

ITALY

Cultural Heritage at Risk

Introduction

Italy, commonly known as the *bel paese* because of its long-standing cultural heritage, can be proud of an outstanding tradition in the field of conservation and management of cultural heritage. Italy and its conservation professionals took a decisive part in the refinement of modern western trends for conservation, by designing specific legislation in the first decades of the 20th century which could be defined as pioneering in the field. Italy also took a lead in academic research, continuously improved and translated into practice, and by actively participating in international discussion on the topic, such as for the Charter of Athens in 1931 and the Venice Charter in 1964.

We may argue that the growing interest in conservation depended on the extensive cultural heritage in Italy, uniquely varied as well as historically very multi-layered, but also in the shared sense of belonging to common roots, to be protected and transmitted to future generations.

However, despite its leading role on the international academic scene, Italy is facing serious problems in protecting and managing its cultural heritage, whose natural deterioration is being irreversibly accelerated by managerial blindness. Despite innovative legislative achievements in 1939¹, Italian architectural, archaeological and environmental heritage has been facing a process of decline and deterioration which does not result from scarce economic and practical resources, but also from the Italian Governments' and people's incapacity to give value to their cultural potential.

Illegal development and speculation

The end of the World Wars represented an inevitable opportunity for uncontrolled development. The force of such development on the one hand allowed an immediate shared and high level of well-being, but on the other increased a tendency to lack respect for the law. In the field of preservation and care of cultural and natural heritage, this process has meant a very low standard in urban planning and a pressing demand-supply for industries and infrastructure²; illegal constructions dominating the urban and rural landscape of the peninsula.

However, once the economic 'boom' ended, Italy has had to face the environmental disaster resulting from this indiscriminate development without having the necessary tools for the long-term restoration and regeneration of wasted land. Although opposed by certain sectors of the Italian population, the first *condono* (the Italian term addressing the remission for building illegality) was adopted in 19853. This *condono* was proposed as a provisional measure in planning, it pardoned illegalities in various protected areas, through concessions by local authorities and territorial bodies of the Ministry of Culture (Soprintendenze). The community's adoption of this legislative measure was in light of its announced ambition to delegate direct responsibilities to the local level⁴. Most 'necessary' illegal residences became officially legal resulting in the landscape being irreversibly devastated.

However, such illegal treatment continued, as whatever was included in the 1939 laws – archaeological sites, coasts, national parks – was subjected to deregulated exploitation. This was even in the absence of primary needs, with the highest percentage tak-

ing place in the southern regions. After the wholehearted initiative of some local authorities and community representatives, who had the courage to reverse the acquiescence of this situation by ordering the demolition of illegal buildings, the situation returned to 'normal', culminating in a second *condono* in 1994⁵, while in 2003 a third was announced and approved⁶. This is probably the worst of all because for the first time it allows for illegal buildings built on public land to be 'pardoned' and made legal.

In addition, new amendments to article 181 of the cultural heritage law were approved recently by the government (designed by the Minister and endorsed by the Senate on 1 May 2004). These amendments permit, at article 36 and especially 37, the pardon of illegal construction in protected environmental areas, if completed before 30 September 2004. This also gave transgressors the opportunity to complete and in some cases add to their treachery.

Why have another concession, the third one in less than twenty years? Referring to an appeal launched by various environmental associations⁷ the risks of an additional general pardon do not simply include the cultural dimension of development, but also the social and economic ones, destabilising the sustainability of a process regulated with institutional consent.

Considering the social dimension and the Government's duty of care role, the continuous and repeated pardons of illegal development results in an increase in speculation and illegal construction, which is often part of a process of organised crime aimed at recycling dirty money. The highest percentage of illegal construction and speculation is registered in the south of Italy, where organised crime has its historical roots. The acceptance of illegality creates moreover inequalities among citizens, clearest to those who act legally. Last but not least, the act of condoning the illegality fundamentally threatens the authority and social balance of the law, given the presupposition of the Italian law that illegal acts against the cultural heritage should be pursued in court.

Also, the local situation may be critical because of an overload from an excessive amount of *condono* applications. This trend runs the risk of speeding up assessments and lowering requirements and permit criteria. In such a case, an excessive number of permits could be accompanied with a drop in controls.

Moving to the economic dimension, we should stress that the immediate proportional taxation revenue from a remission is considerably lower than the total investment necessary for the supply of infrastructure, such as pipelines, streets, electricity, and so on, necessary for legal and regular planning and to be undertaken by the local government, that is by the local community⁸.

When discussing the impact that illegal construction and speculation has on cultural heritage, whether tangible or intangible heritage, the Italian paradox is even more frustrating, because it emphasises a perverse carelessness towards what is often considered the country's highest potential, both in economic and social terms. As an immediate visual reaction, it is easy to emphasise how uncontrolled planning negatively shapes and deprives cultural landscapes of their integrity as historically formed entities that have grown slowly and in keeping with natural inputs. They are non-reproducible, unique and their damage or loss is irreversible.

Such uncontrolled occupation of land which does not respect regulated interim plans or guidelines, nor takes safety measures into account, often drastically increases the risk of natural disasters, which could have consequences not only on human lives but also on existing cultural heritage. Furthermore, the costs of legalising illegal development, for example by providing them with regu-

lar sewage, electricity, and so on, creates a shortage of financial resources in local communities, with a direct impact on the already scarce resources which would normally be used to maintain cultural heritage. In addition, the acceptance of low-quality buildings, the hallmark of illegal development, will reduce investment in future high-quality buildings, as the architectural market becomes saturated. Unfortunately this also points to an impoverishment of research in architectural design or, even worse, a massive escape to foreign countries of honest and enthusiastic young architects. The paradox is that in a few years these buildings may also be covered by existing heritage protection laws, as they currently apply to buildings 50 years after their construction, after which it has to meet special permit procedures before being demolished or modified. It is easy to imagine the immense additional workload which the already stretched Soprintendenze will be submitted to.

Not to be excessively critical, we are also pleased to highlight government efforts to safeguard the quality of architecture, urban planning and environment by the release of the *legge quadro sulla qualità architettonica* (February 27th 2004), which aims at increasing project design standards for the built environment and infrastructure, to improve life quality and to preserve and prevent landscapes and skylines from 'aesthetic pollution'. It is particularly significant for architectural design competitions, because it encourages the involvement of young professionals who were often excluded in the past decade. We are reminded of the perverse and united unofficial Italian tradition by which new professionals, mostly in architecture, were considered amenable to work for free or for ridiculous salaries, and often without being acknowledged in the projects in which they participated, in a sort of ill-defined apprenticeship. It is also remarkable in its specific procedures for the recognition of contemporary architectural masterpieces through the 'declaration of important artistic nature' under agreed criteria and standards. This interesting approach consists in having financial contributions allocated to the buildings included in the list for their consolidation, restoration and maintenance.

Unfortunately, these efforts seem to be isolated, in the absence of a long-term comprehensive approach towards the creation of the necessary conditions for success. The impression is that one law alone cannot be effective while other laws permit the opposite.

Privatisation

The uproar caused by the Italian Government's recent moves to sell public properties to private individuals or corporations has found its way to the international press. It must be said that many countries have always bought and sold land and buildings, and recently France has moved to a very similar scheme of selling off a number of unprofitable buildings, including many that are definitely of cultural significance. The difference is the way the Italian government has announced it, consisting of a very complex scheme of the property's economic valuation, of the verification of values other than economic ones, and of its sale by either competitive bidding or direct agreements that in most cases violates the established rules of heritage protection.

Here we are not discussing the privatisation of services to a cultural attraction such as ticketing, restaurants, general maintenance and upkeep, museum shops, security, or recording and conservation. Privatisation here refers to the sale of a building or site of cultural heritage value, for which a change in use is allowed, or of a heritage place to a private company so that it can transform it into a tourist attraction.

The proponents of the sale of heritage sites maintain that the State is not able to adequately protect this vast heritage, and that the involvement of private money is necessary. They maintain that it is better to sell less important heritage so that the more important can be adequately protected.

The argument that a change of ownership does not necessarily modify a town's physical design, does not hold if the change in ownership also includes radical changes of use and the commercialisation of public spaces (Hassler, Algreen-Ussing, Kohler 2002). The privatisation of cultural heritage may have some short term economic advantages for the State and private concerns but in the long term it may weaken or even destroy the trust that citizens have in the State as the steward of public good (Throsby 2002). It may be more expensive in the long term for the State, if legislation forces the State to continue tax incentives in favour of the owner or to direct protective interventions if the site becomes endangered.

Cultural heritage economists have also pointed out that it is not correct to give only market value to cultural heritage, as there are other non-measurable or parameters that are more difficult to measure that have an influence on the way heritage is perceived and valued locally and globally (Throsby 2002, Klamer and Zuidhof 1999). The cultural and environmental potential of heritage to contribute to local communities' wellbeing is in fact broad and differentiated. While the economic value of goods is traditionally recognised as decisive when measuring its impact on transformations, we cannot neglect the existence of additional values whose evaluation methods are not established yet in economic terms. We should include use value, characterising a good for the range of possible uses it offers, social value, seen as its contribution to the community, to the creation of a common sense of belonging together, educational value, being the eternal educational role, direct and indirect, played by a cultural good, representative value, being how a good can be a symbol of a society and its past. Stressing that there are several indirect benefits of built heritage to society, its sale would have merely a single short-term effect.

The present trend to privatise cultural heritage sites risks the loss of its significance, as a balance and expression of different values, and the loss of its authenticity. In the longer term, this translates into decreasing community interest, as the resource no longer 'belongs' to them, and decreasing visitor satisfaction. This has dire consequences for a site that a private owner no longer sees as profitable, so encouraging a process of rapid sale of non-profitable properties, or of their contents, such as furniture or art objects, with the purpose of finding cash for repairs (English Heritage 2002). This has serious consequences for State authorities' capacity to direct that heritage legislation be respected (in the UK, for example, many manors and villas were destroyed by owners that were not able to maintain them, until specific legislation had to be introduced (Settis 2002)).

The danger is falling into a site-by-site approach, assessing each and every site in its existing context. There are hundreds of hill towns in Italy where perhaps there is not a single 'monument' of national heritage value, but where the context, the urban texture, the quality of life and the relationship with the landscape and the cultural traditions of that area create heritage and give value to the entire village. The balance between public and private, between community and individual was in many cases arrived at as a consequence of long-term historic processes, which the rapid and irreversible sale will disrupt. From this point of view there is no major and minor heritage, but a continuum that in Italy is particularly strong in its deep layerings. The risk of separating major and minor heritage is also in isolating 'major' heritage, transforming it into a mock-up of itself, and favouring the site's aesthetic value over any other value it may have.



Rome, Piazza di Spagna – Piazza Mignanelli (example of building at risk of sale)



Florence, Via C. Battisti near Piazza della SS. Annunziata (example of building at risk of sale)



Sicily, North-West coast (near Palermo) spoilt by modern constructions

Going back to the Italian situation, the government's attempt to find financial support for its large program of new infrastructure development and tax reduction is based on this following scheme, the creation of a new company, *Patrimonio SpA*, which we can translate as Heritage Inc., to which state properties could be transferred by a decree signed by the Minister of Finance, and endorsed by the Ministers of Culture and of Environment, in the case of properties with a recognised cultural heritage value. The properties on this list could be sold or given by concession to private companies. By a simple signature, the Minister of Finance could also transfer any of these properties to another company, *Infrastrutture SpA* (Infrastructures Inc). The market value of this company's properties was intended for use to issue bonds and to receive bank loans. The bank would then become the new owner of the property, until the loan repayment.

