

HISTORICAL SINGLE-USE HERITAGE ASSETS: A TREASURE TO BE CATALOGUED AND PRESERVED

Andrea Natali*

Conservazione dei beni culturali, Viterbo, Italy

Maria Letizia De Luca

Architetto, Ordine degli Architetti e Paesaggisti di Roma e Provincia, Italy

Roberta D'Orazi

Conservazione dei beni culturali, Viterbo, Italy

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1. Introduction

The landscape is no longer simply seen as the sum total of natural and artificial objects; it is read as a holistic and harmonious vision of systems (spatial, functional, environmental, visual, symbolic, economic, cultural, temporal), which have connected to, engaged with and succeeded each other, throughout the territory with the passing of time [1,2].

The terms “historical rural landscapes” and “traditional rural (agricultural) landscapes” have now been introduced into legislation regulating heritage protection. As a result, interest in present-day cultural landscapes, where historical structures have not yet been canceled or altered by modern land use methods, has allowed this heritage to survive (even if only as ruins).

An even broader concept and field in which it is difficult to raise awareness, is that of the *genius loci*, the spirit of the place; it is closely associated with the identity and uniqueness of each individual landscape [3].

It is within this framework that a proposal has been put forward to catalogue special structures located in minor rural landscapes.

They are constructions built in specific environmental, social, industrial, economic and infrastructural contexts serving a single function and were built using either used materials and/or specific materials for this one function. Materials included tiles such as the Marseilles type, a flat brick tile with a shaped perimeter to allow them to interlock with each other and was preferred to other types because it was cheaper and lighter and also easier to replace.

Its single function determined the structure’s dimensions, divisions, accesses and, in short, all its particular features. These features are so exclusive, distinctive and specific that they preclude any alternative reuse of the structure and, therefore, any diversification from its intended use. On the other hand, any change in the intended use of any structure evidently means losing potential information about it, thereby mis-

* Corresponding author: andreanatali.beniculturali@gmail.com

representing the original idea and function, but does at least save the exterior of the building.

These types of buildings are moreover usually located within a secondary, minor rural landscape and are not considered as landscape assets. They are therefore not subject to forms of legal protection. Having lost their usefulness, these artefacts, once of great value, have now been abandoned. Lack of maintenance, but also deliberate actions such as the Rural Development Programs (RDP) that encourage demolition in order to access greater areas for construction, ultimately mean that these special purpose buildings are destined to disappear in the next few years, demolished and deleted from our memory without leaving any trace.

As in the poetry of the Italian singer-songwriter Francesco Guccini which, in 1966, inspired him to write the song "*Noi non ci saremo*" (we shall not be there) sung by the Italian band the Nomadi, the song recounts the rebirth of life after an atomic war, when the earth resumes its blossoming, progress recommences ... but, "we will not be there".

In this case, buildings take the place of people, because they are not considered "worthy" of being preserved and handed on into the future. Thus, by losing these assets one loses the meaningful testimonies of the history of work, of popular culture, of social aggregation, as the historian of urbanism, Enrico Guidoni underlines in the introduction to the singular book about the washhouses of Vetralla ("*I lavatoi di Vetralla*") [4].

The structures under examination have no prestigious features, either in their typology, in their detail or in their originality. Interest, therefore, derives from different points: on the one hand is the fact that these constructions bear witness to a piece of the social history of the territory, as they refer to issues related to working and living conditions, on the other hand is the fact that today they represent, in the agrarian landscape, a sort of discordance in the uniformity of the rural landscape, standing out, in certain cases, from other buildings for which a higher architectural value has been recognized.

They represent "*Stolpersteine*", stumbling blocks, according to the German artist Gunter Demnig, the custodians of a widespread memory.

