CATHEDRALS OF THE SEA

Katedrale mora

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Summary

To fully understand the value of cultural heritage represented by the waterfront, it is important to analyze not only the complex relationships between ports and cities, but also the interaction between the activities and forms of the city and those rooted in the surrounding territory.

“Industrial archaeology between land and sea, for a European network of eco-museums” is the title of a three-year long research study, financed by the European community program Culture 2000, and of a traveling exhibition that describes each territory through the historical evolution of the interactions that took place along its coasts, to come up with an evaluation of the current consistency of its heritage of industrial archaeology and to trace the path of its development into an eco-museum. The exhibition was held in Turku in Finland, Hyerés in France, Thessaloniki in Greece, Terrassa in Catalonia, Sulina in Romania, Iglesias and Venice in Italy, covering the different typologies of coastlines, from cliff to archipelago, from bay to lagoon, from estuary to delta to gulf. The actors of this research study were various typologies of cultural institutions, from non-profit associations to museum networks, from local administrations to the national government, from universities to landmark commissions.

From port activities to military arsenals, from suburban to isolated industries, from mining proto-industries to landfills, the territory and the city have been transformed to adapt to technology and production. Today the relics of these processes wait to become tools for a new cultural repossess of the environment. Just as the local, national and international systems of connection that supported the industrial requirements of each site wait to be interpreted and reinvented. In fact each building must be understood as part of a complex system that tied the infrastructures to the places where raw materials, technology and equipment were produced, as well as to the places where the processed products were to be sent.

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III. MEĐUNARODNA KONFERENCIJA O INDUSTRIJSKOJ BAŠTINI

- Follonica ilva

- Iglesias buggerru
Napoli bagnoli

Piombino acciaierie
III. međunarodna konferencija o industrijskoj baštini

Ravenna piattaforme

Scauri sieci
Trieste arsenale
III. MEĐUNARODNA KONFERENCIJA O INDUSTRIJSKOJ BAŠTINI

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particularly significant buildings unknown to the larger public, because or their state of isolation or decay or because they are located in contexts that continue to be productive. This research study has led to a publication (*Cattedrali dell’archeologia industriale costiera*, Editgraf Venice 2006) and a journey along the entire coast of Italy to diffuse and further develop its findings. The Provincia di Venezia promoted the book and the cruise will be promoted in this fall, by several public, and private Italian administrations. Miljenko Smokvina wrote in the book a contribute about the former torpedo plant in Rijeka, that provide an international framework on the issue, and that we all hope might become soon the beginning of a project about the European Cathedrals of the Sea.

The anthropical structure of the Italian coastal landscape has ancient roots, first Roman then late Medieval, yet underwent its most profound transformations in more recent times, with the processes of industrialization and urban growth. The heritage of industrial archaeology is a tool to understand the evolution of the process of territorial sedimentation over time. Where horographic conditions allowed, a widespread urbanization has saturated the landscape of the coast, enveloping cities and burghs, military as well as industrial infrastructures. A sprawl that has often swallowed up the historical heritage destroying its contextual value, whereas the industrial archaeology heritage has had a more differentiated fate: at times it has been transformed to house new activities or on the contrary wiped away. Other times it lies in self-referential isolation either because it is located within complexes that remain active, or
because the contradictions between renovation and deterioration have produced nothing more than a devastating state of abandon.

The heritage of urban coastal industrial archaeology has suffered such pressure from the real estate market as to bring about its immediate transformation, whereas the isolated heritage often remains abandoned. On the one hand the quality of the requalification depends on how clear the program presented by the business community and the local administrations is, on the other it depends on the capability of the designer to reinvent spaces that respect the original spatial vocations and technologies, without sacrificing innovation and functionality for new uses, like industrial architecture did in its day. The delicate balance that must be built relies on the full expression of the difference in materials and uses. This involves overwriting a palimpsest, without totally erasing the earlier script but on the contrary highlighting the diachronic sequence. Especially in the case of the coastal heritage, the quality of the project lies in the richness of experiences that allow the multiplicity of relationships between land and sea to be understood.