This approach is accepting significant clauses which make its application dangerous. First, many culturally significant buildings were included in the 'shopping list', surprising given the availability of many State-owned buildings and areas of land of no cultural or environmental value. This reflects an incapacity to distinguish between cultural and non-cultural properties, as well as a lack of understanding of values other than purely economic ones. In addition, the laws accompanying the creation of these companies, as well as those authorising the direct sale of State properties to private companies, explicitly deny the Ministry of Cultural Heritage the right of first refusal. This Ministry is however responsible for confirming the cultural importance of heritage. In fact, the present evaluation of the market value of the State properties made by the *Demanio dello Stato*, the authority that administers State-owned buildings and land, is accompanied by a time-limit of 120 days for the *Soprintendenze* to declare whether a site is worth State protection or can be sold, and if there is no answer within that period, the assumption is that the site can be sold. Only 120 days to evaluate what it took centuries to build! Even admitting that each *Soprintendenza* in Italy, roughly one for each of 20 regions, has a work force able to carry out such a study for every site or building for which historic and architectural records have to be found or produced, the sheer number of pending actions shows that this is an impossible task. In Lombardy, each of the 12 architects working at the *Soprintendenza* has 1946 pending assessments! (Emiliani 2004). Although in theory 120 days would allow such an assessment to be carried out, in practical terms it is totally insufficient, given the overwork of every *Soprintendenza* in Italy. The invitation of the Minister of Culture to the *Soprintendenti* to take a site off the list of what can be sold if in doubt, does not relieve critics' misgivings about this law's consequences in the long term, given the parallel and explicit invitation to the *Soprintendenti* by higher State hierarchies to use this power with discretion.

So far we have discussed the theoretical possibilities that this new legislation introduces. But recent sales of buildings through private negotiations or competitive bids have included properties protected for their cultural heritage value within a scheme for the rapid sale of buildings belonging to State-owned insurance and social security companies.

To this legislative proposal, we should add the Italian Government's most recent initiative, which in article 30 of the *Finanziaria* 2005, foresees the possibility to grant the use of protected cultural resources by private parties, after the payment of a rent. These should then be responsible for the implementation of restoration and maintenance works, whose costs will be deducted from the rent, which is to be determined by the local *Soprintendenza*. It is stressed that private grantees will have to make the item *available* to the public in accordance with the rules agreed in the contract.

Although this legislative measure holds the positive potential to

contribute to the conservation of the cultural heritage, it falls as an additional drop into an already full vase. As stated above, the operating conditions of local designated heritage management authorities were already stretched years ago, they cannot be efficient when overwhelmed by tons of records to check and complete. In Italy's dramatic cultural heritage management situation and in the absence of real strategic policies for conservation at a national level, this theoretically positive step sounds destructive and irreversible. Who will take responsibility for approving a conservation project? Who will monitor its application? The *Soprintendenze*, today, are not enabled to operate properly given their chronic lack of financial resources, although they can often count on highly professional, although demoralised personnel.

A characteristic example recalled by S Settis applies to the introduction in December 2002 of an urgent sale of cultural heritage, based on private negotiation, of monuments in several Italian heritage cities, in particular the sale of Manifattura Tabacchi, a huge industrial complex completed during the Fascist era in Florence, which had an order placed on it by the Ministry on the basis of its historic importance in Italian industrial development. The local authorities had already planned an important integrated project for the site aimed at establishing a cultural centre, hosting the national archive, the *Opificio delle Pietre Dure* Institute, and other cultural institutes of the city, a project which could not be realised as a result.

Another example of unbalanced privatisation is the Aeolian Islands, a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2000, which are considered natural heritage at risk. With a recent administrative measure, the Regional Assembly of Sicily (legge regionale n.6 2001) approved the normative law that authorises pumice quarrying despite UNESCO's request and the guidelines of the 'Piano paesistico' (a mandatory zoning plan) to stop the exploitation.

Sicily's finance law has provided for other regional measures during 2003, including authorising the trading of public land to the advantage of private bodies. The leading businesses in pumice extraction now have the right to purchase portions of volcanoes that together represent invaluable geomorphological heritage. Proposals to stop this happening are being put forward by the *Legambiente di Filicudi, Stromboli e Ginostra*.

The situation should be seen also in light of the national cultural and natural heritage management policy, that has indirectly introduced a differentiation between responsibilities for heritage, those for heritage conservation being the State, while its development has been assigned to the Regions, proposing a confused co-ordination and co-operation between State (with *Soprintendenze* which are acting regionally) and regions.

As far as positive initiatives are concerned, in March 2004, the Italian Ministry of Culture with the *Agenzia del Demanio*, passed a decree to improve inspection procedures for the buildings and properties to be transferred to the lists of buildings for sale prior to competitive bidding⁹. This allows *Soprintendenti* to express their concern and apply protection orders before the State properties are sold. The required documentation and formats meet acceptable standards, but the technical committee of the Ministry and State property office underestimated the *Soprintendenze's* technical and time resources to take care of the bureaucratic procedures (see above).

Italia Nostra denounced the procedure's complexity and its failure in an initial application attempt between February 6th and April 2nd 2004 and again reiterated that the *Soprintendenze* are overwhelmed by workloads. Not only is the number of superintendents insufficient to cover all duties related to heritage protection but an endless change in directives, staff re-organisation and nominations (someone has even called it a 'dismantling of the *Soprint-*

endenze') could finally bring chaos and an upset to all positive expectations.

Conclusions

It should be useful to remember the proposals put forward by Marco Dezzi Bardeschi (2003) and Salvatore Settis (2002). Both would be in favour of a closer cooperation between universities and Soprintendenze, at least to complement and update inventories and documentation as well as monitoring the condition of remote and neglected monuments. For example, the risk map, a great achievement of the *Istituto Centrale del Restauro* in the last quarter of last century, should be used more to coordinate professionals and government bodies with the support of public and private organisations. Possibly new resources should be made available to finance the creation of coordination-offices that would act as *facilitators* between governmental institutions, academies and the private sector (bank foundations, and so on). The latter is investing a considerable amount of funds in arts and conservation but to date there is neither a strategic will for a fair distribution of the grants nor an interaction between parties and institutions that are keen to allocate funds on the basis of clear priorities.

Examples of similar cases worldwide show that the State's hands-off policy towards cultural heritage does not pay in the long term. Partnerships between State and private bodies in protecting and managing cultural properties are definitively positive, with an understanding that the advantage to the private bodies comes especially from tax incentives, rather than theoretical, and often illusory, direct economic advantage. The result would be a general improvement in the social and economic condition of the community in which the site is located, because of a conservation approach that is more balanced than an aggressive strategy to obtain revenue. The recent adoption in Italy of new cultural heritage legislation¹⁰ is a sign of the interest that the country has towards its heritage, alongside its commitment to assist UNESCO as one of that organisation's main donors. For this reason the con-

tradition with the above trends is very evident, for a Government has not ever shown such a contrasting attitude towards its built and natural heritage as this one. The need for immediate returns to finance improbable tax reduction programs and absurd new infrastructure projects such as the bridge on the Messina Strait is guiding the the present Government's financial strategy.

The case of Italy shows that heritage can be at risk from its own governing bodies, if only economic values are taken into consideration when shaping policies of heritage protection and *mise en valeur*.

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Citadel of Alessandria

Historic Giant: a symbol of Italian and European military history

To understand the military fortress of Alessandria and the problem that it represents today, we need to see one of the few available aerial images, because although this enormous military architecture site is among the best in Europe for its integrity and its originality, paradoxically, most people, even 'specialists', do not seem to know of it.

Begun by Savoy in 1728 and finished in 1745 (by Ignazio Bertola and Francesco de Willencourt), the citadel takes in and has replaced an entire fortified town of Alessandria, Bergoglio, that has been on the left bank of the Tanaro river since the 13th century. Thousands of inhabitants had to be evacuated during those years, as the construction of the enormous elliptical-shaped hexagon continued to have houses, churches and convents within its enclosure until 1749.

Today it is an authentic Italian historic site, as its fortifications are still perfectly preserved, made up of six impressive ramparts with redoubts, that are still fully standing even on the inside, its ditches and buildings with several storeys laid out around the vast treed parade ground. In spite of a five-month siege in 1745-6, the Citadel was not ever stormed, but in 1799 it was occupied by the Austrians, and later by the French. After the victory of 14th June 1800 at Marengo Napoleon Bonaparte had it substantially modified to make it into a huge warehouse (by François de Chasseloup-Laubat).

In the 19th century, the Citadel was a witness and protagonist of national history. Revolutionary riots took place here in 1821, important figures such as Vochieri and Garibaldi were imprisoned here in the cells in the Palace of the Governor, but the citadel was also a logistic base of great importance throughout the three wars of independence and during World War I. At times of maximum use, the citadel was able to accommodate thousands of soldiers and horses, but also military schools, lodges, laboratories and other structures of which we have evidence today.

Finally, during World War II, bombing on the city caused serious damage in the citadel which became a prison for deportees and partisans, (six of whom were shot in front of the Santa Barbara bastion). It even housed the expeditionary Brazilian corps in Italy for a short time at the end of the war.

The Citadel today

A risky situation

For quite a few years already, the citadel has been in a situation of increasing deterioration. It is no longer a strategic structure for the Army, neither from a military standpoint, nor a logistical one. It is no longer operating as a barracks and its maintenance has been reduced over time so that it is now practically non-existent. Vegetation has long attacked the exterior fortification system, certain buildings are likely to collapse and have already been abandoned and contained by 'transennas' by the military. A historic palace had already been destroyed years ago, while there have been recent new constructions in concrete, and asphalt installations.

The disastrous flood of 6th November 1994, with 11 deaths in Alessandria, enormous damage, tens of victims in Piedmont, completely flooded and seriously damaged the large site by exacerbating its already precarious situation, by increasing the level of humidity inside the lower ground floors, the cannon-gun openings, and galleries, and infilling the huge bastion areas with mud and rubbish. This tragedy for the citadel nonetheless saved the town centre, as it escaped the powerful floodwaters which unfortunately hit the nearby villages and the town's northern districts.

For centuries, the town of Alessandria has paid a heavy fine for the restrictions of this military presence. Near the citadel there is now as there was in the past, the military district with important barracks and the big military hospital. The town is gradually being freed of these limitations, but left with the responsibility for these huge structures at the heart of the urban infrastructure and its immediate fringe. This has contributed to identifying a cultural and town-planning gap in the city, that it has tried to manage these last few years by confronting the challenge of the reuse of these large buildings from a technical, architectural and managerial, perspective. The area's size, about 80 hectares, and the difficulty of finding functions everyone agrees on, are making the citadel's situation even more serious.

The first actions

In 1997, in order not to be caught unawares when the Army abandoned the citadel, the local authorities put the Turin Polytechnic Institute in charge of doing preliminary study. This has yet to take place, and it seems that it will remain a mere idea for a while. The local institutions have started the *Committee for the enhancement of the Citadel of Alessandria* with the active participation by the Prefecture, Piedmont Surveyors, and from the State and Defence property agencies.

The work of the Polytechnic Institute, namely the Department Casa-Città in the Faculty of Architecture, developed a first *study of the metaproject*. The length and methodologies of the research, and the then lack of will from the authorities, did not allow a complete technical plan and an in-depth study of the problem still being prepared, and that still does not have a program direction for property's difficulties and its availability as a site. The most con-

tentious course is still however to attempt to reconcile the conservation of historic and military structures with the idea of 'second historic centre' with museums, services and offices, as well as a large furnished park which the city lacks.

The study was presented to the public in May 1999 and displayed at an exhibition installed in the citadel's Bastion S Antonio under the title 'Re-inhabit the fortress' (Umberto Allemandi & Co, Turin 2002). The research received a favourable reception from the Minister for Cultural Properties and Activities who, via surveyors, ensures institutional and technical attention and collaboration. In 1999 the site's inscription on the World Heritage List was officially requested. This is most unlikely, given the current length of the Italian 'waiting list', but it is useful to try and raise the awareness of the Institutions, public opinion and experts at the national level, linking it to the neighbouring Residences of the House of Savoy and the numerous other Piedmont fortresses (Exilles, Fenestrelle, Vinadio, Gavi, and so on).

