The “survey of memory”. Cultural heritage in cemeteries: development of a catalogue protocol from the “representation” of multidisciplinary researches

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1. Heritage 3.0: from “build” to “cultural” one

This paper summarizes the goals of a broader research project focused on management and conservation of cemeteries. These are special examples of cultural heritage, because of their double feature of “monument” and “memorial”. Speaking about the goals doesn’t means merely to tell the results in their bare evidence. It means match the outcomes of an applied research to general problems, in order to verify the methodology in its scientific approach, and the possibility to solve other problems related to the conservation of built heritage. Indeed the ‘case study’ emphasis how the same survey methodology of architecture may apply to a wider range of assets and it offers helpful tools in the preservation of the whole cultural heritage.

The recent past has showed an increasing attention to the building heritage. Meanwhile we do remark the widening of what is worth to conserve. In the first half of XXth century the focus was on monumental Architecture and Fine Arts that in Italy was a lot but not all. In the second half of the century, the architect’s attention moved from the “building” to the “environment”. On the one hand it was welcoming the concept that a monument is deeply related to its (urban) landscape, on the other hand the significance of urban fabric. Following Muratori’s teaching, the attention focused on urban architecture, even if none were monumental.

“Downtown” recalls in whole Europe a background of historical building, by the old ages, but still in use and in value. People have something more than efficiency or comfort of the contemporary spaces. Therefore urban and environment preservation are good business because of their great influence on tourism. Arts and crafts have increased their meaningfulness as witness elements of the past. Many cities and landscapes have this meaning, so the planning imposes to be careful to these signs. Eventually, the preservation doesn’t concern only the monuments and original works of art, but also in the humanities expressed by common use objects. The last step was the acknowledgement of the social significance of wider cultural heritage, which concerned immaterial values as well. Further preservation means the maintenance of both material and immaterial levels. This awareness stresses the significance of any effort in order to keep a relation between the artefacts and their social meaning. Conservation depends not only on the masterpieces’ repair; so nowadays we are aware that the building restoration is only one of the conservation tools. This means that is needed a management approach to the whole cultural heritage. Consequently it requires a deep knowledge of assets and relations.

The architectural survey was the first instruments of preservation. The resto-
rers have applied it to the preliminary knowledge of built heritage, developing tools and methods of great efficiency and focusing their attention on much more than measurement. Practitioners adopted the measurement not as a goal but as a tool, which is just the global comprehension of the relations linking to the monument and its references. Architects conveyed that it is easier represent formal features expressed by measure, while is more difficult to represent the abstractive property in technical drawings.

From beginning the cataloguing of architecture and art works engaged ‘the problem’, pursuing the collection of different information in a data-base. The cataloguing is a kind of survey that do not concerns only measurement. It is very helpful in preservation management even if it doesn’t allow directly any restoration. Eventually, digital technology offers new media to survey the restitution, able to gather and link different kind of files. The data base’s informatics structure lets to relate buildings (or artefacts) to humanities, allowing the representation of all random relation of immaterial heritage, while tags and key words help survey data management.

The research approach developed in Parma has demonstrated the strong ties between management and conservation, together with the effectiveness of a “free” multidisciplinary approach to architecture preservation. We applied to the planning of the cemetery a previous experience about building management in real estate and after several research projects, the survey data-base has allowed the implementation of the artistic and architectural cataloguing as a pilot protocol for cemetery.

2. A case study. The cataloguing of the La Villetta Cemetery in Parma

First of all, cemeteries are good business because of the continuous burial activity. Secondly, they represent a cultural Heritage of great significance. Therefore industrial activities should integrate with the urban and building management.