The border between land and sea is rather complex and designing places around it may be summarized in the way one looks at it. Renzo Piano, in his introduction to the recent exhibition dedicated to Giancarlo De Carlo, summarizes their relationship with the waterfront in Genoa in the words “Giancarlo sees it from land, I see it from the sea”. De Carlo and Piano shared professional experience and Genoese origins. De Carlo is a lamented maître à penser, who dedicated a large part of his life to the restoration of the architectural heritage that came down to us through history. In this sense he seems to be particularly inspired in the competition project for Ponte Parodi in Genoa, which is a project to renovate the industrial heritage on the placid waters of the Ancient Port. Whereas all the other projects destroy the silos, De Carlo does not leave them as they are, but reinterprets them. The project incorporates the chimneys of the silos like the pipes of an organ, each characterized by spaces that differ in function and in height. The winning project in the competition was by Ben Van Berkel, who erased any reference to the existing industrial heritage. It is a project that is totally internal to the process of the architect who conceived it, who is very talented and thus capable of building a complex of spaces with strong ties to the city and to the serene waters of the Ancient Port. A little further away Renzo Piano did in fact demonstrate the capacity and possibility of working on the water, of building on top of the water. The Bigo is an elevator suspended over the Ancient Port that offers visitors a magnificent view of the entire waterfront, both new and ancient at the same time. From a modern structure of pilings and steel cables one can climb up and view the city, like from the top of the highest mast on a ship anchored in the ancient port. Of course Renzo Piano does not provide any sort of reinterpretation of industrial archaeology this way, but suggests a sort of archaeology of the present.
In recent years there has been widespread discussion over the concept of “between land and sea”, and it has been useful to characterize the theme of the three-year research study (2003-2006) on the industrial heritage and on a European network of coastal eco-museums (Cultura 2000), but it is important to remember that the definition is a complex and ambiguous one: “between land and sea” in fact implies a series of places, not a single line, the border. This waterfront line is itself a bundle of lines and the two components, land and sea, are not two abstract entities but two complex places in and of themselves. That is to say we can be above the land, below land, on land, just as we can be at water level, above or below it. We must also think of the sea as a relationship between land and land, as Braudel suggests, at times the sea constitutes a relationship, and this is the case of the Mediterranean which is no longer a border, but a possible union between strips of land, a network of exchanges. The inner waters are waters that bind and connect.

Thus we look over the waters to immerse ourselves in them as in the case of the trabocchi, the small wooden shelters built by fishermen on the water, bridges onto a plentiful sea, or off-shore platforms, veritable unrivaled cathedrals of the sea, which are waiting to be readapted for use after having been experimented in the upper Adriatic Sea. Or shall we leap over the ancient walls of the major Italian arsenals, these great urban convents which, should Navy activity within them be decreased or relocated, could give their contribution by becoming the tools for a new merger between the needs for culture, production and defense. Or let us enter the yards of the many abandoned and crumbling factories that can also become the core elements for a new infrastructure in valuable and fragile territories.

It is worth taking a moment to consider the various conditions in the relationship between former and potential uses and the actors involved. The Mediterranean coast is full of places that, like in a kaleidoscope, represent the extraordinarily intricate relationship between the territory, man and production and construction technologies. These valuable and fragile landscapes, which at present are often abandoned and hidden from public view, are represented here in a fascinating journey along the fragile and precious border between earth and water, between the works of nature and of man.

An emblematic example of this relationship has been chosen for each Italian region, one that was little known to the public, in a fragile balance between adaptive reuse and implosion. An exception was made for the major Italian arsenals that are still dedicated to industrial or military use, to tell about these remarkable enclosures and the possibility of using them selectively for cultural purposes.

