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## AlmaTourism

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### Places of Memory, Memory of Places: Square Tre Martiri in Rimini

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This is the title of a workshop activity conducted by the educational department of the Historical Institute of Rimini and two teachers with a secondary school class of First Instance of the city<sup>1</sup> during the school year 2008/2009. But it is also logical conclusion of a two-year project that had put the memory at the core of teaching, the conclusion of a rigorous historical research based on documentary sources and historiographical texts, materials, written, iconographic and oral sources; the conclusion of an experiment, starting from the history of each pupil and student, that has grounded the study and knowledge of the "Big History", through the enhancement of local history. But what I want to emphasize, and which will be the subject of the subsequent discussion, is that this trial on "places of memory and the memory of places" has become part of an updating course for teachers organized by the Historical Institute of Rimini in the same year. However a premise is needed. The course is also the result of a reflection on the outcomes of a teaching itinerary promoted by the same Institute and made with various local schools, in collaboration with teachers in classes. The aim was to stimulate students to discover that every inhabited place has a memory to save, to reconstruct and interpretation, a memory which there are often traces that remain silent because they are not interpreted. The undoubted interest in the classes involved, including the possibility of doing field research with the guidance of experienced personnel and awareness of the fact that «young people, whose memory is no longer transmitted by family and social community are led to regard the past as a temporal break, or rather a gap insignificant to their lives»<sup>2</sup>, inspired us to go further, planning a route that combines teacher training and action research with classes. From this it is meant to offer to the teachers the opportunity to build a curriculum in history, starting from the places of local memory, that should set the broader objective of promoting heritage education and cultural heritage, to us as sources and objects of historical knowledge, creating many carriers and witnesses of the past. It's true that in Primary and Secondary School of First Instance the local history is mandatory. But perhaps it is not dealt with due methodological rigueur or is not appropriately used for the value it can have on long term of interest. So we started from Rimini which as most of the Italian cities is rich in history. Particularly, it seemed significant

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<sup>2</sup> L. Lajolo, *L'intreccio tra memorie e storia insegnata*, in Bertacchi e Lajolo, *L'esperienza del tempo...*, pp. 20-21.

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the intertwining with the Roman history, which has considerable signs Rimini, and the period of fascism and the last war, identifying what we might call a “time door” Tre Martiri Square, formerly Julius Caesar, former San Antonio and before Major Square.

The Tre Martiri Square (1944, after bombing)



But it was even described as “clearing the main street”. Yes, because this was the answer given by a student of the class character of the aforementioned workshop activity to the question of what meaning for her the square in question. Answer probably common to the ears of many, but it encourages us to reflect on how we are perceived by the inhabitants, especially by younger generations, the places that constitute the cultural heritage of the city where they live. While establishing, in 1992, as non-places<sup>3</sup> those places of anonymity and solitude such as highways, train stations, airports, but also cars, trains, planes or even supermarket, large hotel chains and refugee camps, Marc Augé today makes his analysis in question in a more nuanced way. He sends out an alarm and tells us what is happening in the city centers, the areas where memory was most shared and had a stronger characterization: they have become increasingly similar to the perfection of airports, «designed to seduce the visitors came from far away and viewers, they are longer inhabited by the international elite»<sup>4</sup>. Certainly the Marc Augés’ configuration of reality covers most major urban fabric, but also in smaller towns experience disorientation and loss of identity could happen. We realize that more and more of the younger generations perceive the city and the countries in which they live as places of transit and not as communities or “text” readable to identify with. There is a beautiful thought of Cesare Pavese that makes us understand how anyone can be, regardless, to a place of affection or a place that involves a root: «... a village means to be not alone to know that in people, plants, land there is something of you, that when

<sup>3</sup> Cfr. M. Augé, *Nonluoghi. Introduzione a un’antropologia della surmodernità*, Elèuthera, Milano 2005

<sup>4</sup> M. Augé, *Per un’antropologia della modernità*, Jaka Book, Milano 2010.

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you're not there it still waiting»<sup>5</sup>. This is not to say that a person should remain anchored to his place of origin, nor probably intended Pavese. Certainly a place becomes a country, a cradle if you have to do involve relations with the emotions. There are places where we feel protected, others scary and there is no doubt that the house where we lived for all our childhood is linked to emotional stress. And yet it is also a territory and not belonging to our roots can develop a sense of belonging if we get in contact with its history, if we learn to know and appreciate the artistic and cultural heritage, if we braiding in it relations. A place is something that lives on its past, persons who have lived it, the events that took place, the houses that were built gradually... (and it could go on). The problem then is to understand the places, so we can live well in it, to preserve but also to continue to modify them without changing its character of identity. But to understand it has become increasingly difficult because the generational link has been broken, because the “gulf of forgetfulness” threatens the lives of individuals anchoring them to a nostalgic past or ephemeral present, because of the dramatic interruption of symbolic production. What is opposing face of this reality? Certainly not resignation, but rather awareness of the importance that the school can play in providing teaching and learning curricula that provide young people with adequate tools for reading places of the individual and collective memory. Our intention is therefore to build a path for reading a place of memory, approaching the issue from different angles. Fundamentally it is to frame the problem historically.