The same year, the Ministry for Cultural Properties declared its preparedness to include the citadel, already a declared National Monument for years, in the Property of the Historic and Artistic State to take on its improvement, once demilitarisation took place, in close collaboration with the Region, the local authorities and, if possible, with the other private and public cultural institutions interested in using the spaces in the citadel, preferably for cultural purposes. One of the rare points agreed for discussion, the future use of the Citadel of Alessandria – this grandiose and scenographic site, is of absolute importance in the context of the most significant historic phase of our region and of our country. That is why in 1998, the Province of Alessandria considered appropriate to propose as a priority the creation of a large ground-breaking Army History Museum, devoting a conference in February 1999 to this idea.

In between this time the Ministry of Public Works started the restoration works of one of the buildings to make it into one of its offices, likewise the National Archives of Alessandria asked to be transferred in the citadel, proposing to restore the Firearms Room.

A future for the Citadel

Perspectives for the „Citadel-Marengo“ system

In autumn 2002, the State allocated considerable funding to the Province of Alessandria for the project, 'Renewal of the Military Citadel of Alessandria'. Ensuing meetings with the Army and the other responsible institutions have permitted an understanding that the military presence will continue in the citadel at least a few more years, and that the Army can and must take on again the maintenance of buildings that are still in use, in a new framework of sustainable management, whilst agreeing to proceed to the partial freeing up of redundant areas and buildings. The citadel improvement must begin right away with the military, and can no longer wait for their departure. Cases like Perpignan and Copenhagen can serve as examples.

An international project rehabilitation competition, open to technical teams able to make integrated, affordable and credible proposals for the site's restoration and reuse according to its historic importance, must guarantee at the same time a strong drive for the entire city's tourist and cultural development. The project must not limit itself to only the citadel's internal structures, but solutions are needed to draw attention to all the fortifications and link them with the unique system of the three forts that surround



Aerial view of the Citadel of Alessandria

Vue aérienne de la Citadelle d'Alessandria



Alessandria, Sapper Magazine – first half 19th century

Alessandria, le Magasin du Génie de la première moitié du XIX^{ème} siècle

the city to the south and also in Marengo with the proposed museum and the battle site.

At the same time, the reports of the collaboration and of 'shared life' already installed years ago on the occasion of shows, conferences and exhibitions, must be formalised with the military personnel. A program agreement will have to be set without wait-

ing for the closure of the military depot, to put into operation the various ideas that are already definite.

The problem of the reuse must be faced from the very beginning, with a need to identify who can take possession of the structures that the Armed Forces no longer use and which are already risking abandonment and collapse. These are all the fortification

systems, the outer and inner galleries of the cavaliers and bastions, the upper floors of the Governor's Palace, the powder magazines, the Cavallerizza at risk of collapsing, the beautiful and valuable Baroque hospital church rich in stucco, but in a very bad conservation condition.

Conservation Proposals

While waiting for the creation of the Foundation that may in future have responsibility for the management of the citadel, the local authorities must try to avoid irreparable damage and at least foster the most urgent maintenance and restoration of the bastions, the Cavalerizza and the North entrance.

The opening to the public of the fortifications system, with walks and space for athletic activities, the Parade Ground, of at least one bastion and the huge Armory, an ideal location for big exhibitions and fairs, could ensure the possibility of public recognition of the citadel even with the presence of the military. That way it would keep their historic defence and protective function by using the spaces still appropriate, about two-thirds, as a depot for material that is not war related.

To achieve these ideas, the Administrations must make clear and unequivocal choices on the overall goal for the citadel and the area on which it is located:

- Preserve at least to the north the original view of the fortifications and rehabilitate for tourists the historic city entrance through the Soccorso Gate;
- Rehabilitate the zone that surrounds the site, by reconsidering accessibility and resolving the serious parking problem;
- Separate the zone that is still military from the zone that could be allocated for public use or as a park in an intelligent and aesthetically appropriate way;
- Increase the quality of activities and public events hosted by the citadel (exhibitions, concerts, theatrical performances, conferences, fairs, and so on);
- Clarify the feasibility of the proposals for more immediate goals with a museological nature or a cultural nature, such as the National Archives for a start, the large exhibition / conference space that the city lacks, as well as the military museum and potential university structures.

In any case, it is particularly vital to successfully complete in the anticipated time the competition to establish the project, to undertake the works after that as soon as the considerable required resources, about 100 million euros, are found, without neglecting the issue of future management and the corresponding costs.

Massimo Carcione
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La Citadelle d'Alessandria, géant historique à sauver

Un symbole de l'histoire militaire italienne et européenne

Pour comprendre la citadelle militaire d'Alessandria et le problème qu'elle représente aujourd'hui, il est indispensable d'en voir

une des rares images aériennes disponibles: cet énorme monument à l'architecture militaire, parmi les meilleurs en Europe pour son intégrité et son originalité, est aussi paradoxalement très peu visible et la majorité des personnes, même parmi les « spécialistes », semble ne pas le connaître.

Commencée par les Savoie en 1728 et terminée en 1745 (projet de Ignazio Bertola et Francesco de Willencourt), la Citadelle a englobé et remplacé tout un bourg fortifié d'Alessandria, Bergoglio, sur la rive gauche du Tanaro depuis le XIII^{ème} siècle. Pour la construction de l'immense hexagone de forme elliptique, il a fallu évacuer des milliers d'habitants pendant ces années; jusqu'en 1749 la Citadelle a conservé dans son enceinte maisons, églises et couvents. Aujourd'hui encore le parfait état de conservation de ses fortifications (composées de six remparts grandioses « à oreillons », tout à fait intègres même à l'intérieur), des fossés et des bâtiments à plusieurs étages disposés autour de l'immense place d'armes plantée d'arbres, font de la citadelle un monument authentique de l'histoire d'Italie. Malgré 5 mois de siège en 1745-6, elle ne fut jamais emportée d'assaut, mais fut occupée par les Autrichiens (1799), puis par les Français suite à la grande victoire remportée le 14 juin 1800 à Marengo – petit bourg aux portes d'Alessandria – Napoléon Bonaparte la fit profondément modifier (projet de François de Chasse-loup-Laubat) pour en faire un immense entrepôt.

Au XIX^{ème} siècle, la citadelle fut témoin et protagoniste de l'histoire nationale : ici se déroulèrent les émeutes révolutionnaires de 1821, ici trouva place la prison de personnages du Risorgimento comme Vochieri et Garibaldi (les cellules sont dans le Palais du Gouverneur), mais la citadelle fut aussi base logistique de grande importance au cours des trois guerres d'indépendance et de la première guerre mondiale : dans les moments d'utilisation maximale, la Citadelle réussit à accueillir des milliers de soldats et de chevaux, mais aussi des écoles militaires, des ateliers, des laboratoires et autres structures dont nous gardons aujourd'hui d'importants témoignages.

Enfin, pendant la deuxième guerre mondiale, les bombardements sur la ville provoquèrent de sérieux dommages à la Citadelle qui devint prison pour déportés et partisans (six d'entre eux furent fusillés devant le bastion Santa Barbara) et accueillit même, pendant une courte période à la fin de la guerre, le Corps expéditionnaire brésilien en Italie.

La Citadelle aujourd'hui

La situation en danger

Depuis plusieurs années déjà la Citadelle vit une situation de dégradation croissante, car elle ne constitue plus pour l'Armée une structure stratégique, ni du point de vue militaire, ni logistique ; ayant cessé d'exister en tant que caserne opérationnelle, son entretien a diminué dans le temps jusqu'à devenir aujourd'hui pratiquement nul. La végétation a agressé depuis longtemps le système des fortifications extérieures, certains édifices sont à risque d'effondrement et ont déjà été abandonnés et renfermés par des transennes par les militaires ; il y a des années déjà un palais historique a été détruit, tandis que récemment de nouvelles constructions en béton, des installations et des asphaltages ont été réalisés.

L'inondation catastrophique du 6 novembre 1994 (11 morts à Alessandria seulement, des dégâts énormes et des dizaines de victimes dans tout le Piémont) a complètement envahi et sérieusement endommagé l'ensemble monumental en aggravant des situations déjà précaires, augmentant le taux d'humidité à l'intérieur des sous-sols, des canonnières et des galeries, et remplissant de

boue et de détritiques les immenses locaux des bastions ; cette tragédie pour la citadelle a néanmoins sauvé le centre ville, qui a évité ainsi la violente montée des eaux qui a malheureusement frappé les hameaux et les quartiers au nord.

La ville d'Alessandria paie depuis des siècles un lourd tribut aux « servitudes militaires » : à côté de la citadelle le district militaire rassemble d'importantes casernes et le grand hôpital militaire ; ces servitudes sont en train de la libérer graduellement, abandonnant d'immenses structures au cœur du tissu urbain et dans la périphérie immédiate. Ceci a contribué à déterminer une sorte de fossé culturel et urbanistique pour la ville, qui ces dernières années essaie de s'en sortir en affrontant – sous un angle technique (architectural et de gestion) le défi de la réutilisation de ces grands édifices : les dimensions (environ 80 hectares) et la difficulté de trouver des affectations partagées par tout le monde rendent la situation de la citadelle encore plus grave.

Les premières interventions

En 1997, pour ne pas être pris au dépourvu au moment de l'abandon de la citadelle par l'Armée, les organismes locaux avaient chargé l'Ecole Polytechnique de Turin de la réalisation d'une étude préliminaire ; cet événement qui semblait alors imminent n'a pas encore eu lieu jusqu'à présent et, semble-t-il, restera pour quelque temps à l'état de projet. Les institutions locales ont donné vie au *Comité pour la Mise en Valeur de la Citadelle d'Alessandria* avec la participation active de la Préfecture, des Surintendances du Piémont, de l'Agence du Domaine de l'Etat et des Commandements Militaires mêmes.

Le travail de l'Ecole Polytechnique (précisément le Département Casa-Città de la faculté d'Architecture) a permis de développer une première *étude de métaprojet* : la durée et les modalités de la recherche n'ont pas permis (il n'y avait alors aucune volonté de la part des organismes) d'effectuer des relevés techniques complets et d'approfondir l'étude d'un problème encore *in fieri*, qui n'a pas encore d'orientation de programme quant à la difficile situation de la propriété et de la disponibilité du site : l'orientation la plus partagée reste toutefois la tentative de concilier la conservation des structures historiques et militaires et le projet d'un « deuxième centre historique » avec musées, services et bureaux, maisons et boutiques, ainsi qu'un grand parc équipé dont la cité est presque dépourvue.

L'étude a été présentée au public en mai 1999 et illustrée par une exposition aménagée dans le Bastion S. Antonio de la Citadelle ; récemment publiée sous le titre « Réhabiter la forteresse », éditions Umberto Allemandi & C. (Turin 2002), l'étude a été favorablement accueillie par le Ministère pour les Biens et les Activités culturelles qui, par le biais des Surintendances, assure attention et collaboration institutionnelle et technique. En 1999 l'inscription du monument dans la Liste du Patrimoine Mondial de l'UNESCO a été formellement demandée : chose improbable, vu la longueur actuelle de la « Liste d'attente » italienne, mais utile pour essayer de sensibiliser les institutions, l'opinion publique et les experts au niveau national, reliés aux résidences voisines de la Maison de Savoie et aux nombreuses autres forteresses du Piémont (Exilles, Fenestrelle, Vinadio, Gavi, etc).