Another exception are two examples of excellent practices in the adaptive reuse of the industrial heritage along the coast, the Città della Scienza at Bagnoli and
the Manifattura delle Anguille at Comacchio. Both cases represent examples of rather interesting institutional processes, where the Parco del Delta del Po, on the one hand, and the Fondazione Idis, on the other, have gradually built extraordinary operational contents for their proposals for reuse. Some examples lie on the waterfront adjacent to the historic city centers, such as the arsenals, but also like Trieste and Comacchio, others were in a suburban location but have now been swallowed up by urban sprawl, as in the case of Follonica, Piombino, Portorecanati and Vibo Valentia. Other cases under consideration were isolated along the coastline and tell the tale of the many possible interactions between land sea and industrial architecture: from the object thrown into the sea, such as the off-shore Platforms or the ‘Trabocchi’, to the towns tucked into the cliffs such as Buggerru, Furore and the Argentiera. And finally, a few cases stand in splendid solitude on the beach, such as the Pisciotto or the former-Fim buildings, or even dominate the sea such as the former Augusta Hangar. Most of them are monuments in decay but this is no reason to allow the fascination of ruins to take the upper hand, on the contrary we would prefer to spark and to pursue a process of conscious restoration. Well aware that the problems that have prevented and bestrewn the path towards restoration may not be overcome by eluding each factor but must be integrated into a complex process. These cathedrals are often in ruins today because it has not been possible to come up with a simple single-function solution for them. The size of these “pachyderms” has at times precluded their designation for exclusively productive, cultural or residential use. The future of these buildings depends on how the project can hold together the issues of morphological respect, environmental clean-up, urban asset value and integration with the context. The project must demonstrate the capacity to regenerate the heritage and to build its future, a complex and interdisciplinary project which must build an intricate relationship, as difficult as it is necessary, between restoration and innovation, profit and culture, public and private.

Sažetak

Da bi se potpuno razumjela vrijednost kulturne baštine koju predstavlja obalni pojas, važno je analizirati ne samo složene veze između luka i gradova, nego i interakciju između aktivnosti i ponašanja pojedinoga grada i aktivnosti te ponašanja ukorijenjenih u područje koje taj grad okružuje.

“Industrijska arheologija između kopna i mora, za europsku mrežu eko-muzeja” naziv je trogodišnje istraživačke studije koju je financirao europski društveni program Kultura 2000., kao i naziv putujuće izložbe koja opisuje svako područje tijekom povijesnog razvoja interakcija koje su se događale duž njegovih obala, a sve da bi se došlo do procjene trenutačne postojanosti njegove baštine industrijske arheologije i da bi se pratio put njegova razvoja do eko-muzeja. Izložba je bila postavljena u Turku u Finskoj, Hyerésu u Francuskoj, Thessaloniku u Grčkoj, Terrassi u Kataloniji, Sulini u
Rumunjskoj, Iglesiasu i u Veneciji u Italiji, obradivši razne tipologije obala, od stjeno-vitih do arhipelaga, od zaljeva do laguna, od ušća rijeke do delta i zaljeva. Studiju su provodile razne kulturne ustanove, od neprofitabilnih društava do muzejskih mreža, od lokalnih vlasti do državne vlade, od fakulteta do povjerenstava za spomenike. Od lučkih aktivnosti do vojnih oružnica, od prigradskih do izoliranih industrija, od prvih rudarskih industrija do nasipanja smeća, i grad i cijelo područje bili su izmi-jenjeni da bi se prilagodili tehnologiji i proizvodnji. Današnjost ih procesa čekaju da bi postali sredstva za ponovno stjecanje kulturnog vlasništva nad okolišem. Baš kao što i lokalni, nacionalni i internacionalni sustavi spajanja, koji su podupirali industrijske zahtjeve, svake od tih lokacija čekaju da budu prikazane i otkrivene. Svaka zgrada, dapače, mora biti shvaćena kao dio složenog sustava koji je povezivao infrastrukture s mjestima gdje su se proizvodili sirovi materijali, tehnologija i oprema, kao i s mjestima gdje su se obradeni proizvodi trebali slati.

U tom su smislu razmišljanja o europskoj mreži eko-muzeja zamijenjena istraži-vačkom studijom o talijanskoj nacionalnoj baštini koju je promovirala Pokrajinska vlada Venecije i to posebno zbog istraživanja iznimno važnih zgrada nepoznatih široj javnosti zbog njihove izoliranosti ili propadanja ili zbog toga što se nalaze u prostorima gdje se i dalje proizvodi. Ova je studija dovela do publikacije (Cattedrali dell’archeologia industriale costiera, Editgraf, Venecija 2006.) i putovanja duž cijele obale Italije da bi se proširila i dalje razvijala njezina saznanja. Pokrajina Venecija promovirala je knjigu, a putovanje će promovirati nekoliko javnih i privatnih talijanskih uprava ove jeseni. Miljenko Smokvina u svojoj je knjizi napisao posvetu nekadašnjoj Tvornici torpeda u Rijeci, koja daje internacionalni okvir toj temi i za koju se svi nadamo da bi uskoro mogla naznačiti početak projekta o “Europskim katedralama mora”. 

F. Calzolaio, Cathedrals of the Sea