2. Special-purpose structures

After defining and describing the characteristics of this particular collection of structures, their cataloging and conservation provides for the identification of the different types. At this stage in the study however, the list of typologies is not exhaustive but can be added to and updated. The structures covered in this paper are:

- Agricultural storage structures (Figure 1);
- Aqueducts (Figure 2);
- Level crossing keeper box (Figure 3);
- Defense bunkers (Figure 4);
- Dovecotes (Figure 5);
- Dryers (Figure 6);
- Forest wardens' cabins (Figure 7);
- Fountains and drinking troughs (Figure 8);
- Ovens (Figure 9);
- Pastoral huts and lookout points (Figure 10);
- Pigsties (Figure 11);

- Prison camps (Figure 12);
- Railway bridges and underpasses (Figure 13);
- Roadside storehouses (Figure 14);
- Rural farm gates (Figure 15);
- Rural shelters and shepherds' huts (Figure 16);
- Silos (Figure 17);
- Washhouses (Figure 18).

Below are a number of emblematic images illustrating some of the different types of construction with an explanation of the reasons they have lost their functionality and are today consequently at risk of demolition or ruin due to lack of maintenance and neglect. The photographic material shown below, prior to the architectural survey, concerned buildings and other constructions located in the Tuscia area, in the province of Viterbo (VT) in central Italy, north of Rome.

2.1 Agricultural storage structures

Agricultural storage structures consist of a single-chamber structure with a wooden truss roof and were usually used for storing and conserving cereal grains.

To prevent mold forming and, therefore, prevent the cereal grains from rotting, the storehouse had to be well-ventilated. For this reason, a pattern of staggered brickwork or tufts was used, producing openings in the wall. This type of wall recalls Arab architecture, more specifically, the *jalousie*: a vertical divider similar to a screen which provided shade, but at the same time allowed the air to circulate naturally (Figure 1).

With modern storage systems and the conversion of agricultural farmsteads into residential housing, this type of building is likely to disappear.



Figure 1. Agricultural storehouse, Capranica (VT), Italy

2.2 Aqueducts

This type of construction, still in use in the twentieth century, incorporates the construction technique of the Roman era and is characterized by a series of underground tanks that capture and collect rainwater and a roofing system. The aqueduct had to be placed at a higher level, upstream from the inhabited area, to exploit the diffusion of water by gravity.

With the excavation of deeper wells and more efficient pumping systems this type of construction has been superseded (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Old aqueduct at Tre Croci, Vetralla (VT), Italy

2.3 Level crossing keeper box

Until the first half of the twentieth century, the closing of the level crossings and maintenance of the railway lines were entrusted to the level crossing attendant (signalman). This fundamental figure, who performed the task along the railway track, found shelter in a signal box/cabin (or even cottage), which consisted of a small building of two rooms one above the other. The storage space was on the ground floor while the upstairs was a living area. With the evolution of technology, this work was no longer necessary and given the building's small dimensions, could not be reused (Figure 3).

2.4 Defense bunkers

The territory includes defensive bunkers dating back to World War II. Placed at strategic points on the beaches they had to prevent landings. In this case the loss of strategic importance and their non-protection have determined their disappearance (Figure 4).



Figure 3. Railway cabin on the Rome-Viterbo railway line



Figure 4. Defense bunker on the beach at Tarquinia (VT), Italy

2.5 Dovecotes

Dove breeding, a practice already used by the Babylonians and the Egyptians, known to the Greeks and Romans at the time of Homer (950 BC), Cato the Elder (200 BC), and also described in detail by Marrone (who speaks of dovecotes for 5000 individuals!) and Columella, continued to flourish in the Middle Ages right up to the present-day.

Almost all the buildings had niches in the outer walls to shelter and raise the doves, considered to be a source of meat at no cost. Today, this practice has been abandoned and the dovecotes, carved in the rock and those made in walls, have been left and closed up (Figure 5).

