PILOT PROJECT FOR A BETTER AWARENESS AND EXPLOITATION OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL-INDUSTRIAL HERITAGE OF THE SALENTO (PUGLIA, ITALY).

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Abstract

The Pilot Project set up by the San Cesario di Lecce municipal administration for the promotion of its industrial past became a reality three years ago. The project's first step was an agreement signed by the CNR-IBAM in Lecce, the Chair in Industrial Archaeology at the University of Lecce and the Manni Editori publishing company. The Project has been financed by the Province of Lecce within the Salento Inter-provincial University Consortium.

The specific objectives of the Project are:
- to increase the awareness of the Public Administrations in the Salento concerning the importance of industrial archaeology;
- to promote a better exploitation of the area's resources while respecting its historical and economic character;
- to create a research model that can be applied to other situations in other areas.

These objectives are to be achieved via the publication of a series of research articles, the holding of seminars and conventions on specific issues, the training of specialist personnel and above all via the creation of "virtual museums" for those places not accessible directly.

We are dealing here with the conversion to "products" of study and research methods which for the time being are restricted in scope but will be extended subsequently to the Puglia Region as a whole.

1. Industrial archaeology, its origins and growth

The Catalogue Central office, today the I.C.C.D. (the Catalogue and Documentation Central Institute), before carrying out a census of national cultural heritage items, in the mid 1970s raised the question of an exact but broader definition of cultural heritage. Together with the Regions it was decided that the term should also refer to the remains of the industrial past and more precisely the objects and the monuments of the history of labour. Industrial cultural heritage items are the object of study of Industrial Archaeology, a discipline whose purpose is the "reconstruction of the history of industrial civilisation and culture via material evidence, tracing the formative process of the phenomenon". Industrial development has left indelible traces in the central and outlying districts of every city, giving rise to what may truly be termed industrial monuments, imposing structures once teeming with workers which are part of the Cultural Heritage of the nations. Industrial archaeology was born in the Anglo-Saxon countries in the 1950s and arrived in Italy in the 1970s. The buildings housing the machinery, the workers' dwellings (often concentrated in particular districts or villages), the infrastructures of the means of transport, the service structures, the raw materials, the technologies used in the production and commercialisation of the products are all significant signs that the process of industrialisation has left its mark
on our culture and on our surroundings. The historical period corresponding to this process is usually considered to have begun with the invention of the steam engine and continued up until the last century, although in countries that were host to ancient civilisations such as Italy there are traces of industrial processes and products that go back much further. There are even those who hold that Industrial Archaeology should embrace all artisanal activities that flourished in the pre-industrial epoch.

The criterion for assessment here is, broadly, obsolescence, that is to say whether a given edifice, object, or even an entire industrial site has been "decommissioned", has abandoned its original function or has a historical background such as to have acquired the status of archaeology, a reminder of the past, a monument. Buchanan defines as an industrial monument "anything that remains of the obsolete phase of an industrial or transport system, from the Neolithic flint mines to the aeroplane of a type no longer used".

It may be said then that Industrial Archaeology is the study of what remains of the work of human beings. In fact, the issue of the temporal boundaries of what constitutes the object of study of this discipline have been the subject of long and repeated debates and to this day there exist many different schools of thought.

The deciphering of the language of industrial monuments is thus the special object of study of Industrial Archaeology, which analyses the phenomena from an overall standpoint, taking in the historical, anthropological, social, economic and scientific aspects. It is thus
the synthesis of many "histories". Consequently, "it is not possible to provide a self-contained interpretation of each individual industrial monument"; rather, it is necessary to tackle the study in all its complexity, to reach an "understanding that is at once technological, artistic, architectural and social, a cultural synthesis of given physical remains". In other words "what interests us is not the factory or the worker’s dwelling in itself, nor the machine or the artefact considered separately from the mass of interrelations which are built up around them, but the industrial monument as a clue, a spy that will speak to us of these relations". Not for nothing does the protection of industrial monuments come within the concept of “integral protection” (monument-environment) propounded by the modern methodology of Restoration. And not for nothing does the study of the productive phenomenon imply investigation in the field, with the methods and techniques of traditional archaeology (the "dig in loco) in the search for "disciplinary convergence".

