

**The forgotten spirit of the past and the loss of memory?**  
*The threats to the Spirit of Place: industrial tourism and heritage*

Marko Stokin  
Institute for the Protection of Cultural Heritage of Slovenia  
Trg bratstva 1  
6330 Piran  
Slovenia  
marko.stokin@guest.arnes.si

**Abstract:** This paper will present the rapid and profound changes of cultural heritage and landscape throughout the past and present days, especially the loss of spirit of tangible and intangible heritage on the North Adriatic coast. In spite of the fact that archaeologists became aware that they have a responsibility to be sensitive to intangible heritage too, because cultural heritage without any intangible aspects does not exist. In early seventies of the last Century “touristification” in the region around Portorož lead to the destruction and abandonment of many cultural sites and connected intangible culture not only from ancient times but also from medieval and especially those from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. Forty years ago the concept of sustainability development of cultural heritage values was very weakly developed, the evaluation of cultural heritage was in the beginning and there was no public influence and awareness.

As things were developing in the past all those cultural resources that were not proven to be relevant or very significant were destroyed. Like in archaeology where they are emphasizing the point that our problems in cultural resource management persist because we have failed to develop means to identify insignificant sites satisfactorily (Curtis F. Schaafsma 1989) the conflict of values is still very present in conservation policy for both cultural heritage in Slovenia.

Tourism in the beginning of the last century was a domain of the “elite” society and the villas and hotels were scattered nearby the seaside, while the cultivated landscape and salt-pans hand in hand were cultivated in old ancient tradition at that time. Not only that the traditional manual gathering of filed and salt pans has a special feature of the cultural heritage of the Mediterranean Slovenia but also provides conditions that enable conservation of parts of landscape and salt-pans with traditional customs, religious feasts, tales, and memories from the past. Many religious sites, feasts, music and tales, many of them probably of the

ancient origins, were demolished by new building interventions and today in the period of “reconstruction” of religious feasts, festivals, traditional production of the salt and presentation of rare historical building as “theatre curtain” as some small remains of archaeological sites are just a memory of the lost of the spirit from the past. The public interest and is becoming important but is still divided by individual, economic and probably by ideological interests?



*Figure 1. Salt-pans*

Sv.Lovrenc

The case study represent the profound changes of cultural heritage, the lost of the memory from the past and the lost of the spirit of heritage of the place. If we understand that the spirit of place refers to the unique and distinctive aspects of place and that an important determinant of any culture is after all the “spirit”, it is clear that modern conservation theory includes materials together with spiritual value. The case study of sv. Lovrenc (San Lorenzo) is a sample how the intensive change of cultural heritage throughout the past destroy the memory and a spirit of the place?

The holiday resorts of Portoro (Port of Roses) and sv. Lovrenc are situated a mere twenty miles from the town of Trieste and few miles from medieval towns of Piran and Koper.

The north–western part of Istria is located in the northern part of Adriatic basin. The Mediterranean climate and vegetation gives a characteristic image to the landscape. As in other parts of the Mediterranean, the traditional use of the land

can be described as »cultura mista« (Typology 1996). The coastal belt was dominated by hillforts and rare settlements on the coast in the prehistoric period. The continuity of occupation at prehistoric sites and hillforts into the Roman period indicates that the various political changes did not necessarily modify the previously established settlement system. The spread of Roman culture in this part of Istria in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and especially in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C was based on urban settlements and large estates distributed along the coast and in the fertile hinterland. Large Roman villas with warehouses (figilinae), ports, piscina vivaria (fishponds), roads, infrastructure and cultivated land changed the landscape. The settlement system was probably modified spatially in the Roman period. The settlements complexes were located in the lowland area of the coastal belt, in the immediate vicinity of the freshwater springs or on south-facing sites on the fertile flysch plains, which were probably not forested (Stokin 1997, 144). Cultivation would certainly have begun to develop more strongly at that time, judging by the abundant appearance of cereal in the pollen record as late as in the Roman period (Culiberg 199, 204). The location of sites can also be related to favourable microclimates, economic exploitation of the area, and advantageous communication routes.

