

## **ABSTRACT**

**Session: Building upon the past for the future. Open air museums: what chance in the 21st century**

### **The Museum of Ledro: an incubator for cultural, economical and ecological development.**

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Among the Italian Open Air Museums, the setting of Ledro represents an almost unique reality.

Almost 650 m above sea level, it is located in a valley alongside two great [commercial crossroads?]. It is somewhat isolated but in close proximity to important tourist destinations like the Lago di Garda. Surrounded by beautiful hills and on the shore of a man-made lake, Ledro is long overdue for taking advantage of these circumstances

While the museum is contained within a single room of 300 sm, it houses 600 objects from the nearby archaeological site

The lake has been used as hydroelectric basin since the 1930s and the regular changes in water level have caused the erosion of the wooden pile foundations of the dwelling.

In the '90s a new cycle has started, pinpointed by the change of the museum's mission.

In addition to conserving and displaying the archaeological remains, the museum has added a program of activities intended to highlight what is irretrievably fading: the village.

In 2006 a portion of the dwelling was reconstructed: it is not an example of experimental archaeology, but a setting – almost a stage or a “narrative background”- for the educational activities of the museum and for the imitative archaeology.

Within the last 15 years, diminutive Ledro has become a noteworthy example in the field of cultural activities (museum animation). Each year, in the 9 months in which the museum is open to the public, about 33.000 visitors view the exhibit (a not

insignificant number, considering that the site occupies 2200 sm!)

Ledro, though a small reality, in order to continue to exist, needs to be integrated in its own territory and together, to develop a continuous exchange, networking and becoming one of the elements of a complex but delicate economical and ecological mechanism.

## DRAFT - RELAZIONE

With its 30.000/35.000 visitors per year, Ledro is a consolidated reality in the field of divulgation and museum education. In Trentino, it is 4<sup>th</sup> among the most visited museums (together with Castello del Buon Consiglio, MTScNat e il MART (214.076)<sup>1</sup> notwithstanding it is located in a geographically isolated valley. [slide nn. 1-4]

The Ledro pile-dwellings [slide n. 5] stand on the west coast of the lake Ledro at 650 m.s.l.m.

It is probable the valley was frequented already in the Mesolithic times and that in the Neolithic some human groups settled down. the increase in the number of population, though, dates to the Bronze Age when the pile-dwelling was built.

Inhabitants have always been aware of the presence of a thick "net" of poles within the lake, considered as an ancient barrier in order to consolidate and to enhance the lake-level. the broad area with timbers (4.500sm; 12.000 posts) was brought to light in 1929, due to a strong reduction in the water caused by hydroelectric works. That year the Sovrintendenza alle Antichità of Padua started a series of excavation campaigns, taken over – in the 60s and the 80s by the Museo Tridentino with stratigraphic criterion. Since 2003 a programme for the monitoring and the survey of the archaeological area and of the timbers' conditions has been started .

The Museo was built from 1968 to 1972 and it displays the objects coming from the excavations of the 60s. Nowadays findings from Ledro can be seen, beyond the Museo delle Palafitte, also at the MTScN, il Castello del Buonconsiglio, il Museo Civico do Riva del Garda and in Padua at the Soprintendenza and the Anthropology Department of the University.

The first construction of a pile-dwelling dates to the 40s [slide n. 7] on the basis of ethno-archaeology and the suggestions of prof. Battaglia, who ran the first excavations. Also in the following reconstructions or brand new constructions, we cannot speak of experimental archaeology because no scientific data from the excavations could be used and relied upon.

The didactic village was inaugurated in 2006 and it is a likely reconstruction of a part of the pile-dwelling as it could be found on the banks of several lakes almost ca. 4.000 years ago. Among those, pile-dwelling n. 3 stands on a Stelzbau structure, as it was found also in Ledro.