In the light of these new tendencies, the classification of Industrial Archaeology as a sub-discipline of the history of architecture focussing on the architectural aspects of industrial monuments while acknowledging at most a connection with issues of landscape or urban and regional characteristics has been abandoned. To define the material remains of
productive processes as "cultural heritage" means to regard them as a testimony to events and values worthy of attention in terms of conservation, protection and where possible, of exploitation.

2. Industry in the Salento

In the last few years the notion that there is no archaeological industrial heritage in the Mezzogiorno of Italy worthy of conservation and promotion has been discredited. It is certainly true that there is a quantitative difference in industrial plant between North and South, confirmed by the massive emigration of workers towards the factories of the North, and the cultural orientation of the South is basically humanistic and literary in character, but now, in the light of recent studies, it can be affirmed that an appreciation of the identity of this land must take into account its emerging industrial past. Considering its distribution over the territory, industry in the Salento may be described as "fragmented industry", without big industrial concentrations, where a wealth of small productive situations, considered all together, have given rise to a single industry. A mapping of the Salento in terms of industrial archaeology brings this "fragmentation" into focus: the production of oil, for example, was the common thread that held many towns of the Terra d'Otranto (the historical denomination of today’s provinces of Brindisi, Lecce and Taranto) together; the underground olive presses found all over the area are today the tangible proof of this. The same goes for the building stone quarries, the wineries, the distilleries and the tobacco processing warehouses which, although characterised by greater concentration, are present in many parts of the territory. The work of the last decade has tended to follow two different but parallel approaches: the first aims essentially at the discovery, the “census” and the primary cataloguing of industrial heritage items present in Puglia and in particular in the Salento; the second aims at spreading awareness (of the rich industrial legacy, considering this to be a potential resource), and is directed in the first instance towards the Local Administrations.

3. The Pilot project

This task of spreading awareness obtained its first fruits three years ago with the approval of a Pilot project, promoted by the Comune (town council) of San Cesario of
Lecce, which signed an agreement with the CNR Institute for Archaeological and Monumental Heritage in Lecce, the Chair in Industrial Archaeology of the Faculty of Cultural Heritage of the University of Lecce and Manni Editori publishers. The Project was funded by the Province of Lecce as part of the Salento Inter-provincial University Consortium.

A pioneer in the drawing up of a wide-ranging integrated plan for of Industrial Archaeological studies, the City Council of San Cesario di Lecce has launched a meticulous operation for the discovery, cataloguing and exploitation of its industrial legacy and that of the Salento in general. The starting point for this was its five distilleries (De Giorgi, De Bonis, Carmelo and Riccardo Pistilli and Cappello) still in part intact and uncontaminated; one of these, perfectly “frozen” in time, will house the Alcohol Museum.

The Project has precise steps divided into nine phases. The second of these phases involves the survey ("census") and completion of inventory cards for fixed items, such as buildings, sites and major pieces of machinery, to be placed in a Database (Cfr. "A project for the creation of a catalogue of archaeological-industrial resources in the province of lecce“ in this same Symposium) accessible online; the fourth phase concerns the discovery, census, cataloguing and potentially the collection of movable items (machines, utensils, company archives, etc.), and the last concerns the drawing up of a Regional Plan for the conservation and the exploitation of the archaeological-industrial heritage in the Comune (district) of San Cesario di Lecce, with particular reference to the setting up of the Alcohol Museum and the creation of a Centre for the cataloguing of industrial-archaeological heritage in Puglia.