The large Roman villa St. Lorenzo in Portoro is just one example, which typifies the archaeological and historical research and destiny of many similar settlements in this region. The villa was situated on a small hill, with a panoramic view of Portoro bay, where the winds “bora” and “tramontana” from the sea and hinterland were fragrant with the smell of the sea and the cultivated gardens with olive trees, vineyards, herb gardens, oak, hornbeam,



*Figure 2. Olive tree*

chestnut, artocarpus, oleander and fruit trees. From the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC, the Roman coast road connected the large estates with similar complexes on the coast, with ports, towns, salt-pans and farm buildings. Lucius Papius Marcellinus, a legionary of the I Legion Italica, completed his military service in Moesia Interior and returned to his home in sv. Lorenzo at the end of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD (Franzoni 1961, 217). The noble Pupius family originated in Aquileia and probably held estates or other types of property at sv. Lovrenc and in Istria. This information has been gained from an “ara” (altar), which was discovered at the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> Century.

The “ara” was dedicated by Lucius to his wife Secundina and her freed slaves and later he was buried in the same tomb. Roman law forbade burial within settlements, for this reason it may be assumed that the area of tomb was discovered near by the road, where a Late Roman cemetery was excavated (Stokin, Lazar 2008).





*Figure 3. Late Roman grave*

It is important to mention that the remains of church foundations were partly excavated near by the villa in 1995, but their interpretation is difficult because of the extremely limited excavated area. In spite of the limited research in the sv. Lovrenc area, a large amount of data has been gained about the place, the cemetery, the roads and the extent of the settlement, not only for archaeological research, but also for other sciences. The interpretation of the site can be undertaken from different angles, but without the hypothesis and speculations we can never re-create the past as it actually was.

The limited archaeological record indicates that the Roman villa was demolished or partly reused in the late 6th Century. The Benedictine monastery of San Lorenzo was founded on the same site at the beginning of the 14<sup>th</sup> Century. The villa was without doubt a very luxurious buildings, with mosaic floors, opus spicatum floors and statuary, including the head of Jupiter (Franzoni 1961; Degrassi 1928). After the decline of the Roman Empire in the 5<sup>th</sup> Century AD, Istria became a part of Ravenna exarchate (751). After a short period of Lombard control, it became part of the Carolingian Empire (788). This period ended when the Istrian towns accepted the protection of protection in the 11<sup>th</sup> Century. This was a period when many monasteries and cloisters were established, especially on the sites of Roman villas, as in sv. Bernardin and in our example at sv. Lovrenc. Sv. Lovrenc was one of the oldest monasteries in this region, with a church decorated with wall paintings, a tower, a convent, a port, gardens and a “holy cemetery” (Franzoni 1961, 215). In the beginning of 19<sup>th</sup> Century the remains of the convent were demolished and the Villa San Lorenzo was built on the site by the famous Triestine architect G.Rigetti between 1830-1840.



*Figure 3 . Villa San Lorenzo*

The large neoclassical style villa is adorned with Corinthian columns at the main entrance and has rich interior decoration, parks, paths, the extant church of sv. Lovrenc and gardens. Rigetti sold the villa to the tourist trust of Piran at the beginning of the 20 Century, with very rich library, more than hundred pictures and rich furniture. Once a centre of elite society, music, cultural and spiritual events was lost. They transformed the villa into the Frediani Hotel. The new decorated villa became a luxurious hotel with tennis courts, garage, parks (Hoyer 1999 ). At the same time the large new Palace Hotel was opened in the vicinity and this was a start of the tourism industry in Portoro. Portoro became the most famous resort and spa centre for elite society in the north Adriatic until the end of the First World War. The villa was destroyed and replaced by a large massive hotel building (hotel Metropol) during the 1970s. The same fate was suffered by many others small villas, landscapes in the bay of Portoro.



