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Sustainable reuse of disused railway

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Abstract

Railways, an infrastructure system consisting of 'railway lines', tunnels, toll booths and stations, are considered 'abandoned' when, for various reasons, any regular service of railway type is suspended. About 2 thousand kilometers of lines no longer active railways exist in our Italian territory, in most cases abandoned to decay. European and international examples of redevelopment of these derelict structures in bicycle lanes or otherwise dedicated to sustainable mobility foresee the transformation of old stations and toll booths in dining and reception points (youth hostels, hotels, restaurants), info points for the enhancement of the territory and care centers for bicycles maintenance. These tourism businesses may be of great impetus to the development of employment and economic exploitation, as well as be a driver of growth for tourism and economy of the country. In Italy a possible strategy for sustainable conversion of these paths necessarily has to take account not only of landscape and environmental values, but also the rich archaeological heritage which, in most cases, these routes intercept and connect. In this regard, the recovery of the railway plaza of Velia, a Focea colony of Magna Graecia is emblematic. Founded shortly after 540 BC, Velia is located inside the archaeological area (northern region), associated with an abandoned stretch of nineteenth-century galleries and ancient houses of the archaeological park. According to a view to integrated redevelopment, the project proposal is based on the idea of the "museum" structured on the historic landscape values.

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1. Introduction

The work, that concerns the archaeological area of Velia, is about rethinking and redesign of two important elements of the site: the main entrance, which is constrained by the presence of an elevated railway line and characterized by a significant degradation condition, and a disused ‘casello’, the subject of a recent restoration, but nowadays it is without a precise function.

2. Velia and its discovery.[†]

Situated about 40 km further south of the important archaeological site of Paestum, Velia is an ancient Polis of Magna Graecia (Fig. 1). The archaeological site is in the district of the Piana di Velia, in the little village of Ascea (Province of Salerno, Southern Italy), within the Nazional Park of the Cilento e Vallo di Diano. The Polis was founded in 540 b.C. by the Focei who came from Ionia to escape the Persian invasion of 545 b.C. The old city was characterized by a promontory which jugged out of the sea with the presence of a temple and a first settlement, while on either side small areas were gradually built extending both to the plain in the north and south. From the territorial point of view, the general components are well known by now, starting from the fortifications located in the territory. This territorial system was in functional continuity with the urban one, characterized by walls that marked, with the recurrence of square towers, both the northern district, of which few traces remain, already covered up in Roman times and used as a necropolis, and the southern one, fairly well preserved, and the acropolis that separated the two districts. (Fig. 2) The intersection point between the fortified tracts was the so-called Porta Rosa, which interrupted the road linking Porta Marina to the north and the south. (Figs. 3, 4)



(a)



(b)

Fig. 1. (a) Cities of Magna Graecia; (b) Engraving of a part of the city.

During the Middle Ages the lower part of the city was abandoned, as evidenced in a few houses on the Acropolis, with the destruction of some monuments, the re-use of others, the semi-destruction of the theater. Here a fortified village called Castellum Velie, was created which underwent transformation until it assumed the name of Castellammare della Bruca. (Fig. 5)

Inhabited until the seventeenth century, the village disappeared from censuses, and only in the nineteenth century reappeared thanks to some foreign travellers. In the beginning of last century, the village was radically demolished to highlight, according to a vision considered erroneous and not very scientific today, the material documents of the Greek city. Regarding Castellammare of Bruca the Torre Angioina remains (Fig. 6), superimposed on the cell of the Ionic temple that hung over the headland, the Cappella Platina, formerly the church of San Quirino, mentioned in a document of 1144, and the church with an adjoining rectory of St. Maria di Porto Salvo.

[†] Elaborated by Emanuela D'Andria

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