Some of the specific objectives of the Project are to increase awareness of industrial archaeology in the region, to promote the region while respecting its historic and economic identity, and to create a study model that can be applied to other regions. The "products" resulting from these objectives include a series of scientific and informative publications - including multimedia presentations, the organisation of seminars and conferences for increasing awareness, the training of specially qualified operators, and a feasibility study that aims also to provide a methodology that may usefully be extended to the whole of the region. The project is also availing itself of the scientific co-operation of national (AIPAI) and international (TICCIH) Associations, in line with the most recent European Union
policy. It is worth remembering in this regard that this Project responds to the broad objectives as set out in "Agenda 2000" and more precisely that of “developing internal policies for promoting growth, employment and the quality of life”. Cultural wealth - which archaeological industrial heritage clearly belongs to – has been included in the fundamental elements of European planning, as a resource that contributes to the cultural identity of a people and that possesses a high "exploitability" potential in socio-economic terms. Thus the Pilot Project of San Cesario di Lecce, whose initial phases are already well under way thanks to provincial funding, will be presented under the aegis of European Union programmes (Regional Operational Programme – Puglia 2000-2006 – Chapter II, Cultural Resources, Measure 2.1 “Promotion and protection of public cultural heritage and improvement of the provision and the quality of cultural services”, ERDF; Community Initiative Programme, Interreg III Italy-Greece; Local Leader Plus Action Group) and the stakeholders will endeavour where necessary to draw up the relevant contracts for the implementation of the entire project. All this within the more general objective of facilitating ongoing co-operation between the public sector (Boards, Administrations), the private sector (the owners of archaeological industrial heritage items) and Institutes and/or Associations for study and research (University, CNR, Cultural Associations), further to an optimisation of existing resources.

4. **A Virtual Museum for the discovery of the industrial legacy of the Salento**

"A virtual museum is a collection of electronic artefacts and information resources - virtually anything which can be digitized. The collection may include paintings, drawings, photographs, diagrams, graphs, recordings, video segments, newspaper articles, transcripts of interviews, numerical databases and a host of other items which may be saved on the virtual museum's file server. It may also offer pointers to great resources around the world relevant to the museum's main focus." (Jamie McKenzie)

“The virtual is a transformation from one way of being to another. That is, it has nothing to with the false, the illusory, or the imaginary, but is one of the possible ways of being.” (Pierre Lévy)
The virtual museum can be interpreted, in a broad sense, as the possibility of enjoying an asset without actually visiting the site where it is kept or located. This particular approach to knowledge needs to be implemented with suitable instruments and techniques of communication, appropriate to the various possible levels of interest and understanding. But the “fruition in another location” can also be identified with the museographical operation of “highlighting the value” of the item, because to promote something means in the first instance being able to activate interest in a forgotten object, bringing it back into the ‘sphere of attention’, “as a living and present legacy”. Thus, the more information it is able to transmit concerning the specific properties of a given item, in a coherent and overarching frame of reference, the more useful and more effective the collocation of that item in a museum will be.

However, while these considerations may be simple to apply in the promotion of movable objects, this cannot be said for the promotion of architectural creations, which by their nature are immobile. Indeed, at times, it is difficult to appreciate or contemplate these monuments, for two reasons: firstly the impossibility of comprehending in toto their formal, artistic and constructive values directly in situ, because of their size or particular difficulties of access (this is true of most archaeological sites); secondly the limitations of

Figure 4. Virtual visit to the original working environments
the traditional systems of printed informative material. In this sense ‘modern’ technologies, inasmuch as they are able to facilitate a correct historical-critical reading of the item, constitute a powerful tool for fruition from a distance, as an alternative to a visit in loco.

Collocating items in a museum using digital technologies means organising new discovery processes within a multi-interactive space in which distances are cancelled out, and with them the limits imposed by the ‘territory-as-museum’. The item displayed is thus removed from its physical location and re-inserted into a new space, the virtual space, where each item can be re-collocated in the original context, without limits of space or of time, in a new form of museum, that is to say a museum linked to an area in which the characteristic elements that unify the diverse expressions of a particular culture co-exist. It is precisely in this virtual territory and with this premise that the decision was made to gather together and organise the archaeological industrial heritage of the Salento (Lecce, Puglia, Italy), starting with a pilot experience in the Comune of S. Cesario di Lecce and its distilleries, now decommissioned and forgotten.

The concept of a ‘virtual museum of the archaeological industrial heritage of S. Cesario di Lecce’ is developing from a base of digital information and is articulated in two separate phases:

**Phase 1** - census and gathering of the information in a Database, conceived as a study and analysis tool, but above all as a repository of the knowledge of the archaeological industrial heritage of the Salento. The material thus gathered will shortly be published on the web so that it may be consulted by scholars and be enriched with external contributions.