Marko Stokin  
The forgotten Spirit of the past and the loss of memory?  
The treats to the Spirit of Place: industrial tourism and heritage.

#### *Figure 4. Hotel Metropol*

Mass tourism in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century had provided short-term economic gains, but caused irreparable damage to the place. Unfortunately, no archaeological or other research was undertaken in this period and many sites were destroyed, whilst many tales, beliefs, folk tales, customs and memories beside material culture were lost forever. This was a short description of sv. Lovrenc, place were for two thousand years various people of different origins gave the place the “spirit” and a “value”, probably on different spiritual level as we are doing today?

Today in the period of globalisation, when cultural heritage frequently receives a new facade or new “theatre curtain” and the material culture of the building is far away from authentic, but the public is becoming ever more interested and sensitive to the preservation of heritage. We know that the public should be inspired by their own sense of place and attention to various aspects of local heritage to make it happen (Graham 2001), but in reality the “revival” of the cultural heritage is many times just our illusion and imagination..

#### **Toward the public**

In spite of the fact that without political and other interests the managing of cultural heritage cannot be properly effective the public opinion is very important. It is very significant to increase public opinion and public participation in all decision making, particularly when conservation issues are present, as sometimes conservation may appear in conflict with the particular interests of specific parts of society, like are individuals, political and economic pressures. Preserving the cultural identity of tangible and intangible heritage is an important dimension of sustainable development, because they determine the characteristics that give a sense of place to the historic environment, in spite of the fact that many places were destroyed. However, there will always be some development pressures that cannot be mitigated and will require protection of material and non material culture in advance but the basic criteria is that more and more people shell realised that intangible values are vital and permanent principles and aspects without which a cultural heritage will never became a complete one (Fu Chao-Ching, 2005)

#### REFERENCES

Conference.1996. Typological landscape classification: international conference proceedings: Institute for landscape, Architecture and Office of the Republic of Slovenia for Physical Planning.

Marko Stokin

The forgotten Spirit of the past and the loss of memory?

The treats to the Spirit of Place: industrial tourism and heritage.

- Culiberg, M.1997. Paleovgetacijske razmere v Koprskem zaledju, Sermin, *in Horvat (ed.) Sermin, A prehistoric and Early Settlement in Northwestern Istria*, ZRS SAZU, 135-139, Ljubljana.
- Curtis F.Schaafsma, 1989. Significant until proven otherwise: problems versus representative samples, *in Cleere(ed)*, *Archaeological heritage Management in the Modern World*, 38-51. Unwin Hyman London.
- Franzoni, Lucio.1961.La porta orientali, Num.11-12, Trieste.
- Fu Chao Ching. 2005. Cultural sensibility towards intangible values in monuments and sites- a comparison between eastern Asian and Western countries, *in Proceedings of Icomos 15<sup>th</sup> General Assembly and Scientific Symposium*, 71-75, Xi-an: World Publishing Corporation.
- Graham, Roy Eugene.2001.Old town Koper Conservation Strategy, Preliminary Observations and Suggestions, The consortium for urban conservation in the Balkans. Catholic University of America.
- Hoyer, S.A. 1999. Giovanni Righetti, in\_enir, arhitekt-konservator, *in Jaki(ed.)*, *Razprave iz evropske umetnosti*, 221-237, Ljubljana.
- Degrassi, Attilio.1928. Precussore litico con incavi scoperto nell'agro di Capodistria.Bulletino di palentnologia italiana 48, 125-129.
- Stokin, M. 1997. The distribution of archaeological sites in the hinterland of Sermin, *in (Horvat (ed.) Sermin, A prehistoric and Early Settlement in Northwestern Istria*, 135-139, ZRC SAZU, Ljubljana.
- Stokin, M. and Lazar, E (2008), Poro\_ilo o arheolo\_kih za\_\_itnih izkopavanjih na lokaciji hotel Lucija, parc. \_t. 1388/2, 1839/1, 1839/6 in 1841 k.o. Portoro\_ (E\_D 7197), Report ZVKDS.