La même année le Ministère pour les Biens Culturels a déclaré sa propre disponibilité à insérer la citadelle (déclarée Monument National depuis des années) dans le Domaine de l'Etat historique et artistique pour entreprendre sa mise en valeur, une fois la démilitarisation concrétisée, en collaboration étroite avec la Région, les organismes locaux et si possible avec les autres institutions culturelles publiques et privées intéressées à utiliser les espaces de la

citadelle, pour des buts culturels de préférence. Un des rares points fermes des discussions, l'utilisation future de la citadelle d'Alessandria, est en fait l'importance absolue, dans le cadre de la phase historique la plus significative de notre Région et de notre Pays, de ce site grandiose et scénographique ; c'est pourquoi la Province d'Alessandria a considéré opportun proposer en 1998 comme priorité la création d'un grand et innovatif Musée de l'Histoire de l'Armée en consacrant à ce projet un congrès en février 1999.

Entretiens le Ministère des Travaux Publics a commencé les travaux de restauration de l'un des édifices pour y réaliser un de ses sièges ; de plus les Archives Nationales d'Alessandria ont demandé à se transférer en Citadelle, en proposant de restaurer la Salle d'Artifice.

Un avenir pour la Citadelle

Perspectives pour le système « Citadelle – Marengo »

En automne 2002 l'Etat a attribué à la Province d'Alessandria un financement considérable pour le projet de « Recouvrement de la Citadelle militaire d'Alessandria » ; les réunions qui ont suivi avec l'Armée et les autres Institutions responsables ont permis de comprendre qu'une présence militaire persistera dans la citadelle au moins quelques années ; l'Armée peut et doit donc reprendre, dans un nouveau cadre de gestion durable, l'entretien des immeubles qui sont encore en son utilisation, en acceptant en même temps de procéder à la libération partielle de zones et d'édifices hors d'usage. Il faut donc commencer tout de suite à mettre en valeur la citadelle avec les militaires, et ne plus se borner à attendre leur départ : des cas comme Perpignan ou Copenhague peuvent servir d'exemple.

Le concours international de projets de réhabilitation, ouvert à des équipes techniques en mesure de proposer des hypothèses intégrées, finançables et crédibles de restauration et réutilisation dans le respect de l'importance historique du site, doit garantir en même temps une forte impulsion au développement touristique et culturel de la ville entière ; le projet ne doit donc pas se limiter aux seules structures internes de la citadelle, mais des solutions sont nécessaires pour mettre en valeur toutes les fortifications et réunir, dans un système unique les trois forts qui entouraient la ville au sud ainsi que Marengo, avec le musée et les lieux de la bataille.

Parallèlement, les rapports de collaboration et de « vie en commun » déjà instaurés depuis des années à l'occasion de spectacles, congrès et expositions, doivent être formalisés avec le personnel militaire : un « accord de programme » devra être stipulé, pour rendre opérationnelles les différentes idées déjà explicitées, sans attendre la fermeture du dépôt militaire.

Le problème de la réutilisation doit être affronté dès le début : il faut donc identifier qui peut prendre possession des structures que les Forces Armées n'utilisent plus et qui risquent déjà l'abandon ou l'effondrement : tout le système des fortifications, l'extérieur et les galeries internes des cavaliers et des bastions, les étages supérieurs du Palais du Gouverneur, les poudrières, la Cavallerizza qui menace de s'effondrer, la belle église baroque de l'Hôpital riche en stucs de valeur, mais en très mauvais état de conservation...

Propositions d'intervention

En attendant la constitution de la Fondation qui s'occupera peut être à l'avenir de la gestion de toute la Citadelle, les organismes locaux doivent essayer, pour éviter des dommages irréparables, de

promouvoir au moins les interventions les plus urgentes de entretien et restauration des bastions, de la Cavallerizza et de l'entrée au Nord.

L'ouverture au public du système des fortifications, avec des promenades et des espaces pour les activités sportives, de la Place d'Armes, d'un bastion au moins et de l'immense Armurerie (siège idéal pour de grandes expositions et foires) pourrait assurer la possibilité de mise en valeur publique de la Citadelle même en présence de militaires, qui garderaient ainsi leur fonction historique de défense et de protection en utilisant les espaces encore appropriés (2/3 de l'ensemble environ) comme dépôt pour le matériel à l'exclusion des armes.

Pour réunir ces circonstances, les Administrations doivent effectuer des choix clairs et univoques sur la destination globale de la Citadelle et de la zone sur laquelle elle se trouve

- préserver au moins au nord la vue originale sur les fortifications et réhabiliter du point de vue touristique l'entrée historique à la ville à travers la « porte du Soccorso »;
- réhabiliter la zone qui entoure le monument, en reconsidérant

la viabilité en fonction de la facilité d'accès et en résolvant le problème grave des parkings;

- séparer de façon intelligente et esthétiquement correcte la zone encore militaire de la zone pouvant être affectée à des utilisations civiles ou à parc;
- augmenter qualitativement les activités et les manifestations publiques accueillies dans la Citadelle (expositions, concerts et spectacles de théâtre, congrès, foires, etc..);
- préciser la faisabilité des hypothèses de destination plus immédiates ayant un caractère muséographique et culturel : les Archives Nationales in primis, le grand espace pour expositions et congrès qui manque à la ville, ainsi que le musée militaire et les structures universitaires éventuelles.

Il est surtout indispensable d'achever à terme dans les temps prévus, le concours de mise en projet, pour entreprendre par la suite les travaux dès que les ressources considérables nécessaires (environ 100 millions d'euros) auront été trouvées, sans délaisser le problème de la future gestion et des coûts correspondants.

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Sardinia's Vernacular Earthen Architecture

Courtyard houses

Sardinian earthen heritage is the most extensive in Italy and recognised formally as one of the richest of the Mediterranean basin because it embodies functional, structural, rural, and urban characteristics that are missing in other regions. Also, the importance of Sardinia's earthen buildings lies in the impressive number of surviving mudbrick villages. A rough calculation shows that more than one third of all island villages' historic centres are made of earth.

Until 1950, mudbrick and stone were the most frequently used building materials in Sardinia, but today their quality has deteriorated considerably because relevant skills have been forgotten or are lacking. The island can be divided into two main areas: the north, where mountain houses of stone with several storeys are more widespread, and the south, where mud-brick courtyard houses are more common. The main entrance of this latter type usually faces the street through a large gateway that gives the building a monumental impression. The residential area of the house is usually characterised by a long arcaded loggia that acts as climatic buffer and where housework took place and onto which the rooms opened. Also, town growth by adding courtyard houses resulted in shared shading, but also in an internal and private lifestyle.

Sun-dried clay bricks, locally called *lādiri* (from the Latin word *later*, brick), were made using thick malleable mud with added straw. Houses were built under the supervision of the *maïstru de muru* (the Sardinian expression for master craftsman), a very experienced and senior mason who was skilled with every material involved in the construction process.

Having virtually only two main seasons – winter and summer – both characterised by extremes, made the use of earth as a building material necessary and led to the development of features such as the arcaded loggia together with shared shading and inward-

looking spaces in order to cope with climate swings. The use of earth as a building material is also because it was the only locally available material in the alluvial area and because of the constant winds so essential for the drying process. Another important influence in the closed-in nature, particularly of the farmhouses, is related to the area's agricultural economy. In fact, the evolution of this form of vernacular housing cannot be understood properly without being set within the context of the farming systems in use before the start of the 20th century. Such architecture is the expression of Sardinian tradition and culture and it needs to be conserved in order to check the loss of cultural identity to contemporary living standards. Another important and practical reason for the conservation of this heritage is the demand for sustainable housing. Also, the fact that Sardinia's endangered heritage requires immediate attention was stressed by the 2000 *Heritage at Risk* report where it was stated that '...this entire heritage will be gradually destroyed as soon as the houses are abandoned or replaced by horrible constructions in concrete and plastic'.

Survey of Threats

Although it is a common opinion that 20th century housing policies have failed, at the moment mudbrick structures are very deteriorated and sometimes they have not been repaired since the day they were built. In fact, nowadays a courtyard house owner either builds a concrete house on the site of the old one, or builds it on the outskirts of the village. This incongruous occurrence of a lack of awareness of environment conservation is slowly changing, but

there is still a need for proper guidelines and practice when conserving earthen buildings.

In order to understand the most common symptoms of decay that affect inhabited mudbrick buildings, a questionnaire was designed. The overall number of completed questionnaires was 288 and this population size was considered to be adequate for the area being examined. The aim of this study, stimulated by the distinct lack of literature on the main symptoms and problems of such buildings, is to survey the main threats and mechanisms of deterioration. The work is a general survey of the area under examination, and not a detailed analysis of the peculiarities of single buildings.

Mudbrick construction in Sardinia reached a peak between the end of the 19th century and the start of World War II. This is demonstrated by the survey which shows that 9.1% of the buildings involved were built before 1900, 31.5% were built between 1901 and 1960, whilst the remaining 59.4% of the respondents answered that the date was unknown. The popularity of modern building materials for repair purposes can be quantified according to questionnaire responses, showing that 59.7% of the total number of buildings included in the questionnaire have been repaired with modern materials, whilst only 14.9% are repaired with traditional materials, the remaining percentage was not repaired since construction or was unknown.

At this point, it is relevant to understand the proportion of these buildings located in historic centres. The total number of buildings in historic centres included in the questionnaire is 137, of the 288. It can be therefore demonstrated through a cross-query that only 18.2% of the buildings located in historic centres have been conserved with traditional materials. This survey paints a gloomy picture of the region's landscape, giving evidence of the complexity of this phenomenon. Moreover, today owners and practitioners still tend to replace traditional porous coats with a combination of hard cement-based renders and chicken mesh as a binding agent. Today this is causing more damage to the historic fabric than any other misrepair. The main disadvantage of using cement-based coats is their high alkalinity and also the migration of salts towards the inner face of the render where they can crystallise and make the softer and more porous fabric lose cohesion, in this case the mudbrick. The questionnaire results on coating systems are lime plaster (42.7%), cement plaster (39.9%), mud plaster (6.6%), tile cladding (0.4%), and not available (10.4%).

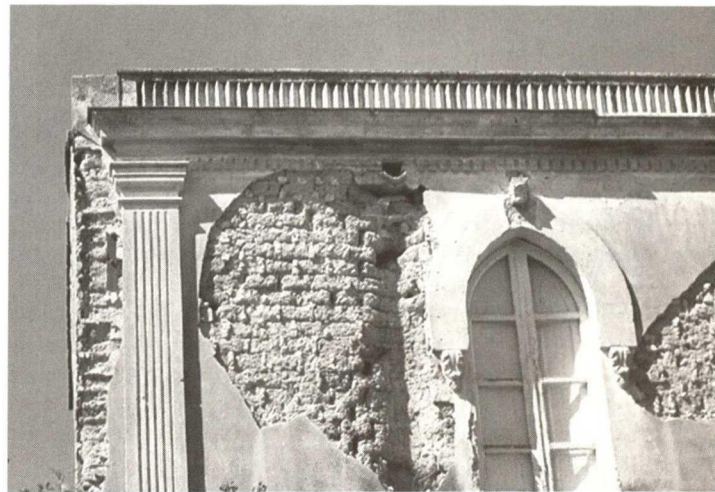
If common sense was the key of conservation regulations in protecting earthen architecture prior to the cement era (pre-1950), by contrast what subsequently followed seems to deny local building cultures. It appears likely that since then, cement lobbies have played a role in the way mudbrick was perceived as a building material on the island, with a consequence that demolition and rebuilding with reinforced concrete increased rapidly. A lack of consideration for the historic fabric can be read in recent conservation regulations where PVC windows, cement plinths, and other inadequate materials are imposed for repair work by heritage regulations.

Modern building materials still play a relevant role in the repair and maintenance of mudbrick buildings. This is not only because of a lack of awareness of building users, but also of professionals. Since the mid-20th century, new construction is with modern materials and therefore the repair and maintenance of Sardinian vernacular heritage has relied on inadequate techniques and alien materials. It can be speculated therefore that such deterioration is more the result of a cultural problem and, in this respect, regulation and craftsmanship play their proper roles.