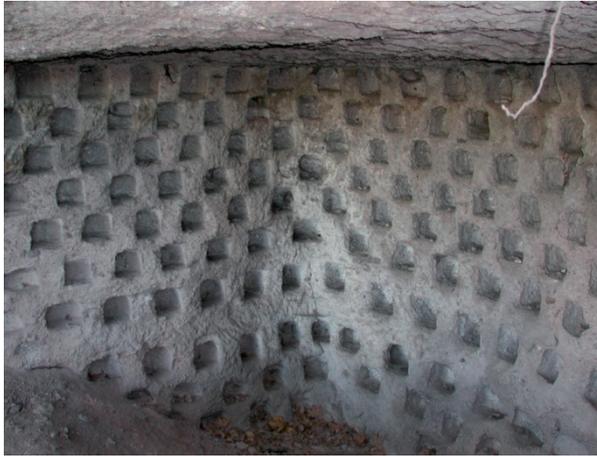


Figure 5. Dovecote in the south of Viterbo, Italy

2.6 Dryers

The cultivation and processing of tobacco, introduced into the area in the second half of the twentieth century, has left traces and remains that are a characteristic feature of the territory. Through its cultivation, tobacco driers can tell a story that not only has obvious social and economic implications, but also interesting consequences on the settlements around the landscape (Figure 6). Their neglect and disrepair involve a loss of the memory of the territory [5]



Figure 6. Dryer for tobacco in the locality "La Carrozza", Vetralla (VT), Italy

2.7 Forest warden's cabins

The area of Tuscia is rich in woodland, its trees representing a real source of wealth for many local communities. For this reason, control over forest activities was necessary to avoid abuse and excesses. This was the job of the warden, who controlled the

territory under his competence on horseback. The cabin, located inside the woods, consisted of a construction with two rooms: one for the warden, the other for the horse. The space for the animal had two large doors that gave onto the exterior: one to enter, the other to exit (Figure 7).

The isolated location and new surveillance systems have made these buildings fall into disuse without any form of maintenance. Nature is consequently slowly reclaiming its space.



Figure 7. Forest warden's cabin in the woods of Monte Fogliano, locality of S. Angelo, Vetralla (VT)

2.8 Fountains and drinking troughs

When there was no running water in homes, the supply point, especially in the countryside, was the fountain. It was an important place also from a social point of view, as people often met to socialize. It usually consisted of two separate basins, one for people, where the water flowed with a support on which to place containers (usually made of earthenware, as the area of Vetralla is well-known for its pottery production for household use in the kitchen); the other, into which flowed the water from the first basin, was for animals. Changes in the way animals are bred and regulations concerning reducing water wastage, have made these artefacts objects that are destined to disappear as a result of disuse and neglect (Figure 8).



Figure 8. Drinking fountain and trough in Mazzacotto (VT), Italy

2.9 Ovens

Given the distance from inhabited centers, sharecropping farms and country houses had to be autonomous. For this purpose, there was a house and stables with a barn and other buildings, which included an oven (Figure 9).



Figure 9. Oven in the courtyard of a house, San Martino (VT), Italy

2.10 Pastoral huts and lookout points

Vigilance was also to be guaranteed for pastures. This was provided by the guardian of the pastures. The shelter was characterized by a high turret to control the territory and the lots leased to farmers (Figure 10).



Figure 10. Shelter and lookout point for a guardian of pasture-lands, Monte Calvo, Vetralla (VT)

2.11 Pigsties

The pigsty was used for the family breeding of pigs and consisted of a small space, less than a meter and a half in height. The pigsty opened onto an adjacent enclosure, which allowed the animals to go out into the open where there was a trough into which

their food was poured.

Everything had to be small in size in order that the pig that was being fattened did not move too much and so lose precious calories. Its height was limited to avoid heat dispersion.

More restrictive hygiene regulations and social changes have greatly reduced the activity of family pig-breeding, especially in the zones bordering the urban centers. Its small size and in particular its limited height, make this artefact difficult to reuse. In addition, incentives for demolishing structures to make room for other buildings have ensured that this type of construction is slowly disappearing (Figure 11).



Figure 11. Pigsty in the locality of Mazzacotto, Vetralla (VT), Italy

2.12 Prison camps

Prison camps within the area date back to the period of World War II. After being looted and stripped of all the furniture and materials, the building complex making up the prisoner-of-war camp in Vetralla (VT) was abandoned. Neglect, loss of community memory, make it an anonymous and silent area of ruins. A building complex that is inexorably disappearing (Figure 12).

2.13 Railway bridges and underpasses

Brick railway bridges and arched underpasses built between the end of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century, are also at risk of disappearing. New construction techniques, variations in the network and the modernization of old railways (track doubling, new safety standards, etc.) have made these structures obsolete (Figure 13).