The training course was organized for teachers of every level of school at the City Museum. It was then opened with a report by historian Antonio Gibelli (Genoa University) entitled “The Roman Empire and its symbols through time”, where has addressed the issue “Romanism and Fascism: construction and dissemination of a myth. Imagery control and power in mass societies”.

Then he entered into the specifics of Roman Rimini and fascist Rimini we considered it important to reflect on the relationship that each person has with the memory and in particular with the sites of memory, individual and collective. And it is an undoubted fact that all of us, teachers or not, to find ourselves face to face with our own and others' memory, personal and family memory, collective and public. But this is not all: we must also relate to uses and abuses of memory or even better of memories, different and often conflicting and divided in their relations with the construction of historical sense and that of the public. For history teachers, the involvement is more complex and urgent as they are required to directly address the problem of the complicated relationship between history and memory. As Ivo Mattozzi stresses: «... is not true that is enough to live in history to have the ability to understand the links between biographic private processes and historical processes, to become a witness of history and to produce representations of past biographical historically intelligible. Is not enough to have lived to become historians of themselves. We need very different qualities: first, the ability to perform cognitive operations of production and structuring of information, attribution of meaning, communication processing. It should also be the mastery of historical knowledge concerning events, issues, historicized processes. And we need the exercise. In short, we need a kind of historical formation that teachers have never received by the University»<sup>6</sup>. Precisely to empower teachers, to stimulate the production of biographical and autobiographical memories of students in order to make them the subject of methodological analysis, to include memory in the teaching and learning cycle. The second round of training has been developed as essentially operational. After the necessary conceptual framework activities were presented which start from the memory of itself. Such activities which could be arranged by the teacher in the workshop activity and at the same time provide a stimulus for further research on the formation of a historical cognitive consciousness abilities.

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<sup>5</sup> C. Pavese, *La luna e i falò*, Einaudi, Torino 1950.

<sup>6</sup> *Memoria e formazione storica*, Il Bollettino di Clío '92, Anno XI, n. 29, Marzo 2010.

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The issue, “Memory, emotions, the places” was conducted by Maria Bacchi (Historical Institute of Mantua - Villa Emma Foundation of Nonantola). In the second phase of the course we have entered into the scope of local history scope, specifically the Roman Rimini and fascist Rimini from the reading of sources: materials, iconography, papers, multimedia. In two subsequent lectures, one more theoretical and the other made on "field" through an output in the territory, archaeologist Cristina Ravara led teachers along a route that was centered on education to heritage and cultural heritage, seen as sources and objects of historical knowledge. We might say that this was a journey between the Roman monuments of Rimini during the fascism, between commemorations, celebrations and propaganda. The last stage of the training was the presentation of the entire workshop on "Places of memory, memory of places: Piazza Tre Martiri.

The Tre Martiri Square (2010)



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A town's place full of signs of the past”, which has been mentioned in the introduction, the result of a collaboration between teachers and experts, both at the design and operative as well in the commitment of students who have demonstrated interest and passion for the work of action research that saw them as protagonists. The results in terms of knowledge and skills confirmed, since there was a need, the value of a teaching focused laboratory activity and on the need to develop a rigorous teaching of specific sites. Approaching the local history with emphasis on place as a historical source, setting a work that can trace from a local event to a more general context, emphasizing the experiential dimension of the place as a container of memories, not only creates motivation to enhancing emotional ties, but also develops curiosity, and critical attitudes of respect to cultural heritage. The work was followed in a scientific manner at all stages of historical and educational research: from the collection and analysis of pre-existing knowledge of students in relation to the present and past, to the teeming in relation to the availability and classification of documents, to the read different types of sources, organization of information in textual form. What is there to say in conclusion? Tre Martiri Square remained as "the clearing of the main street", but it certainly

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has become for students, including those from other cultures, a "full" place, legible, where the "signs of the past" pose questions that find answers; a place to preserve its identity, characteristics that, through proper politics of memory should be able to speak to those of the city who have made or intend to make their home. It is clear that a place in itself is dumb, but can have meaning for those who see it if it creates the conditions for establishing a relationship. The teacher's role in this sense is crucial. A correct reading of the places that should be considered as other sources and as such subject to criticism, is indeed a great learning resource that allows you to go beyond history as a subject to make it a discipline. It means, in addition to knowledge, the method and the procedures of historiography work with the cognitive operations and practices and make it possible. So, the place can really "talk" to the student (but more broadly to every visitor) if he is placed in a position not to get only a fleeting emotion, with the risk of superficial and hasty interpretations, but to acquire facts which can permit a durable revision and reflection, capable of marking experience and building memory. And so the memory can actually become the object of attention in the educational processes of learning and teaching.