Because of the lack of standardized instruments able to helping the preservation of its monumental core, the Parma City Council, in 2005 has started a new governance policy to promoted the cemetery. The Business Department sought at local university the preliminary studies for the planning of the whole cemeteries system. This was an outstanding law requirement, focusing the attention on relations between the business and the preservation needs. The whole job - 7 different research projects - dealt in the integration of different surveys, the implementation of survey data in a database, and the dissemination of related knowledge in a digital archive. The first task was a broad survey of settlement architecture, in order to identify the historical building and the monumental area. Then, “Landscape and Architecture”, “Mathematics”, “Chemistry”, “Biology”, “Earth Sciences” and “History”. The last project involved the local office of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, called the ‘Soprintendenza’ of Architecture and Historic Monuments, regarding the official Cataloguing. The sponsor granted a scholarship to several PhD students, with different
scientific background, who have applied their personal research to different topics related to the main issue. The interdisciplinary survey, focused - time after time - on different topics, such as the functional building, the urban settlement, the architectural monument, the artistic significance or the evidence of customs in the memorials, restoration of wall structures, decoration and “furniture”. The survey testifies that architecture is the main container of all the artistic and historical values collected in the cemetery. The survey layout was the GIS data base, which has grown changing its features step by step. Data representation has different “format”, because of different features of information, which required the GIS application surveying the restitution, the hierarchical layout of the architecture. It was the model of the informatics design of nearly 2000 record database. At the beginning, the digital tool allowed the development of planning and management instruments. It has suggested the application of the ICT for the dissemination of knowledge and to sensitize people on the conservation of the artistic and historic values. A further project developed a customer interface, conceived as digital guidebook. This online achieved a broad test of this complex asset, gathering public and private properties, where the tangible things recall intangibles, with random link to the city, the arts, the history, the social habits and arts of community. The final result was the architectural and artistic cataloguing of the cultural heritage collected in the historical cemetery. The implementation of the Catalogue was then the “natural” consequence of the architectural “survey”. In fact, the word means more than the simple measurement of architecture and it is quite the discovery of mazy relations among built objects and memory heritage. The main difficult has been the representation of the complexity, which followed the hierarchical organization of architecture, because it doesn’t express only formal features but recalls arts and cultural heritage.

3. The Research Project
The project “Development of the Information System of the Cemetery”, has pursued the gathering of previous studies, enabled to integrate management of all available cognitive components of cemetery assets. One of the primary objectives pursued in the development of the project was to make the data accessible to a wide range of users - public and private - by consulting in the network environment. The innovative aspects of this system have affected not only the way of thinking about cataloguing, but also the communication of knowledge for all those working in the field of cultural heritage. The main problem was the records’ compatibility regarding different purposes and some common fields. The Information System of Cemetery was created starting from the alignment of existing information about the Parma’s cemeteries system (SICM), with a database designed by the software Artview. Then, it has been integrated with studies conducted by the Faculty of Chemistry, performed with the filing by the local office of the ‘Soprintendenza’ for the
historical, artistic and ethno-anthropological heritage.

Artview is a system of cataloguing and managing archives of Cultural Heritage based on ministerial standards issued by the Central Institute for Cataloguing and Documentation (ICCD)\(^3\). The conformity with the national cataloguing makes it perfectly compatible with the ministerial catalogue systems (eg SIGeC). It allows the management of the catalogue’s records, with all the pictures and documents that may be associated. So, the users are piloted in the search, allowing a prompt consultation and visualization of data and documents. This software has a modular structure which offers all the functionality needed to manage a cataloguing system. The flexibility of the software let to perform both on the acquisition phase and on the search of data and query. The system allows to operate with the ICCD tabs.

The SICM project is focused on the alignment of the previous system and the integration of data required by the compilation of the A and OA cards of historical artefacts of the cemetery. The total includes 588 records, of which 159 of full and 429 of pre-cataloguing. In the project were also gathering some cards about the authors with bibliographical information’s about the artists who worked in this area and all the quotes useful for the knowledge of the cultural heritage of the cemetery. Each tab is divided into fields, which are separated into paragraphs including information about related items.

The models are structured in order to obtain for each type of card information, such as property, identification, preservation, administrative managements, cultural references, technical data, chronology, and documentary information. Consequently, an heritage building can be composed of different objects and the complexity of the cultural heritage is recognized by the same ICCD\(^4\), in cataloguing standards.

A 3 levels hierarchy includes activities connected with relative records. It organizes the assets that constitute the historical, public and personal estates:

- complex good
- component building
- individual building

The cataloguing methodology requires the definition of complex objects, the clarification of the relationship, which links its components. Therefore, an “altarpiece”, must be recorded before a whole, as a “unique” object (record “mother”) and then into its parts (record “daughters”).

The first filing was the prime component of types, then it has been defined and organized hierarchically on three levels which comprising:

- cemetery complex;
- sectors (such architectures gallery, porch, area, etc.);
- units (such as burials arch framework, chapel, tomb, kiosk, etc.)

The ICCD filing stresses the historic-artistic interest of the components with the definition of relations between the different objects in the cemetery. Additional difficulties have emerged in the geo-referencing of the architectures, and in the spatial layout of the structural elements described in the architectural and decorative fields.

In the paper records, the material and formal components of the architectural - floors, ceilings, walls and coatings - and decorative elements, were descri-
bed in full text form, while in the digital ones, the information fill closed fields, with an open short vocabulary. In consequence of the number of rooms in any architecture, it was evident that the encoding facilitates the localization of the elements.

The structure of Artview's records has allowed the input of all relevant information describing its features of the cemetery. It has been built up over the last two centuries succeeding an expansion and consolidation of buildings on the original porch.