The main obstacle against the acceptance and the conservation of such buildings is the lack of awareness and pride in the build-

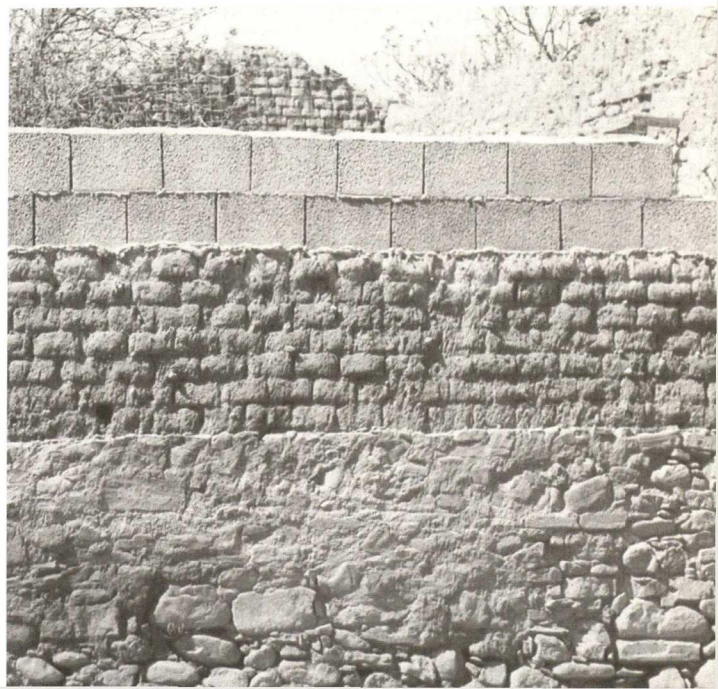


Courtyard house in Ussana, Sardinia



Erosion of mudbrick caused by neglect and lack of maintenance of downpipes and gutters (Samatzai, Sardinia)

Misrepair of an earthen wall by means of cement blocks (Ussana, Sardinia)





The top part of this earthen building shows repair with cement blocks (Terralba, Sardinia)

ings on the part of their owners and users, and this is confirmed by direct observation. The aesthetics of vernacular buildings in Sardinia do not correspond to the portrayals existing in today's media. It seems that there is a need to show that one does not have to live in modern buildings to be able to enjoy the comforts of modern life.

The main reasons for abandoning vernacular architecture and the resultant heavy introduction of unfinished architecture can be identified in the social changes that have occurred on the island:

The sense of shame associated with the material is still strong in the island because, as noted earlier, mudbrick is considered as a peculiar resource of the poor.

- A further reason is related to the traditional construction system. Dwellings were traditionally built by the addition of cells or units, according to the financial situation and to the need of more rooms. Such cells were called *domus* (houses), so that there was no distinction between the terms 'room' and 'house'. This organic growth of such dwellings was characterised by the use of traditional materials and unchanging architectural codes. During the second half of the 20th century this traditional building with incremental parts was applied with catastrophic consequences to modern materials and design.
- Another reason can be related to the improvement of transportation facilities and a consequent drop in the costs of building materials. The construction industry has a strong motivation to keep modern materials and methods in the market because they are more profitable.
- Another important reason for abandoning earthen buildings involved the continuous complaints about the need for their constant maintenance.
- A lack of scientific research on building cultures and materials.
- Building a new house in the outskirts of villages is preferred to repairing a historic building in the village centre where regulation is considered to be too conservative and restrictive.

During the last fifty years, the conservation of earthen buildings of Sardinia has too often relied on the use of non-porous materials. This is principally due to the fact that practitioners tend to apply those skills and methods employed in new construction to historic buildings. Another cause is due to the conventional and simplistic idea that 'strong' materials should be used, with the result that mortars are often rich in cement, if not made entirely of cement. Such material is commonly used in Sardinia in the shape of blocks for the replacement of deteriorated sections of earthen walls.

Recommendations for Conserving Sardinia's Mudbrick Buildings

A series of themes on how conservation and public awareness can be improved have been identified, and are listed below. These are by no means intended as firm practical proposals, but simply as an outline of where and how improvement can occur:

- Reversibility and minimum intervention into the historic fabric.
- Traditional, local, and recycled materials in contemporary repair. Employing local materials has several advantages, not least being that the sources for the original materials are close to the site. The recycling of building materials is especially applicable to the earthen buildings of Sardinia. Soil was often traditionally recycled and reconstituted in the form of mudbricks for replacement purposes, but also in the form of mortar, dry packing, and less frequently in the form of mud render.
- Repair 'like with like' (mud with mud, lime with lime, and so on).
- Repairs guided by building traditions and by past craftsmen, and the role of training. The lack of specialised craftsmen in the repair of earthen buildings, together with the issue of training needs, is constantly deplored in the literature on Sardinian earthen heritage. Buildings are conserved with inappropriate modern materials and methods and this is due to the fact that the workmanship necessary for using traditional materials requires more skill, sensitivity and grounding in traditional culture than does that required for using modern materials. The suggestion advanced here is that the role of the master craftsman and his knowledge of traditional repair methods should be re-instituted by on-site training of young apprentices including the involvement of older craftsmen. This would be in keeping with traditional practice in Sardinia, where young apprentices were trained at different levels before reaching the status of master craftsman.
- Maintenance after repair. Annual maintenance and the renewal of sacrificial layers are essential tools for the conservation of earthen buildings. The key to maintenance is that if a fault is not repaired, instant failures will occur. Regular and cyclical maintenance was historically undertaken in Sardinia. However, in today's world, building regulations do not ever provide any recommendations on post-construction maintenance and repair. This absurd lack of interest in maintenance is also shared by building users who have certain preconceptions against maintenance, often owing to the frequent work that its adoption usually implies. The suggestion given here is that building regulations should be more explicit about requiring the use of traditional building materials and methods.

Tuscan archipelago – Island of Pianosa

Pianosa, the ancient *Planasia*, one of the seven islands of the Tuscan Archipelago, located 15 km south west of the Island of Elbe, is the jurisdiction of the Commune of Campo nell'Elba. The Commune of Campo has become the owner of four buildings, a new management building, accommodation for foreigners, the refectory for former agents, and Caserne Bianco Quirico, as well as a big part of the agricultural land. This follows the dissolution of the then municipal use determined by Decree of the Tuscan region 2887 of the 30/5/2001, although seized at the last minute by the State of Libourne's Property Agency and currently still *sub iudice*. Its dimensions, 10 km², and even the presence of the penitentiary have protected the island until now from the destructive property development that has totally ruined the other Tyrrhenian islands.

Archaeological evidence on the island covers a time span from the Palaeolithic to the present day.

The availability of freshwater and a few points to beach small boats favoured interaction with the mainland as well as the other Tyrrhenian islands. It is no coincidence that Pianosa is mentioned in the works of Classical Greek and Roman writers.

We find numerous remains from Roman times, when Pianosa, like the other islands in the archipelago, became a place of rest and recreation. A luxurious villa, with its remains on the east coast, housed Agrippa Postumo, grandson of Augustus, during his exile and he was assassinated there in the year 14.

There are cement structures along the northern coastline of Punta Teglia and upstream, traces of huts linked to cisterns for wine production, also referring to Villa Agrippa, known as 'Bagno'. Remains of walls and basins dug into the rock in the north-west bay indicate the existence of an ancient anchorage point.

Between the 4th and 6th centuries, Pianosa, just as the other islands of the archipelago, offered refuge to the first monastics. It is probably in this epoch that behind the promontory of the Teglia, at the junction of several underground caves a big catacomb was formed, the second biggest in Italy north of Rome, after that in Chiusi. Altered in the 19th century by a cellar being installed, the catacomb was only recently freed from its use as the prison sewer and dump by the Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology.

Implicated from the 10th to 14th centuries in the struggles between the maritime republics of Pisa and Genoa for the control of the High Tyrrhenian Sea, in 1399 Pianosa went under the domination of the Appianin lords of the Piombino.

The Appiani domain lasted until 1554, with only a brief interruption in 1501 by Cesare Borgia. Then the island was dispossessed by Admiral Dragut's Franco-Turks in the war between France and Charles V, delivering its inhabitants to slavery and leaving it deserted. Afterwards, it was only visited seasonally by shepherds and farmers from the Island of Elbe. Pianosa became the property of the princes of Boncompagni Ludovisi.

In 1814, the island was conceded along with Montecristo to Napoleon, who was confined to Elbe. The Congress of Vienna assigned it to the Grand Duchy of Tuscany, which tried to restore agriculture and animal husbandry, by providing it with a coast guard detachment and by housing the few inhabitants and garrison in its grottoes. From that moment on, the island depended administratively on the municipality of S. Piero in Campo (Elbe).

In 1846, the building began of the church dedicated to S. Gaudentio. It still stands today on the esplanade in front of the prison entrance, the prison dating to the first half of the 20th century.

Finally, in 1856, the Grand Duchy of Tuscany implemented a project of Napoleon's, by establishing an experimental reformato-

ry for young delinquents. Later from 1858, the agricultural penitentiary colony remained in use, even after Italy's unification.

The first director of the prison was Leopoldo Ponticelli of Reggio Emilia who built almost all the buildings that we see on the island today, using convicts as labour and the local tufa as building material, in a project that followed the then dominant neo-Gothic in a provincial yet ingenious style. These include the castellated walls behind the port's small jetty, Fort Teglia in place of one of the Appiani forts, the Observatory, the Punta del Marchese convalescence home for the detainees convalescing from tuberculosis. It is thanks to him that we owe that section of the street that links the 19th-century structures of the little port to the rest of the island. The house built for the agronomist hired for the island by the Grand Duchy also goes back to the second half of the 19th century.

The first archaeological research in Pianosa goes back to those years. The research was led by Don Gaetano Chierici, pioneer of the old stone age research in Emilia, and promoter and first director of the municipal Museums of Reggio Emilia. Invited to Pianosa in 1874 by his fellow citizen Ponticelli, Chierici, guided by the discoveries made a few years previously by R. Foresi, investigated prehistoric sites, but also undertook the first excavations and uncovering of the Villa Agrippa as well as the first description of the catacomb. In 1875, he published the results of the enquiries in *Gli antichi monumenti della Pianosa* ('The ancient monuments of Pianosa'), the first and only monograph on the antiquities of the island. The remains and artefacts found during the excavations are preserved at the Archaeological Municipal Museum of Reggio Emilia.

Entrance to the esplanade of the church (IGM, s.50, f.328-341)

Entrée à l'esplanade de l'église (IGM, s.50, f.328-341)



During the 20th century, the penitentiary colony was transformed into a tight security prison, with barracks and other security structures. This construction was wanted by General Dalla Chiesa and led to the building of a high wall in reinforced concrete through the remains of Villa Agrippa.

Once the prison was demolished, the island was included in the Natural Park of the Tuscan Archipelago on 31 October 1997. A protection area up to 1000 m off the coast had already been established in 1989 around the island. In 1995 an association was founded for the protection of Pianosa. The island is the object of a research program by the University Institutes and the CNR, and the Tuscan Surveyor of Archaeological Property has undertaken research and restoration there on several occasions.

However, without any maintenance the buildings of the 19th century are abandoned and certainly risk collapsing. Moreover, Pianosa is included on the lists of the society Patrimonio dello Stato S.p.A which means that as a result it is likely to be sold.

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 and verbal communications with the lawyer Lorenzo Calvani

Archipel Toscan – Ile de Pianosa

Pianosa, l'ancienne *Planasia*, une des sept îles de l'Archipel Toscan, située à 15 km au sud-ouest de l'île d'Elbe, se trouve dans la juridiction de la Commune de Campo nell'Elba. Suite à la liquidation des utilisations municipales disposée par Décret de la région Toscane 2887 du 30/5/2001 (tardivement saisi par l'Agence du Domaine de l'Etat de Livourne actuellement encore *sub iudice*), la Commune de Campo est devenue propriétaire de quatre immeubles (nouvelle Direction, hébergement pour étrangers, Réfectoire des anciens Agents, Caserne Bianco Quirico), ainsi que de grande partie des terrains agricoles.