**Phase 2** - publication of the data on CD-ROM and in scientific publications. This phase involves the transfer of the gathered information, in a user-friendly form, to all possible levels of user.

These two separate phases constitute the methodological backdrop by which, using various technologies and acting autonomously, the museographical operation of ‘highlighting the value’.

Phase 2 in particular, which is the subject of this paper, translates study methodologies that have hitherto been restricted to the confines of specific disciplines into ‘products’. For this reasons it was decided to organise the documentary material on CD-ROMs, where the diverse forms of information (animation, QTVR videos, vocal comments, hypertexts, 3D...
reconstructions, databases) will be accessible interactively in a virtual space, organised according to museographical criteria. These contributions will therefore need to be:
- Multimedial-interactive
- Multidisciplinary
- Multi-sensory
- Multidimensional (the geometry of the museum and the information contained in it)
- Dynamic (the information evolves over time)

They will also need to have the following properties/features:
- Multitemporality (diachronic museographical evolution)
- Connectivity (multi-user and hypertextual linking)
- Contextualization of the data (with reference to other areas of interaction, URLs, etc.)
- “De-territorialization” (the museum information does not belong to any territory except the web and its context)
- Polysemy
- Accessibility of invisible data
- Guidance (guided navigation via metaphors towards more complex information)
- Cognitivity. As a structure-system the virtual museum becomes a knowledge space, whose significance is a function of the sum of information and associations it embraces.
- Exchangeability (with other real or virtual environments)
- Narrativity, that is the possibility for the virtual museum to show and make legible not just works, exhibits or objects, but also dynamic events or episodes (Forte, Franzoni, 1998).

Collectively these requirements, efficiently organised within the authoring software, have made it possible to conduct a virtual visit to the original working environments and to activate a series of relations between objects, architectural spaces, products and processing methods. This level of fruition aimed at a diverse usership, from the child who enjoys interactive exploration on a computer, to the keen amateur or scholar who seeks to expand their knowledge of other more complex or specialist aspects by consulting the linked Database. The example visit, centred for the time being on the De Giorgi distillery, does not simply tell the story of the factory and its founders; it is rather the working environment, ‘frozen’ in its abandoned state and fortunately spared destruction, which is the real protagonist of this journey in time. The distillation tower and the chimney stack, the analysis laboratories, the boiler room, the storerooms and depositories still full of bottles tell the story of the recent past and come to life as panoramas that can be explored thanks to QuickTime VR technology. The user is free to move from one node to the other and to study the layout of the rooms. They can consult the iconographic section, containing about fifty images, or broaden their knowledge of the art of distilling or consult the plates contained in the Encyclopédie of Diderot & d’Alembert, the Dictionary of the sciences, the arts and the professions, published in Paris in 1751.

The virtual visit is extended with the same methodological approach to all the other distilleries present in the region, and to the old tobacco processing warehouses, bringing together all the archaeological industrial instances of the district in what may justifiably be called a “disseminated museum”.

It should be stressed however, that in this type of operation there is a danger of burdening the original work with an excess of information that may substantially hinder direct contact, or distort the original message with an emphatic and excessively generalised interpretation. As Howard Burns explains, the virtual visits cannot substitute direct knowledge of the buildings, their internal spaces, the sense of three dimensional works created with intelligence and toil in bricks and stone. They can however, enrich our perceptions and our objective knowledge when we visit monuments of the past, because they prepare us for the visit and enable us to better understand what those buildings were like, what their original context was. They help us to defend the sense of memory, to better understand their meaning as a testimony to a way of life, to become aware of our roots. They enable people from far away to approach our Cultural heritage in a completely new way, they are a valid vehicle of knowledge and a useful tool for conservation.

Conscious of this, the town council of San Cesario di Lecce, in agreement with the bodies involved in the formulation of the “Archaeology and Industrial legacy” agreement, has decided to set up the Alcohol Museum in its territory, probably by re-converting a decommissioned factory.

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