based on a historical sequence of different and coexisting values.

Keywords Cultural religious heritage · Regeneration · Architectural History · Values · UNESCO

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