The structure presented an ordered layout and gathers the data depending on their nature:
- identification and dimensional survey data
- History (the building and transformation, but also the events' reference)
- typology (the variety of burial architecture types: porches, galleries, shrines, tombs)
- architecture (the formal variety of architectures from a compositional point of view)
- decoration and ornaments (the formal variety, semiotic and iconographic elements of the grave furniture).

In the alignment of SICM with the information system realized in Artview, therefore in the structural reorganization of the first system, the vertical hierarchy has highlighted a further component in the organization: the historical and artistic significance of memorials as collective asset.

The cemetery complex expresses an essential component of the global knowledge of the cultural heritage, regarding the evocative aspects of the “building” and their relation to “history” and “people”. This required the integration of the ICCD fields with further specifications. The software makes possible to build and manage the stored data through the creation of new records within the framework of national compile by the extension of new cards standard tracks - with the information included in the SICM - related to the architectural style and the illustrious deceased (personal details, qualifications, biographical notes). The field relating to a famous deceased appears very significant as it links to the “history”.

This allows the link among the “architecture” that is the container of memory, the “people” improving the significance and “arts” that recall it. Artefacts recall their authors and display the characters of the city, also including the changing of its socio-cultural context in the last two centuries.

The navigation in the archive is quicker and easier through sequential access or by articulated queries. It is possible to search data of the cross-tabs. The horizontal connection allows relations within the cognitive data and environmental. It stresses the logical relationships between historical and spatial elements belonging at the same geographical area, providing a better contextualization in time and space of the goods.

4. The Research Heritage
The group approached to Gis and informatics systems more than 10 years ago, as a useful tool in the restitution of survey data of significant building estate - such as those of the University of Parma - to improve the manage-
ment of assets. We can refer to this experience as a management survey, in which the measurement data care building maintenance rather than their architectural quality.

The enforcement to building of cultural heritage and the sector activity, such as the cemeteries, have improved both the business management and the knowledge development, which is very important in the conservation of monuments.

Furthermore, it has demonstrated that industrial activity may improve the maintenance of historical architecture and its reference to immaterial heritage. Last but not least it offers a valid tool in cultural heritage dissemination, because of its implementation of open on-line repository about studies and documentation of artistic works.

This idea steered the winning research project PRIN 2010/11 that focused on architectural perspective and relations between built room and perceived space. Actually the perspective is a feature of Europe’s visual and scientific culture, not only a painters’ device.

The project foresees to apply methods within Horizon 2020 goals, which can help a multidisciplinary and multi-functional research, understood as scientific, historic and artistic application. Moreover the IT competences, with possible results in the ICT sector for the preservation of the cultural Heritages and their enhancement within the educational sector in development of the historical knowledge.

The research’s goal is the creation of an online data base linked to the Europeana. The informatics team is working on the data migration with Carare (http://www.carare.eu) experimenting the compatibility of new record designed to describe the architectural perspective, which joins elements of fine arts and architectures, as the cemetery does. This record is just the heritage of what was implemented with the last project.

Notes

1 The architecture is constituted by a considerable number of structural elements which must be described, such as decorative elements (frames, portals, coatings,...), that it still need to be catalogued. The data entry is supplemented by the considerable amount of file attachments with different digital format (as surveys, floor plans, bills, building licenses with the attached drawings...).

2 Artview has been chosen by the Lombardy Region as a software based on the realization of instruments to integrate and management data relating to the Cultural Heritage, from the activities of cataloguing for SIRBeC (Regional Information System for Cultural Heritage).

3 The Central Institute for Cataloguing and Documentation (ICCD) is one of four Central Institutes of the Ministry of cultural Heritage in Italy. This is the institutional point of reference, where functions, as the design and methodologically development, related to the cataloguing of the Italian historical and artistic heritage, are delivered. It deals with the definition of cataloguing standards and the preparation of uniform rules, recognizable by various central or peripheral organs, dealing with issues related to artistic and historical heritage. To provide for problems related to the conservation and dissemination of various paper ballots, produced on time, in the nineties the ICCD returned to the cataloguing metho-
dology, and the information technology. As a result of this innovation, paper ballots - accompanied by photographic documentation and/or graphics- are varied even if they are following the rules to ensure the standardization of paragraphs, and a “new” data structuring information contained in them.

In 2002 the ICCD presented the Information System of the General Catalogue (SIGEC), which is a system that allow to interrelate the various cataloguing data products in the ministerial and/or from different institutions, in order to have a knowledge of an “extensive and comprehensive review of the territory.” The SIGEC project was born to requirement to retrieve and cataloguing, the information concerning the rich historical and artistic national heritage.

Its purpose is the creation of a data base related to “realize and manage unified functions and processes, carried out by different levels of the operating structure responsible for the cataloguing in the institutional context.”


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