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Difficult Heritage in Conflict Archaeological Landscape

The paper aims to investigate the unknown legacy of twentieth century military heritages, "Difficult Heritages" (Macdonald: 2009), highlighting the need for museographical intervention to approach and solve the questions dealing around the so called Conflict Archaeological Landscape. "Conflict Archaeology is a new and interdisciplinary study of conflict and its legacies during the 20th and early 21st centuries. Conflict Archaeology focuses on conflict as a multifaceted phenomenon, whose variety of physical traces possesses multiple meanings that change over time. It is not restricted to battlefields, or to large-scale wars between nations, but embraces every kind of conflict and its diversity of social and cultural legacies." (Saunders: 2009).

The relevance of investigating "Difficult Heritages" lies in the value of both collective and private memory (and identity) they incorporate, providing stimulus to critical reflection on still relevant issues. These Heritages wars and conflicts during last century left behind, both in terms of physical presences and memories, always represent a huge collective and shared patrimony often considered inconvenient and difficult because perceived like a scars in the body of own Land (Schofield, Johnson and Beck: 2005). '[...] What it has been opened after the catastrophes of the 1900's is a time of debris, not of ruins. Debris and not ruins. There is nothing romantic in this time, it's a terrible time that may not be sublime [...]' (Pirazzoli: 2010).

The debris that conflicts have left as troublesome legacy touches different areas of the territory, from city to landscape. Vienna, Berlin, Hamburg co-exist, for example, with some remains of past wars: i.e. the flak towers built by the Germans since 1940. Similarly, long fortified lines were built as a boundaries between neighboring countries: i.e. the Atlantik Wall, the Maginot Line, the West Wall or the Salpa Line, all built on European territory. At the same time there are also places where there is not any

physical remain but only painful memories: i.e. reprisal, or any other kind of tragic and traumatic event, sites or landscapes.

Traces and findings, but also intangible presences, that lie in large parts of European territory and form a valuable cultural and material heritage even if a difficult one (AAVV: 2004).

Museographical intervention arises therefore not only as a need to recover Difficult Heritages, promoting preservation and communication activities, but also as a possible therapy to overcome the trauma connected with such patrimony. These should include memories hosted and suffered in/by the territory.

The signs of conflicts are like load-bearing ridges that cross and unify Europe, signs asking for a re-writing that triggers phenomena of formation and feeding of a new over-national collective memory: a narrative dealing with time, territory and identity for a forthcoming European citizenship.

CV

Gennaro Postiglione is Associate Professor in Interior Architecture at The Politecnico di Milano (teaching activity: www.lablog.org.uk) and at the moment Technical Manager of the 4 years research project MeLa (www.mela-project.eu) on Museums, Identity and Migrations. Researches focus mainly on Interiors and Museography, preserving and diffusing collective memory and cultural identity, connecting the museographic issues with the domestic ambit. From 2004, within the area of teaching and research "acting upon the existent", is promoter of PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE @ POLIMI, an interdisciplinary research & operative group that puts the resources of Architecture in the service of the Public Interest and focused on adaptive re-use design strategy.

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