Ses dimensions (10 km²) et la présence même du pénitencier l'ont préservée jusqu'à présent de la destruction immobilière qui a massacré les autres îles tyrrhéniennes.

Les témoignages archéologiques sur l'île couvrent un arc chronologique qui va du Paléolithique à nos jours.

La disponibilité d'eau sur place et quelques points d'accostage pour bateaux de petites dimensions favorisent les échanges avec la terre ferme ainsi qu'avec les autres îles tyrrhéniennes. Ce n'est pas un cas si Pianosa est citée dans les ouvrages des auteurs anciens, grecs et latins.

On y retrouve, plutôt nombreux, des vestiges de l'époque romaine, période où Pianosa, tout comme les autres îles de l'archipel, devient lieu de repos et de divertissement. Une villa luxueuse, dont on peut voir les restes sur la côte orientale, y accueillera l'exil de Agrippa Postumo, petit-fils d'Auguste, qui y fut assassiné en 14 après J.C.

Des structures en ciment le long de la ligne de côte au nord de punta Teglia et, en amont, des traces de cabanes associées à des vasques pour la production de vin se réfèrent, elles aussi, à la villa d'Agrippa (dénommée «Bagno»).

Des restes de murs et de bassins creusés dans le roc signalent dans la baie à nord-ouest l'existence d'une ancienne escale.

Entre le IV^{ème} et le VI^{ème} siècle Pianosa, tout comme les autres îles de l'Archipel, offre refuge au premier monachisme. C'est probablement à cette époque que derrière le promontoire de la Teglia, de l'union de plusieurs hypogées, se forme une grande catacombe, la deuxième pour ses dimensions dans l'Italie au nord de Rome, après celle de Chiusi. Altérée dès le XIX^{ème} siècle par l'installation d'une cave, la catacombe n'a été affranchie de son utilisation comme égout et décharge à laquelle la prison l'avait affectée que récemment par la Commission Pontificale pour l'Archéologie Sacrée.

Impliquée du X^{ème} au XIV^{ème} siècle dans les luttes entre les républiques maritimes de Pise et de Gênes pour le contrôle de la Haute Mer Tyrrhénienne, Pianosa passe en 1399 sous la domination des Appiani, seigneurs de Piombino.

La seigneurie des Appiani, qui n'a subi qu'une brève interruption en 1501 par Cesare Borgia, durera jusqu'en 1554, époque où, dans la guerre entre la France et Charles V, elle sera dépouillée par les Fracs-Turcs de l'amiral Dragut, qui réduira ses habitants en esclavage, en laissant l'île déserte.

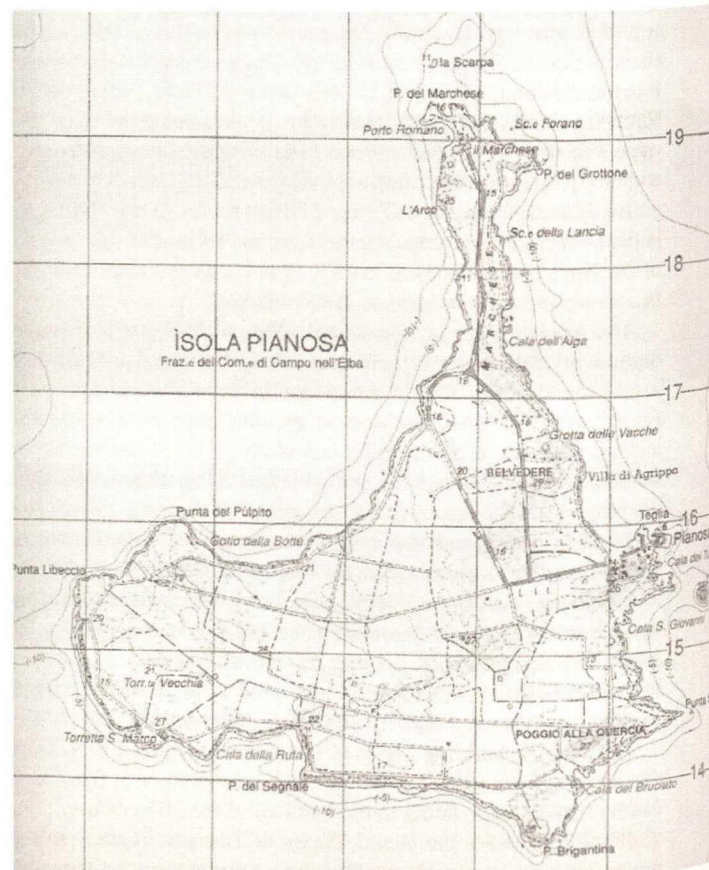
Fréquentée par la suite uniquement de façon saisonnière par des bergers et des agriculteurs de l'Elbe, Pianosa passera en propriété des princes Boncompagni Ludovisi.

L'île sera concédée, avec Montecristo, à Napoléon, confiné à l'Elbe, en 1814.

Le Congrès de Vienne l'attribuera au Grand - duché de Toscane, qui essaiera d'y rétablir l'agriculture et l'élevage, en la dotant d'un détachement de garde-côtes et en accueillant dans ses grottes

Map of the island of Pianosa

Plan de l'île de Pianosa





View of the island of Pianosa (photo: Mirella Marini Calvani)

Vue de l'île de Pianosa

les rares habitants et la garnison. A partir de ce moment, l'île dépendra du point de vue administratif de la municipalité de S. Piero in Campo (Elbe).

En 1846 commencera la construction de l'église consacrée à S. Gaudenzio – qui existe encore aujourd'hui sur l'esplanade devant l'entrée au pénitencier – qui sera complétée dans la première moitié du XX^{ème} siècle.

Enfin, en 1856, le Grand-duché de Toscane réalisera un projet de Napoléon, en y instituant, en voie expérimentale, une colonie de jeunes délinquants à corriger; par la suite, à partir de 1858, la

colonie pénitentiaire agricole est restée en fonction même après l'unité d'Italie.

Le premier directeur de la prison est Leopoldo Ponticelli de Reggio Emilia qui, en utilisant comme main d'oeuvre les forçats et comme matériel le tuf local, fait construire presque tous les bâtiments que l'on peut voir aujourd'hui sur l'île, les murs crénelés derrière le petit môle du port; le Fort Teglia à la place d'un fort des Appiani; l'Observatoire; la maison de convalescence pour détenus guéris de la phthisie de Punta del Marchese, avec un projet qui adhère de manière provincialement ingénue au langage néo-

gothique, à l'époque dominante. C'est à lui que nous devons le tronçon de rue qui relie les constructions du petit port du XIX^{ème} siècle au reste de l'île. La maison construite pour l'agronome engagé pour l'île par le Grand-duché remonte elle aussi à la deuxième moitié du XIX^{ème} siècle.

Les premières recherches archéologiques à Pianosa remontent à ces années-là. Les recherches sont menées par don Gaetano Chierici, pionnier de la recherche paléontologique en Emilie, promoteur et premier directeur du Cabinet delle Antichità Patrie, premier noyau des Musées Municipaux de Reggio Emilia. Invité à Pianosa en 1874 par son concitoyen Ponticelli, Chierici, guidé par les découvertes faites une dizaine d'années auparavant par R. Foresi, entreprend des recherches sur les sites préhistoriques, mais effectue aussi les premières fouilles et le premier relevé de la villa d'Agrippa; la première description de la catacombe. En 1875, il publie les résultats de ses explorations dans "*Gli antichi monumenti della Pianosa*" (« *Les anciens monuments de la Pianosa* »), première et unique monographie existant sur les antiquités de l'île. Les vestiges retrouvés lors de ses fouilles sont conservés au Musée Archéologique Municipal de Reggio Emilia.

Au cours du XX^{ème} siècle, la colonie pénitentiaire a été transformée en prison de toute sécurité, avec des casernes et autres structures de surveillance; la construction voulue par le général Dalla Chiesa à travers les vestiges de la villa d'Agrippa d'un haut mur en béton armé.

Une fois le pénitencier supprimé, l'île a été insérée le 31 octobre 1997 dans le Parc Naturel de l'Archipel Toscan.

Une ceinture de protection jusqu'à un mille de la côte avait déjà été instituée en 1989 autour de l'île.

- En 1995 une Association est née pour la sauvegarde de Pianosa.
- L'île est l'objet de programmes de recherche de la part d'Instituts universitaires et du C.N.R.
- La Surintendance aux Biens Archéologiques de la Toscane y a effectué des recherches et des restaurations à plusieurs reprises.
- Mais les édifices du XIX^{ème} siècle, privés de manutention, sont en état d'abandon, certains à risque d'effondrement.
- Pianosa est, de plus, insérée dans les listes de la société Patrimonio dello Stato S.p.A. et, par conséquent, susceptible d'être vendue.

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et les communications verbales avec l'avocat Lorenzo CALVANI

Protection of the Baia Underwater Park

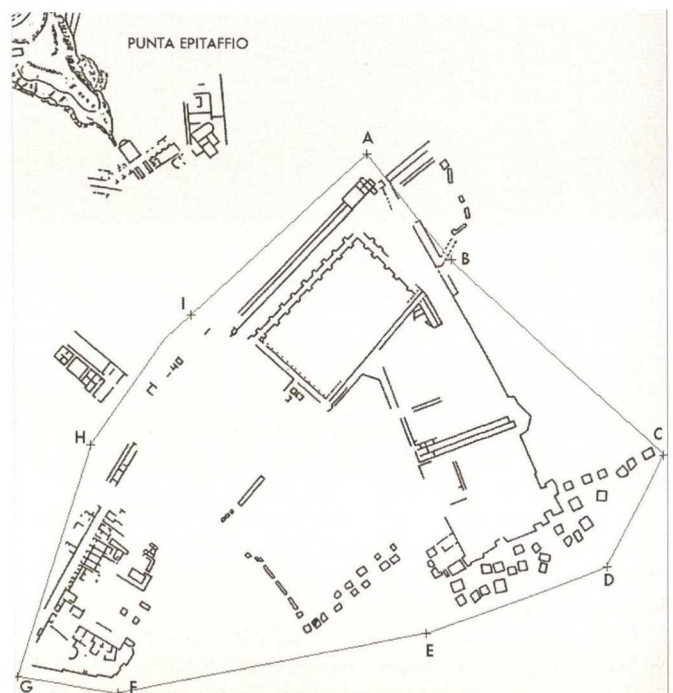
The uniqueness of the archaeological evidence of Baia, be it on land, be it underwater, has made this site famous worldwide. Also, thanks to the pioneering experience of underwater investigations by Nino Lambrogia in 1959¹¹ and to the first underwater stratigraphic excavation campaigns between 1981 and 1982,¹² Baia has come to hold a significant role in the history of underwater archaeology.¹³

