

INTERREG III/ CADSES: LITHOPOLIS project

Conversion of deserted stone quarries into underground sites with the purpose of promoting local cultures.

Descriptive outline

Framework

The project LITHOPOLIS arises from the concept that enriching an area is often the result of adopting an extraordinary perspective to look at an ordinary and familiar site. We apply this principle to stone quarries, seen as abandoned sites, morphologic sights, containers to be protected against environmental pollution and heritage of an ancient past whose effects on the economy and culture of neighbouring areas are probably too recent to be interpreted with a current perspective.

Quarries as an instrument to increase the value of an area

Deserted stone quarries are lifeless signs of a forgotten history that is often difficult to decode.

LITHOPOLIS plans to revive these sites converting them into channels to divulge and promote the demographic, ethnological, anthropological and social culture they have contributed to produce. Deserted quarries can thus become driving centres of innovation telling the history of the places and activities that formed their identity. This can also be accomplished with the help of multimedia communication that can appeal to the users' senses and imagination (visual and acoustic channels in underground sites offer very effective emotional surroundings).

Pilot site in the Colli Berici

The pilot site we are planning to create in the Colli Berici district would become an operating model for all European partners involved in the project. The activities shaping the identity of the Colli Berici are related to stone work, grapevine and olive tree plantations. These economic processes have affected lifestyle in this area and marked natural landscape (with tracks, water sources, grottoes, woodland), rural buildings (country yards, farm resorts, historical buildings) and local folklore (country celebrations and traditional events)

In a stone quarry in the Colli Berici LITHOPOLIS will arrange an architectural pathway made up of multimedia galleries in order to

- Reconstruct the stone industry process from the 19th century up to today
- Simulate some local working activities that for the last two centuries have strengthened the identity of this area.
- Organize play-and-learn events that enhance the genius loci, that is all ethno-anthropological traditions related to the history and geography of this area.

Project objectives

LITHOPOLIS aims to:

- Preserve the memory of a major business in this area by collecting and visually revising the documental heritage processed as a work in progress (stone cutting,

mining and transport are related to sounds and images affecting the lives and activities of current and former quarry workers, up to and including present stone uses).

- Provide critical instruments of analysis to develop an historical local identity by observing and understanding phenomena involved in the project.
- Promote and divulge local history by identifying the instruments and activities that have shaped the economic processes in local communities and deeply influenced the area.
- Promote knowledge of the area as an added value of products and activities founding its identity.
- Promote European consciousness by comparing, through analogy and contrast, similar historical and economic phenomena in non-neighbouring areas.

Expected results

Activities and events promoted by LITHOPOLIS may effectively influence:

- Several types of tourism (related to sports, culture, culture popularisation and entertainment).
- A number of targets (local, regional, national, international through twinship projects with similar sites in Europe).
- Several leisure and educational activities (visiting tourism, organized travel tourism, educational school visits, personnel exchange visits).

Work Packages

Transnational supervision of the project and results circulation

Activities and gathering of project materials will be co-ordinated and monitored by means of co-ordination meetings. A technological platform will use internet to have the several teams involved share the work plan, data on its progress and produced materials.

Project results will be made public through specific conferences, published works and a website. The initiatives organized within the pilot project will be focused on tourism promotion of the area and on allowing residents to reappropriate the quarries as part of their cultural heritage.

Transnational development of methodology

Work teams from different countries as a network will develop a transnational methodology with the purpose to devise and implement projects aimed at recuperating and enriching specific areas, based on the quarries as distinctive cultural elements.

Similar projects shall be analysed and guidelines shall be defined to develop a project methodology that, starting from objectives, describes the processes that needs to be followed in order to reach them and assess their quality.

Transnational information gathering and elaboration

The network of teams from partner countries will develop a transnational research on quarries regarded as cultural heritage and their potential function in enriching an area from a cultural and tourist perspective. The teams in each partner country will collect,

catalogue and analyse documents about the existence and morphology of local quarries, the economic weight of mining business, about quarry materials used locally for typical buildings and jobs related to the mining activity and manufacturing of quarry materials. Work teams will use the methodology to analyse and process documents from an historical and scientific perspective.

Research papers will be made public through specialized conferences and used to organise cultural and information events addressed to residents of the territories involved in the project partner countries.

Transnational project development competition

A competition addressed to project planners of all partner countries will be announced to develop projects that turn quarries into centres enriching local areas. Projects will be published on the website and become part of a travelling exhibition, and will be illustrated during information workshops.

Pilot action: experimental project of territorial enrichment

As an experiment a quarry in the Colli Berici will be turned into a cultural and economic centre enriching the same district end, in perspective, a European centre of documentation about the reuse of abandoned stone quarries. A series of public events will be organized involving local residents and stakeholders to stimulate their awareness of the centre as cultural heritage and support their appropriation of it. At the same time, the effective potentialities of the centre as a means of tourist and economic promotion will be assessed through a communication campaign directed to other areas.

Partners

Italy (leader): Veneto Region and/or other local organisations and administrations

Former DDR: University or local organisation/administration (verifying stage)

Poland: University or local organisation/administration (verifying stage)

Croatia (Istria): University or local organisation/administration (first contact stage)

DNA Srl: Supporting the leader for project management and circulation of results

Budget

Around 1.500.000 Euro