

GIANPIERO PERRI

MR. PERRI: Thank you. My task today is to present to you a conceptual approach of the cultural vision and the methodology used to commemorate the memory of the Battle of Monte Cassino. Dr. Agostino, later on after Ms. Arne Flaten will speak, we'll also give you a detailed description of the exhibit.

The cultural memory is collective culture of remembrance which is linked to a social reference framework. There can't be any memory outside of these frameworks what (inaudible) was calling the picture frame of memory and which represents also a set of transmitted values a chain of ideas and of judgment which are renewed.

This memory on the other hand is fuelled by places by objects around which we can organize the recollection and the historical memory both in its tangible and physical dimension, and both in its intangible dimension, the culture of remembrance leads us to use representations which are more in line with modern times, with different forms of communications which are available today, giving rise to experimentation.

In 2004, to commemorate and celebrate 60 years from the Battle of Montecassino, we formed a committee to organize the celebrations and involving 36 different municipalities and villages, which were devastated by the tragic events of the war in 1943 and 1944. And for this reason these villages are called villages of the martyrology.

In this light, side by side with the celebration activities, we also launched a global communication project of the history and of the values of the territory itself. And this project was financed by the minister of culture under the sponsoring of the ministry of defense.

This design is based on a cultural attraction a polimedial arrangement, which is being called Historiale. This is a neologism, which is taken by the Latin expression Historia, which takes us back to the meaning of a place where a story is stalled. And from itinerary, which connects together all the different villages, which were a part of these dramatic events. And they are parts all of this is included in what we call in Italian gran percorso della memoria or a memory park. From this Historiale, this is the perfect starting point, an interpretation center.

This gran percorso includes according to the logics of the itinerary all those places, which were linked to the war; trenches, battlefields, military cemeteries monuments and so forth; with what still remains today, linked to the history, and art, and culture, which preceded the war.

And this itinerary marks the spatial relationship between these references and the peculiarities and attractions of the area. In other words the geographic

location of this area, which acquired, during the war, a very important geo-strategic relevance, remains today, very important from the landscaping point of view. And to this physical dimension, corresponds a virtual dimension, which can be experienced online.

The conceptual model assumes or adopts, what we call the network scheme, where we have a series of dots connected together and they are called nodes and they refer to physical places, which are indicated by signs and are characterized by artistic installations. They are called folio de memoria, memory sheets. And they are placed in the historical centers of the different villages but they also provide and are also information dispensers, thanks to the Bluetooth technology through which any visitor, by consulting a specific map may build his own personal itinerary. It's a global communication project, which provides a (inaudible) access to navigate inside the territory.

Therefore our mission was to realize an organic design of historical memory and at the same time to enhance and promote the territory and we had to satisfy four main needs. First, to pay tribute and then a public acknowledgement of the sacrifices made by local people, to pay tribute to the many fallen of different nationalities, to transmit and to pass on the memory of those events by renewing the threads of memory between a big history, a large past which was interrupted by the war and the present.

And the fourth point, to bring to the national attention, a territory, which is not only a symbol of the tragic events of the war, but also of the ability of the local population to revive the area, to revive the community, to enhance its landscaping resources, historical and cultural resources in a general tourist and cultural-tourism design.

Obviously, a memorial is a place of memory, it is not a destination like others. The deep wounds left by the Second World War are healing only now. And this maybe the reason why we have been reflected and we've waited 60 years before thinking about creating a memorial. A project on the memory, in fact, shares in the elaboration of a process of mourning not only to remember and to acknowledge but also to accept and to close. From this point of view the historical memory transforms itself in a common good and in a collective heritage, which gives a sense of belonging.

The cultural sentiment and sense of the community, according to the definition given by Jan Asmann (phonetic) becomes the pivot for a strategy of local development. It's a bottom-up approach, where all the local peoples participate, are involved. They have collaborated. They have cooperated actively to the project by providing testimonials, objects, by contributing to the arrangement, and sharing expectations and hopes. And this is a starting point of an ideal tour of all this memory lane is the Historiale.

But what is the Historiale? And why did we deem interesting to discuss this today, here with you, even though we deal with history and war? It's not possible to classify Historiale among the traditional historical or military museums. In fact, only two rifles and four helmets are exhibited and displayed. And in this way, this is a museum, which is a non-museum. It's a museum because obviously, it refers to a physical place, which presents something culturally relevant. But it is also a non-museum because if we think to the -- of the traditional task of a museum to preserve, to study, and to display relics and testimonials related to some specific historical events. On the other hand, we cannot even classify it as a multimedia medium or a multimedia section even though there are some information workstations with data banks and images.

Now, I tell you about the experience that we carried out with Historiale is based on the idea of providing the visitor with a itinerary of 13 different rooms, which have been planned specifically, which allow the visitor to contemplate, to meditate, to reflect upon the themes and the moments that are in relation to the dramatic events of the Second World War. It's a setting, where one can retrace the history of the eclipse of European conscience in the 18th-century. And of the wars which followed.

And at the same time, a place where we can retrace the process of revival, which gave rise to a vast efforts of reconstructions, which the peoples are very proud. It's an itinerary, which is characterized by many solicitations, which guide, in certain way, the movement and the posture of the visitor. And the visitor is always accompanied by a narration voice. The voice changes in every room. There can be images, voices, sounds, special effects.

And there is a main voice, which is the main voice of a choir, of voices and suggestions. There are data banks which are available, which can be downloaded on pen drives and news that can be accessible. And it's a sequence of settings and rooms, which bring about the contemplation of photographic, images, signs of sculptures, and scenographic reconstructions, objects, weapons, and different sounds. And with the contribution also of the local population, the history contribution. And I forgot the name of the professor that you mentioned Professor Mattei and Professor Perfetti.

In the end, the approach that we selected was those of favoring contextualization factors, and factors of meaning, going back to what the Professor Antinucci said before and as I already said this. There are data banks that are available and can be downloaded on pen drives and the itinerary can represent a sort of continued communication, which can be obtained on the website.

MR. BOBLEY: Thank you very much.

(Applause)

MR. BOBLEY: Answer any questions?

MR. BOZZI: I would just like to express congratulations Professor Perri, for a very valuable tool in deed and to underline its value by mentioning an experience I had, thanks to the generous support of NEH, in the summer of 2006, when I had the privilege to co-direct at the American Academy in Rome, a summer seminar for 15 college and university faculty in the United States; a seminar that was focused on ancient Rome and war and memory in its society.

The center, the focus of the seminar was Trajan's Column and its frieze. And I do wish that, at that stage we had, had Professor Fischer's tool, which is now available. But one of the initiatives we took was to have an excursion for a day when we went to Benevento to see the Emperor Trajan's Arch there. And then from there we went to Montecassino to see, not only the abbey, but also, in particular, the German war cemetery there.

And it was indeed a very instructive and moving experience. And I wish, for the sake of the group, that we had had at that time, the tool which Professor Perri, has illustrated for us today. And I would very much like to take its details, so that I may share those with the group of 15 faculty, who as our Italian colleagues may not know, take back what they learn in the seminar to share with their classes in institutions across this country.

MR. PERRI: Thank you, professors, for your words. And I want you to know that this project, the memory project is still continues. And we are very keen on cooperating with others because the theme of memory, really there is a lot to be done. In Italy, still, we have a lot to do. Maybe, the French have a little bit more experience. But we are ready to cooperate with other institutions.