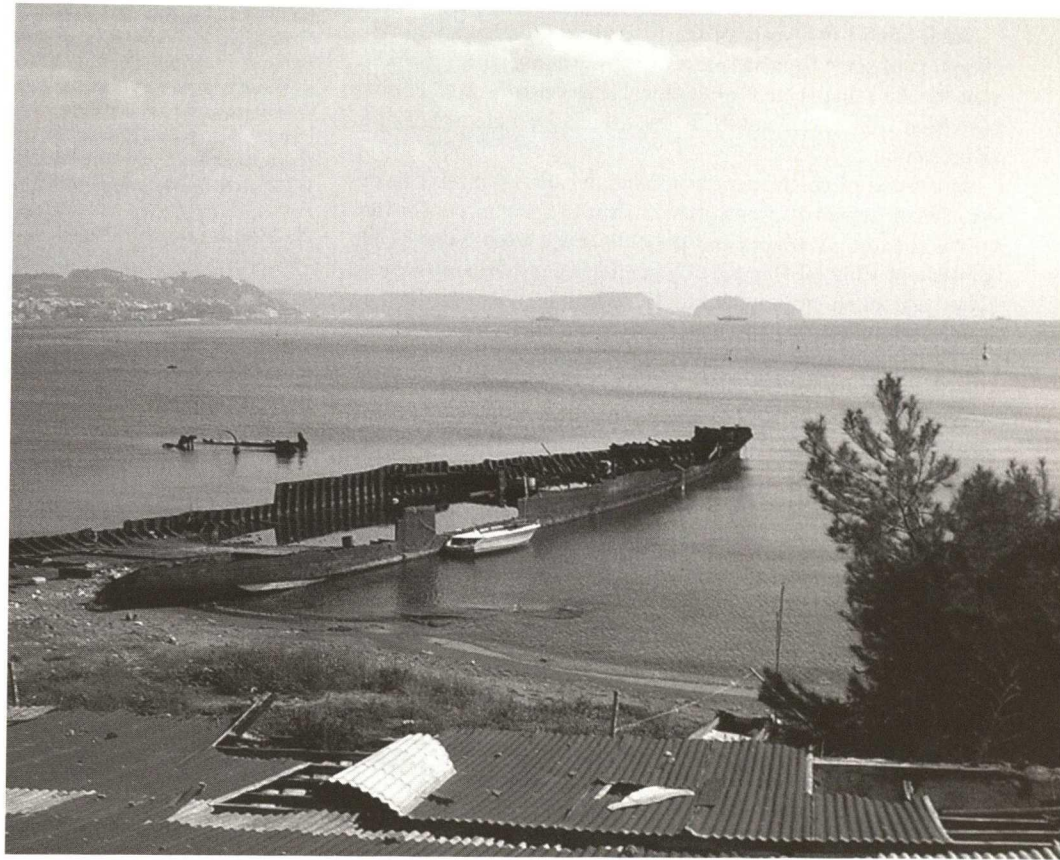
In 1998, the admirable and far-sighted work of the Naples Archaeological Management Agency¹⁴ favoured the conception and the creation of an archaeological underwater pathway inside an extensive expanse of water in front of Punta dell'Epitaffio,¹⁵ where sailing, anchorage and fishing has been prohibited. A temporary association of businesses has however been granted a concession for this area.

On the basis of Article 114¹⁶ of Law no. 388,¹⁷ the Ministry of Environment and Land Protection, under its own legislation,¹⁸ has established the Baia Underwater Park, with the following objectives (Article 3):

- *The environmental and archaeological protection of the area of interest;*
- *The improvement, also for social and occupational scopes, of the environmental, historical, archaeological and cultural resources in the area;*
- *The dissemination of knowledge of marine ecology, of biology of marine and coastal environments and of the underwater archaeological heritage in the area;*

Baia, Punta dell'Epitaffio, archaeological underwater pathway





Baia, hulks near the zone A of the Underwater Park

- *The implementation of educational programs for the improvement of common knowledge in the field of ecology, marine biology and archaeology;*
- *The realisation of educational and scientific research programs in the sectors of ecology, marine biology, environmental protection and archaeology with the scope of assuring a systematic knowledge of the area;*
- *The promotion of socio-economic development compatible with the historical, natural, environmental realities in the area, also privileging traditional local activities already present.*

The Park, extending itself from the southern pier of the port of Baia, that coincides with OMLIN pier and the head of the pier at the Lido of Augusto in the Municipality of Pozzuoli,¹⁹ is divided into three sections, each one having its own separate protection regime:

- Zone A includes the tract of the sea in front of Punta dell'Epitaffio.²⁰ It is completely protected. Swimming, all diving, sailing, access and mooring of all vessels, anchorage, mooring and all forms of fishing are prohibited. A lessening of these prohibitions is foreseen for the previous authorisation and supervision of the management body for vessels that carry scientific research programs and for visitors, on condition that it has a draught less than 2.50 m. This will also apply to guided underwater visits compatible with the underwater heritage protection requirements for underwater objects archaeological find. Exceptions are also made for recreational fishing with rods or fishing-lines, although exclusively for local residents.
- Zone B includes the tract of the sea between the pier of 'Lido di Augusto' and the land stretch of Lido Montenuovo.²¹ It is under general conservation; therefore free navigation, anchorage, mooring and all other types of fishing are prohibited. On the other hand, bathing and snorkelling are allowed. Also grant-

ed with the management agency's prior consent and control by the managing body are the navigation of recreational boats, fishing by local residents and the local fishing corporations based in the municipality.

- Zone C includes the remaining tract of sea inside the Park boundary. It is under partial protection and within its boundaries it is permitted to anchor, to moor in the areas designated by the management agency and compatible with the requirements of protection of deep water. With a prior permit and the management agency's monitoring the sailing of recreational crafts and fishing are allowed.

In the three sectors, it is nevertheless prohibited, based on article 4, comma 1, of D.M. of 7 August 2002, to carry out any kind of activity that could alter the current state of the places and that could impact on the protection of the environmental and archaeological heritage. In particular, the following is prohibited:

- The removal, illegal search and damage (also partial) to archaeological objects and of geological and mineral formations.
- Hunting, capturing, picking, damaging and all other activity that could endanger or perturb the vegetal species and animals, including the introduction of alien species.
- The alteration to any degree, direct or indirect, of the geophysical environment and of the biochemical characteristics of the water, the discharge of solid or liquid waste. In general, the introduction of discharges not in rule with the most restrictive prescriptions foreseen by the current norms which could alter, even only temporarily, the characteristics of the marine environment and the archaeological submerged objects.
- The introduction of arms, explosives, all means of destruction or capturing, as well as toxic or polluting substances.
- Activities that could do harm, hinder or upset the accomplishment of the educational and research programs in the area.

After almost two years of the formation of the park, with the exception of some isolated works of conservation, no real working plan for the improvement or sustainable development of tourism have been worked out and there are still many problems linked to its protection.

In the first place, the persistent issue remains of abusive mooring. This disregards the most basic norms of security put forward by the code of navigators and the obligations established by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, by continuing to position mooring buoys, and so on, over archaeological structures. Also, it could be correct to infer that organised crime has been infiltrated in this sector, reporting considerable gains despite the modest risks inherent to this type of activity.

Also, the lack of daily monitoring favours illegal fishers who use explosive materials to recover entire colonies of fish – dories, basses and maigres – that are particularly abundant within the archaeological structures in the Park. This happens without considering the risk of deterioration of the mosaics along the underwater trails, which are left deprived of their covering often during guided tours. An additional risk is the consecutive development of the marine vegetation among the individual small elements, and the danger of being damaged later on by violent sea storms.

In the light of what has come from this short analysis of problems connected to protecting the first Italian archaeological underwater park, it is desirable that some concrete operational strategies are decided on soon for the protection and the improvement. Likewise, above all, universities and/or public research centres should be involved in its management.

Actually, this author thinks that in whichever sector, including the no-profit one, the 'private person' tends inevitably to stick exclusively to his own interests, which do not always coincide with those of the public good. Also, the private individual tends to want the maximum practical benefit with the minimum investment possible.

Instead, the management by one or more associated universities together could offer major guarantees of transparency and integrity, in scientific, technical, operational and administrative terms. It would also ensure the involvement of the many who have been operating in the area over past years.

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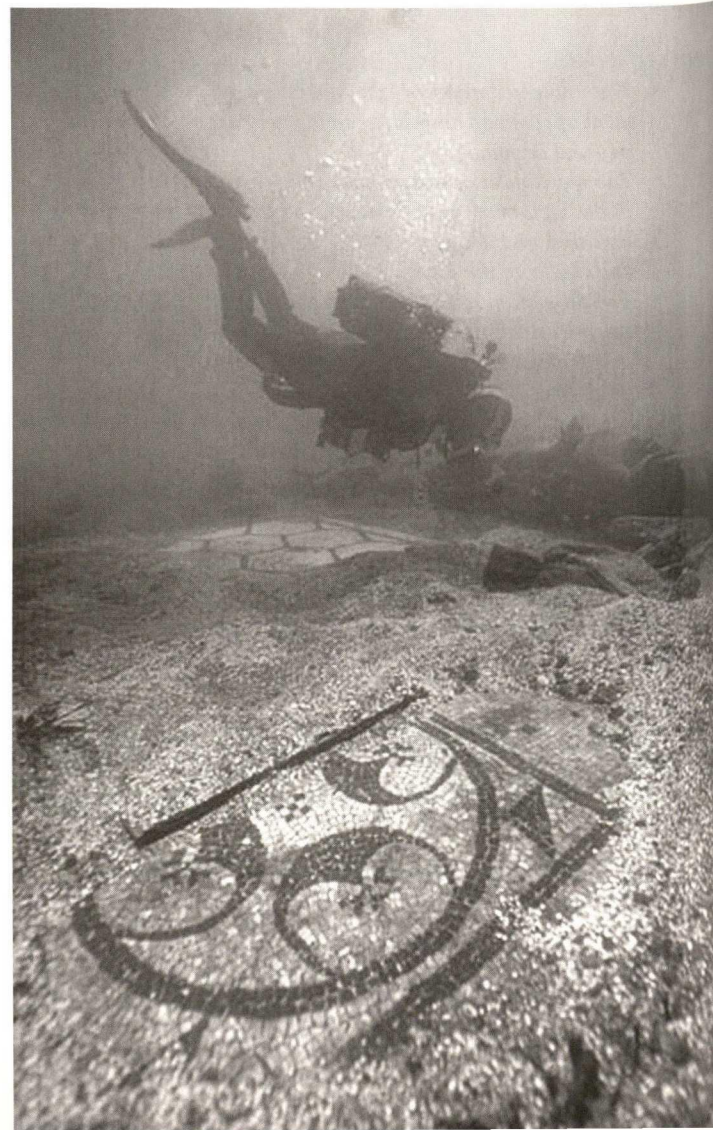
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- ¹ Laws 1089 on the Preservation of Artistic and Historic Heritage and 1497 on the Protection of Natural Beauties.
- ² An exceptional example of this trend during the 1960s is the urban and industrial sprawl of the Venice region, with the urban explosion of the city of Mestre and the Chemical Industrial Quarter of Porto-Marghera, which still represents one of the major threats for the conservation of the Lagoon and the historic city centre.
- ³ Law 28/2/1985 n° 47.
- ⁴ On the contrary an increase of illegal constructions was registered in the biennium 1983-1984, after the announcement of the measure, and the number of estimated cases was 230,000.
- ⁵ Law 724 of 23.12.1994.
- ⁶ Law 326 of 24.11.2003.
- ⁷ Association Bianchi Bandinelli, Comitato per la Bellezza, FAI, Greenpeace, INU, Italia Nostra, LAC, LAV, Legambiente, LIPU, Marevivo, VAS, WWF.

Baia Underwater Park, mosaics with their covering removed by unknown divers (photo: F. Rastrelli)



⁸ Unfortunately comprehensive data referring to the previous experiences are missing. However the case of Rome for the remissions of 1985 and 1994 can be mentioned when, gaining a total amount of 477 millions euros, an impressive 2992 million euros has been paid for infrastructure supply and related matters.

⁹ art. 27 law 326, 2003

¹⁰ Decreto Legislativo 22 gennaio 2004, n.41: Codice dei Beni Culturali e del Paesaggio (expanding the law 29 ottobre 1999, n. 490, the so-called Testo Unico dei Beni Culturali e Ambientali)

¹¹ See N. Lamboglia, *La prima campagna di rilevamento della città sommersa di Baia*, in 'Forma Maris Antiqui', 2, 'Rivista di Studi Liguri', 25, 3-4, 1959, pp. 302-309; AA.VV., *La seconda campagna di scavo e rilievo a Baia*, in 'Forma Maris Antiqui', 3, 'Rivista di Studi Liguri', 26, 1-4, 1960, pp. 361-364; N. Lamboglia, *Inizio dell'esplorazione di Baia sommersa (1959-1960)*, in AA.VV., *Atti del III Congresso internazionale di archaeologia sottomarina, Barcellona 1961*, Bordighera 1971, pp. 225-252; F. Pallarés, *Quelle prime ricerche*, in P.A. Gianfrotta, F. Maniscalco (eds.), *Forma Maris. Forum internazionale di archaeologia subacquea*, Pozzuoli, 22-24 settembre 1998, Napoli 2001, pp. 13-28.