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<sup>1</sup> "Minicifre della Cultura 2009" MiBAC – Segretariato Generale – Ufficio Studi – Gangemi Ed., 2009

Short term aim of the Museum is to boost the consensus of the public towards the structure and its activities [slide n. 8], in order to launch a broad and long term project aiming, within 10 years , to make of Ledro an international research centre on the piledwelling settlements of the Alpine region and for imitative archaeology and museum education – issues which are missing in Italy at a leading level in this field. There is no doubt the new village has increased sensibly the suggestion about the place in the visitors' emotional approach [slide nn. 9- 10] amplifying the evocative potential of the activities the museum offers. From the needed renewal and enlargement of the museum will depend the out spring of new scientific and educational projects.

During the last years, managing data, infacts, show how relevant the increase of visitors [slide nn. 11-14]

Now some of the peculiarities of the Museum.

## **Strenghts**

A. **Focus on one single prehistoric period and theme,** it allows to get specialised in the issue and in its communication with topic educational activities

B. **Two distinct operative seasons** one with mainly schools during spring time and autumn and one with generic public in summer-time.

Therefore:

1. We can concentrate upon programmes and events completely different during the two seasonal operating periods where the summer school Officina Ledro is a stimulating think-tank where professionals of the field can meet and confront
2. We can work to enhance the quality of our offer, targeting our marketing ad personam with a rich and various merchandising and publishing activities .

A. **Partnership in international networks**

B. **Physical interaction within the urban texture** makes us work as we were "on a show" : that's also the way we attract part of our summer visitors .

## **Weaknesses:**

**Focus on one single prehistoric period and theme → a continuous updating of the activities of the museum is essential** although our staff is limited.

This compels us to:

1. Replace and integrate the educational labs very often
2. Integrate and renew the summer projects

### **A. Limited space non isolated by the urban area**

1. Doesn't allow us to perform Living PreHistory due to the external audio and sight pollution.
2. Imposes a limit to the number of visitors an opportunity could regard the extension of the opening season to 10 months or the implementation of the offer targeted on the tourists in May and September

## **Ledro and the Open Air Museums ?**

- A. **Edutainment** (the learning by a lively, enjoyable and playful experience)
- B. a **Team** composed by an eterogeneous mix of multi-skilled and experienced people, enthusiastic and consistent with the museum's philosophy

**thanks to** this emotional approach, Ledro is perceived as somewhere far from the everyday routine, almost super-place where people can experience the flow of space-and-time.

- C. The museum becomes the centre for the consolidation of the local cultural identity becoming and forming the Brand of the valley.
- D. The shortage of spaces is partly balanced by the interaction with some other local cultural, environmental and historical institutions and placet.

## The future

- A. To develop a constant dialectic model between History/science, Nature/Environment, Society/Community NOTE n. 2
- B. Promote the **public understanding of research**: not only to narrate the science but the daily efforts in order to achieve knowledge <sup>3</sup>, where the work-in progress has to be accepted with an interpretative involvement and not passively. In this sense Ledro can also be considered as a science museum and justifies itself as a branch of the MTScNa)
- C. To become a scientific research centre in an international network, dedicating more attention to the original archaeological objects
- D. Necessity to consolidate its own image to the eyes of the inhabitants of the valley and of the external visitors (tourists) in order to succeed in creating a meaningful and inclusive territorial brand [for this purpose, the Museum has carried on a process of the place's memory reconstruction named "Plan Memory 1929-2009 the pile-dwellings in the drawer", introduced to the public on the last day of Officina Ledro this year.
- E. To practice a social impact on the territory, becoming a sort of "incubator" not only on a cultural level but also on an economic and social one.
- F. To resume the diggings and the studies on Ledro.
- G. To improve the communication and the visibility of the Museum, maintaining the limits of space which it has been said of.

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<sup>2</sup> R. Willis, J. Wilsdon, See through science, DEMOS, 2005

<sup>3</sup> Creating Connections, Altamira Press, 2004