Figure 12. Prisoner-of-war camp (P.G. n. 68 in Vetralla, VT), Italy

2.14 Roadway storehouses

These small buildings consisted of a single open space that acted both as a storehouse and shelter. Inside was a fireplace that the lengthman (i.e. the person in charge of maintenance and supervision of the road) used to cook and keep warm. As for toll point structures, technological evolution has made them obsolete and, given their very small size, has meant they are not re-used (Figure 14).



Figure 13. Railway bridge along the Rome-Viterbo line.

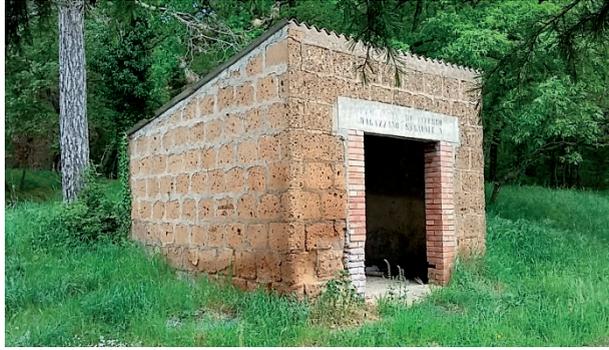


Figure 14. Roadway storehouse on the Foglianese road, between Vetralla and Viterbo, Italy

2.15 Rural farm gates

Rural farm gates represented real status symbols as they demonstrated the wealth of the farm and therefore, of the owners, to passers-by. Situated close to the more important main roads, they were very often decorated with coats of arms, statues and paintings. With the increase in vehicular traffic and larger vehicle dimensions, these entrances can no longer be used and, for this reason, are either demolished or abandoned (Figure 15).



Figure 15. Entrance gate to a farm holding on the Via Cassia, north of Viterbo, Italy

2.16 Rural shelters and shepherds' huts

They gave shelter for a few days to farmers and shepherds who, for various reasons, could not return home. They consisted of a single small room with a low-ceiling and consequently, a door and windows of reduced dimensions. An animal enclosure surrounded the small building (Figure 16).



Figure 16. Rural shelter and shepherds' hut, Strada della Veronica, Vetralla (VT)

2.17 Silos

As in the case of granaries, silos, (from the Greek “pit for preserving grain”) are used as a deposit for different materials and cereals, the main difference being that storage is vertical and not horizontal. There are also silos with balconies. They are cylindrical in shape with external stairs to allow goods to be loaded from above. In this case too, new storage systems, the conversion of agricultural farmsteads to housing and their peculiar characteristics, are jeopardizing the existence of these buildings (Figure 17).



Figure 17. Silo in the locality of Casalone, Norchia, Viterbo, Italy

2.18 Wash houses

The public wash house represented the focal point of female social life until the 1970s. It was covered with a trussed roof, to protect the washerwomen from inclement weather and generally had no walls.

Inside there were usually two large basins placed on different levels so that the water entering the first (at the higher level) passed into the second (at a lower level) and not vice versa.

The lower basin was used for washing clothes, etc. while the upper one was used to rinse them.

The flat sloping surfaces resting on the basins were used for scrubbing clothes; they are carved in *peperino*, a brown-grey volcanic tuff found locally in the surrounding area (Figure 18).

The peculiar characteristic of the wash-house was its height: not too low, so as to prevent animals from drinking (they drank from troughs), but, at the same time, not too high, to facilitate washing operations.



Figure 18. Public washhouse, Tobia (VT), Italy

3. Considerations

Cataloging, documenting photographically and, as far as possible, preserving [6] these single-use buildings means telling a story that not only carries obvious social and economic implications, but also interesting implications for the landscape as regards settlements [7].

The work carried out in these buildings from the early twentieth century until a few years ago, in addition to giving voice to the society that conceived, built and used them, has left traces and remains that characterize and distinguish the territory.

But the importance of this study is also in remembering the past: the intrinsic architectural quality of these artefacts is certainly not recognized. They can neither be included in minor architecture, nor among the types of rural architecture that comprise agricultural settlements and rural buildings built between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries [8-13] and, therefore, subject to some form of protection.