¹² Cfr. B. Andreae, F. Zevi, *Gli scavi sottomarini di Baia*, in 'La Parola del Passato', 37, 1982, pp. 114-156; AA.VV., *Baia. Il ninfeo imperiale sommerso di Punta Epitaffio*, Napoli 1983.

¹³ On the recent searches in the field of underwater archaeology at Baia, see: G. Di Fraia, N. Lombardo, E. Scognamiglio, *Contributi alla topografia di Baia sommersa*, in 'Puteoli', 9-10, 1985-1986, pp. 211-299; F. Maniscalco, *Un ninfeo severiano dalle acque del porto di Baia*, in 'Ostraka', 4, 2, 1995, pp. 257-271; F. Maniscalco, *Ninfei ed edifici marittimi severiani del Palatium imperiale di Baia*, Napoli 1997; P.A. Gianfrotta, F. Maniscalco (a cura di), *Forma Maris. Forum internazionale di archaeologia subacquea*, Pozzuoli 22-24 settembre 1998, Napoli 2001; F. Maniscalco, N. Severino, *Recenti ipotesi sulla conformazione del Lacus Baianus*, in 'Ostraka', 11, 1, 2002, pp. 167-176; F. Maniscalco (ed.), *Tutela, conservazione e valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale subacqueo*, 'Mediterraneo. Tutela e valorizzazione dei beni culturali ed ambientali', vol. 4, Napoli 2004, *passim*.

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¹⁵ Situated between Punta dell'Epitaffio and the northern shore of the antique access canal *lacus Baianus*.

¹⁶ Especially comma 10, that recognises the importance to guarantee protection, knowledge and improvement (also for social and occupational purposes) of underwater parks and museums with relevant environmental, historical, archaeological and cultural importance. It foresees the conception of the submerged Park in the waters of Baia in the gulf of Pozzuoli.

¹⁷ Dated 23 December 2000 and published in the 'Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana', no. 302 of 29 December 2000.

¹⁸ Dated 7 August 2002 and published in the 'Gazzetta Ufficiale della Repubblica Italiana', no. 288 of 9 December 2002. The decree is agreed between the Ministers of Cultural Property and Activities, Infrastructure and Transport, Agricultural and Forestry Policies and with the agreement of Campania Region, the Ministry of Environment and Land Protection.

¹⁹ Art. 2, comma 1, of the Ministerial Decree of 7th August 2002 also defines the limiting coordinates for the Park :

| Point | Latitude | Longitude |
|-------|--------------|---------------|
| A 1 | 40° 49'.91 N | 014° 05'.94 E |
| B | 40° 49'.60 N | 014° 05'.94 E |
| I 1 | 40° 49'.07 N | 014° 04'.61 E |

²⁰ According to Art. 4, comma 2, of the Ministerial Decree of 7th August 2002, zone A also consists of the stretch of sea limited by the following co-ordinates:

| Point | Latitude | Longitude |
|-------|--------------|---------------|
| E 1 | 40° 49'.49 N | 014° 04'.70 E |
| F | 40° 49'.24 N | 014° 05'.05 E |
| G | 40° 49'.20 N | 014° 04'.60 E |
| H 1 | 40° 49'.40 N | 014° 04'.53 E |

²¹ In the cartography enclosed to the Ministerial Decree of 7 August 2002, zone B is limited by following co-ordinates :

| Point | Latitude | Longitude |
|-------|--------------|---------------|
| A 1 | 40° 49'.91 N | 014° 05'.94 E |
| B | 40° 49'.60 N | 014° 05'.94 E |
| C | 40° 49'.60 N | 014° 05'.62 E |
| D 1 | 40° 49'.91 N | 014° 05'.62 E |

Highway or Heritage?

The construction of the Autostrada A 31 Valdastico Sud via Vicenza to Rovigo threatens the surroundings of Palladio's famous villas in the Veneto. ICOMOS – unfortunately in vain – joined the protests of several environmentally concerned organisations, as Italia Nostra, WWF Italia and British Landmark Trust (owner of Palladio's Villa Saraceno). In the following, we are quoting in parts from the abundantly illustrated report of SAVE Europe's Heritage (e-mail: save@btinternet.com):

Italy's Assault on a World Heritage Site

The Villas of Palladio were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1996. This was a worthy and fitting tribute to the most influential architect of the Western World, agreed unanimously by the World Heritage Committee.

Now this remarkable landscape is under horrific assault. The threat comes first from relentless unchecked building in open country, initially around the towns, but rapidly spreading across fields well away from any village. The second threat comes with the proposal to build 54 km of motorway, the Valdastico Sud, south of Palladio's home town Vicenza.

This motorway will have a devastating effect for the following reasons. First there will be 7 exits in just 54 km, each one with a major roundabout raised above the flat plain as well as exit toll-gates. Second, the new road passes within hundreds of metres of dozens of fine and beautiful villas and farms, splitting up the fields of one farm after another. With it will come a perpetual spear of noise that will destroy the tranquillity of centuries.

Third, the motorway will bring industrialisation on a colossal scale. The Motorway Company has already called for 400 hectares (1000 acres) of development land to be provided along the new road to make it viable. Even before the road has been put out to tender, the march of the giant capannoni continues at an accelerating pace. These capannoni – "brutes" of concrete warehouses – are spreading down the main road south of Vicenza (ironically named the Riviera Berica) obscuring the views of villas and church campanili on neighbouring hills. Still worse they spring up randomly in open fields like dragons' teeth in the Argonaut legend, blighting whole stretches of hitherto unspoilt landscape.

The Italian Government stands condemned of utter neglect of what was (and in parts still is) one of the richest and most beautiful and historic lowland landscapes in western Europe. This is an area shaped by man over two millennia – a landscape moulded by engineers and far-sighted statesmen which is now to be destroyed by engineers and short-sighted politicians who are too blind or ignorant to appreciate the achievement of their predecessors. It is lamentable that the striking beauty and harmony of this country, whether seen from the valley floor or the surrounding hills has never been deemed worthy of official classification and protection.

The success of the Italian national monument service – the Soprintendenze – in preserving the centres of cities has been the admiration of the whole world. The regional Soprintendenze of both Verona and Venezia have objected to the proposal as well as the Soprintendenza Archeologica. So has the Minister of Heritage – the Ministero per i beni e le attività culturali – through its directorate for architecture and the landscape. All this has been swept aside.



Villa Forni-Cerato in Montebelluna near Treviso, a building by Andrea Palladio (1541-2). A piece of World Heritage in an increasing state of decay (leaking roof, no windows, the dilapidated interior with endangered wall paintings).



Rear of the Villa Forni-Cerato

The Villa Landscape

The villas by Andrea Palladio on the World Heritage List comprise just 16 out of more than 3000 historic villas in the Veneto. Most of these have been listed or classified by the Soprintendenza but a considerable number remain without protection. In the province of Vicenza alone there are 480 villas. The most famous is the Villa Rotonda immediately south of Vicenza; other Palladio villas are the Villa Pojana, Villa Pisani Placco (Montagnana), Villa Pisani Bonetti Bedeschi (Bagnolo di Lonigo) and the Villa Saraceno nursed back to life with exceptional sensitivity by the British Landmark Trust.

An Engineer's Landscape

More than 2000 years have contributed to assemble the elements of a unique European region, where technological as well as artistic features compliment each other in an enlightening manner that allows the traveller to form an impression of one of the continent's cultural heartlands. Bad enough, that the villas as artistic abbreviations of a way of life since the 16th century are threatened by the gross dimensions of a new motorway, its environmental damage and subsequent deterioration of the land that surrounds them - even more damage would ensue for the tightly knitted web of rivers, rivulets, canals and ditches that shows how innumerable generations made the land safe and fit for a thriving agriculture that still today serves the market.

The scandal of the Environment Commission

Italy like all EU countries is required by law to obtain an assessment of the environmental impact of major infrastructure projects. On 8 November, 2001, the Environment Commission rejected the proposals for the Valdastico Sud as too damaging. The Motorway Company then withdrew the proposals which the Government was thereby obliged to reject. Subsequently by decree of 19 September, 2002, 23 out of 36 members of the Commission were replaced. Surprise, surprise, the new Commission promptly approved the route of the road, with only minor modifications, on 18 December 2002. Few of the modifications significantly mitigated the damage of the road. Some actually increased them.

The Failure of the System

No less serious is the failure of the Regione Veneta to carry out the landscape plans which it is obliged to undertake as a preliminary to protection of landscapes of special beauty or interest, and indeed to act as a basis for properly planned development. The failure to carry out such plans has led to some of the worst clogged and polluted roads in Europe.

At the same time the Regione Veneto continues to promote the Veneta as an attractive tourist destination, ignoring the fact that recent intense industrialisation will increasingly damage its appeal. It also ignores the high priority many Italians now place on Nature and nature conservation, reflected in the growing activity of the Worldwide Fund for Nature and the *Fondazione per Ambiente Italiano*.

The Italian Government should intervene, as it is empowered to do, to carry out the necessary landscape plans itself. This is not a local matter - it concerns a World Heritage site, with a setting that is already badly damaged and likely to be extensively destroyed.

If the Italian Government is unwilling to meet its responsibilities a serious effort needs to be made to place the Villas of the Veneto on the list of World Heritage in Danger. While the villas are not under direct physical threat to their fabric, the all-essential frame, the landscape which they were built to enjoy and which is integral to their beauty and history, is under sustained assault. [If development is not checked, the beauty of the villas south of Vicenza will be severely compromised and in some cases fine historic buildings will be abandoned or left empty because the noise and intrusion of industry and roads makes them uninhabitable and renders them valueless.]

For years, Italy has set an inspiring example to the world in the protection of its great buildings and monuments. The Soprintendenze for monuments and archaeology are among the most professional, knowledgeable and respected bodies of their kind in Europe. Yet the Italian Government brushes aside their advice and legitimate concerns. Italy is thus failing the whole world by allowing crude devastation of one of the cradles of European architecture and landscape beauty.

What can be done

1. Urgent action must be taken to protect the tranquil fenland landscape south of Vicenza from further despoliation. New development must be contained within strictly limited areas near towns. These areas must be sited to ensure minimal damage to views across the landscape. New capannoni must be screened by trees, not dense conifers but lines of trees typical of the landscape. These will soften the impact of the capannoni without being an intrusion themselves as conifers would be. The height of new commercial and industrial buildings should not be higher than the average tree line.
2. New landscape regulations must prevent further random building in open country. 'Clandestine' buildings - *edifici abusivi* - erected without permission must be demolished. No building should be allowed along the motorway or near motorway exits to ensure the rural character of the landscape remains.
3. If it is to be built, the motorway should be screened by high earthen banks like those along canals and rivers. This has been done successfully along a section of the Valdastico Nord and is proposed for a section near the Villa Saraceno.
4. Tax concessions encouraging the construction of capannoni in sensitive landscape areas should be discontinued.
5. Instead tax incentives (*Tremonti bis*) should be provided to encourage the repair of historic buildings, particularly empty ones.
6. Urgent steps should be taken to ensure all historic villas, farms and other buildings of historic interest and their historic settings are protected by the Soprintendenza.
7. Protection of the setting of Veneto villas must be strengthened. This means protection only of immediately adjacent land, the 'vincolo di rispetto' but longer views to and from villas. For Palladio villas which are inscribed on the World Heritage List this is a matter of major importance.

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