They are exclusively linked to their use: when they are no longer needed, they are abandoned and, with the passing of time, forgotten.

In this regard, we are working on the realization of a project, named “The cataloging, conservation, valorization and sustainable use of special-purpose structures”.

The territory of the Municipality of Vetralla (VT) was chosen as a sample site and is a vast extensive territory, where different types of structures are under examination.

The Project includes the following activities:

- cataloging and documentation, using dedicated index cards, of constructions from a historical and conservation-restoration point of view (assessment of conservation state and risk factors for materials and structures);
- creation of a territorial information system to visualize the cartography of the territory with the position of the structures, their specific characteristics and state of conservation;
- conservation work accomplished through the study, prevention, maintenance and restoration of several artefacts;
- interventions for the valorization and sustainable use of the structures through the creation of an “ecomuseum” on the territory that can be visited following georeferenced itineraries.

In Part 1 of the Italian Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape, Article 6 relating to “Enhancement of the cultural heritage” states that enhancement consists “in the exercise of the functions and in the regulation of the activities aimed at promoting awareness of cultural heritage and at ensuring the best conditions for the utilization and public enjoyment of the same heritage, also by persons with disabilities, with the aim of promoting the development of culture” [14]. Within the project, interventions for enhancing and promoting enjoyment of the cultural heritage represent a focal point. If well prepared and implemented, they can give new life to these structures, determining a more modern approach to their cultural use and enjoyment. Emphasis must be given to the fact that currently, the cause of their disappearance is related to their non-use and non-enjoyment.

If examined in the context of a model of economic development based on principles for the sustainable use of resources for the benefit of society, cultural heritage is a useful source for human development. The debate on integrated strategies of valorization gives cultural heritage an increasingly significant role in development models based on local identities and on valorizing territorial resources, also thanks to implications of an intangible nature such as those linked to traditions, knowledge and to creativity, which have enriched the notion of heritage [15-16]. This is particularly relevant for the symbolic value of historical single-use structures.

Furthermore, valorization is achieved through the “establishment and stable organization of resources, structures or networks, that is, through the provision of technical skills and financial or instrumental resources. Private entities may compete, cooperate or participate in such activities” [14]. In this regard, a network is being formed, involving local associations and entrepreneurs that have expressed interest in the project.

As part of the project, a number of built heritage assets, considered to be of particular significance from a historical and social point of view, have been selected because their size and location allow reuse. Plans are being made to design indications for identifying the site and remembering the historic structure, as well as providing accommodation facilities for hikers and tourists with the aim of proposing the whole to the competent authorities.

More specifically, for one of the buildings in the Vetralla prisoner-of-war camp (Figure 12), *Campo P.G. n.68*, which housed up to 2,191 people, the proposal is to create

a “World War II Memorial Site”. A place to remember, through documents and testimonies, the events that affected both the prison camp [17], which operated from 1 July 1942 to 10 January 1943, and the town of Tuscia, which suffered a devastating bombing in 1944. The bombing hit the historical center and the millenary Rocca (ancient defensive fortress), as reported by Colonel Fletcher, commander of the 320th bomber group of the United States of America: “Results. The result was an excellent concentration of bombs that hit the area going from the city center of Vetralla as far as the road to the south-east of the city and to the north-east road” [18].

As for the shelter for forest wardens (Figure 7), given its location inside the Monte Fogliano woods (Site of Community Importance), on the border of the Natural Regional Reserve – Lake Vico, and therefore located in an area of high naturalistic value, the proposal is to reuse the building as a visitor center and information point for hikers and tourists.

The same end-use concerns the shelter and look-out for pasture-land guardians (Figure 10) located on the Montecalvo estate, under the jurisdiction of the Municipality of Vetralla, which is of naturalistic, wildlife and historical interest [19, 20].

For some of the buildings which cannot be reused, due to their particular features, maintenance work is underway to ensure they can be used: this is the case of the fountain and drinking trough located in Mazzacotto (Figure 8). The work is being financed by the Associazione Popolare Sassogrosso Tre Croci.

Ultimately, the project aims to safeguard and enhance the targeted structures, ensuring the preservation of traditional elements and historical, architectural and environmental features. This means continuing to pass on a fragment of the history and culture of the territory and proposing a sustainable use of resources for the benefit of society.

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Biographical notes

Andrea Natali carries out research, teaching and consulting activities in the field of "Conservation of Cultural Heritage". He graduated in "Conservation of cultural heritage" at the University of Tuscia; received two research grants from the Department of Cultural Heritage of the University of Bologna; has a Master in "Community Narrators" at the University of Tuscia (Viterbo). He is the owner of the company, Andrea Natali "Conservazione Beni Culturali". He has carried out teaching activities in University Courses and Masters and done research in the fields of conservation, restoration, artistic diagnostics, authentication of works of art, management and enhancement of cultural and landscape heritage, planning and promotion of artistic and cultural events. In the field of architecture, he has been professor of "Theory and Techniques of Architectural Restoration" at the Faculty of Conservation of Cultural Heritage of the University of Bologna and a researcher on the NEREA Project (NETwork for Advanced REstauro), Department of Architecture and Territorial Planning at the University of Bologna.

He is a mediator / conciliator and expert of the Arbitration Chamber for public contracts with ANAC (Anti-corruption Authority). He is the author and co-author of over 50 publications in the field of conservation and valorization of cultural and landscape heritage. He has been a speaker at over 50 national and international conventions and conferences.

Maria Letizia De Luca is an architect. She has been a member of the Order of Architects and Landscape Architects of Rome and the Province since 1995 (No.11038).

She has collaborated with major architectural firms and has carried out general design activities, development of executive design and has been responsible for the graphic elaboration of projects, development of architectural and constructive details for private commissions, which include the prestigious Bulgari boutiques in Italy, Europe and America.

Since 1995, she has worked in her professional studio in Castelnuovo di Porto (Rome, Italy), with particular focus on building design, interior architecture and renovation, in historic centers.

She performs technical appraisals for individuals and for the court of Tivoli as a court-appointed technical consultant.

Roberta D'Orazi, is a graduate in Architecture at the Sapienza University of Rome, she is a graphic and visual designer. In the field of architecture, she has taken part in important studies and research including the historical, urbanistic and artistic study of Rome's Ghetto area; project proposal for a library building included in a masterplan for the upgrading and transformation of the former municipal slaughterhouse of Rome; survey, study, analysis and proposal for a restoration project of the Church of San Francesco Fuori le Mura in Sermoneta (LT), Italy.

She collaborates with the company, Andrea Natali "Conservazione Beni Culturali" for the cataloging and conservation of historic single-use structures, by carrying out architectural surveys on them.

Summary

Special-purpose historical assets are those built in the twentieth century, in certain environmental, social, industrial, economic, infrastructural contexts, which carried out a single function. This unique function determined the dimensions, partitions, accesses and, in short, the very particular and specific characteristics that excluded their reuse. Having lost their usefulness, they are destined in the space of a few years to disappear, to be demolished, their past lost without leaving any memory or mark, because they are not protected by current legislation.

The proposed cataloging and conservation of these structures is aimed at focusing attention on the afore-mentioned historical assets and protecting these significant testimonies not only from an architectural perspective but also from that of the history of work, popular culture and social aggregation.

Riassunto

Gli edifici finalizzati sono quelle costruzione sorte, nel Novecento, in determinati contesti ambientali, sociali, industriali, economici, infrastrutturali, che svolgevano una unica funzione. Questa unica funzione ne ha determinato le dimensioni, le ripartizioni, gli accessi e, in sintesi, le caratteristiche così particolari e specifiche che fanno escludere riutilizzi. Perdendo la loro utilità, sono destinati nel giro di pochi anni a scomparire, ad essere demoliti, a perdersi nella memoria senza lasciare spoglie anche perché non oggetto di tutela da parte delle Normative vigenti.

La proposta di catalogazione e conservazione degli edifici finalizzati è finalizzata a porre l'attenzione sui suddetti manufatti e a tutelare queste testimonianze significative dal punto di vista non solo architettonico ma anche della storia del lavoro, della cultura popolare, della aggregazione sociale.