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Fragile Memories: A Brief Historical Overview of Italian Conservation Laws on Fascist Concentration Camps

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**Andrea Ugolini and Francesco Delizia**

**Fragile Memories: A Brief Historical Overview of Italian Conservation Laws on Fascist  
Concentration Camps**

**Physical places stand the test of time**

Contemporary critical reflection has been looking for some time and from different angles at the close relationship between physical places<sup>1</sup> and remembrance, fully aware that the link between places and events has always been stronger than any built memorial. It is generally accepted that places themselves have the ability to ‘preserve the memory of the event they bear witness to’,<sup>2</sup> even if the relation between the event, the physical place and the act of remembering isn’t always straightforward and immediately understandable. The historical heritage of a particular site is often the result of cultural processes and it is sometimes impossible to separate policies aimed at helping people remember from politics. Hence, the alternation between oblivion and rediscovery, and the different ways of looking at the same site have led to the stories these places bear witness to being incomplete and biased. It is not surprising, though, that the sites are still able to preserve memories, even when these have been temporarily forgotten.<sup>3</sup>

While the importance of remembering takes on very specific meanings for historians, philosophers or sociologists, it is even more complex for those who are convinced that the physical place itself preserves memories. Just as a seal stamp leaves a mark on wax, to use a recurring image from Aristotle’s work, remembering relies on ‘the ruins of time’,<sup>4</sup> on the spaces and places that people have used and sometimes modified. The need to preserve them is therefore closely linked to our

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<sup>1</sup> In Pierre Nora’s work, the term ‘remembrance places’ is used in a wider, metaphorical sense, encompassing physical and non-physical places. Patrizia Violi, *Paesaggi della memoria. Il trauma, lo spazio, la storia* (Milan: Bompiani editore, 2014), 84.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>3</sup> Aleida Assman, *Ricordare. Forme e mutamento della memoria culturale* (Bologna: Edizioni il Mulino, 2003) 22.

<sup>4</sup> Alessandra Tarpino, *Geografie della memoria. Case rovine oggetti quotidiani* (Torino: Einaudi, 2008) 44.

ability/willingness to recognize and accept them, without looking away, even when what we see makes us feel uncomfortable, as, for example, in the case of Italian concentration camps built in the mid-twentieth century, especially those built for political and racial deportation purposes.<sup>5</sup>

The lack of reliable and complete information on these sites, the low-quality material used to build them and the country's haste to distance itself, internationally, from fascist Italy and from its part in the Nazi extermination programme are just some of the reasons why these places were neglected and forgotten. The belated recognition of their value as historical testimony has also led to different and deferred conservation policies for these so-called 'places of shame'. In this chapter, we will be presenting a brief historical overview and an analysis of the reasons for such conflicted attitudes and their consequences for these sites that were sometimes lost or altered or ended up taking on new meanings. Physical places stand the test of time – they of course change, but they are still there – and we can only truly understand them by considering them critically and not necessarily believing every truth with which we are presented.

### **Prisoners and detention places in Italy**

On 8 July 1928, the Consolidated War Act was approved, allowing the Italian Ministry of the Interior to 'imprison enemy alien citizens [...] or anyone dangerous to public safety'.<sup>6</sup> The Directorate-General for Public Security then began to draw up lists of people to be imprisoned at the outbreak of the war, as well as identifying the best areas to build concentration camps.<sup>7</sup> It was decided, where possible, to use existing buildings, be they state-owned or rented. In some detention camps, brick buildings or blocks were built for that purpose. Prisoners were mostly locked up in villas, castles,

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<sup>5</sup> Fascist concentration camps held not only political opponents and Jews, but also Slavs, after Yugoslavia was occupied in April 1941. Men and women of all ages (citizens of Yugoslavia or from other countries living in the Venezia-Giulia area) were deported and imprisoned in detention camps that were organized differently and with different purposes than Nazi extermination camps. These camps were located mainly in Yugoslavia and less frequently in Italy. In this chapter, we will not dwell, unfortunately, on these specific concentration camps, although they share the same fate of oblivion and a lack of conservation policies as the camps described herein.

<sup>6</sup> Gina Antoniani Persichilli, 'Disposizioni normative e fonti archivistiche per lo studio dell'internamento in Italia (giugno 1940–luglio 1943)', *Rassegna degli Archivi di Stato* (January–December 1978), 77-78. It took the regime a long time to decide who to include in the lists of people to be arrested, with a procedure finally being adopted in 1935.

<sup>7</sup> Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, 'I campi di internamento fascisti per gli ebrei', *Storia contemporanea* 4 (1991), 665.

farms, schools and former cinemas, as we learn from the extensive correspondence between the Directorate-General for Public Security and the Italian *questori* [heads of police] and *prefetti* [the arm of the central government in the provinces].<sup>8</sup>

The first people to be imprisoned were militants from anti-fascist parties and the so-called ‘subversives’, who were sentenced to jail time by the *Tribunale Speciale* [Fascist Special Court]. After the occupation of Yugoslavia, these prisoners were joined by civilians of Slavic origin from Venezia-Giulia and the occupied areas.<sup>9</sup> Upon the approval of the Racial Laws in 1938,<sup>10</sup> Jews were also arrested, starting with those ‘coming from states where racial policies were already in place that had hoped to find safety in Italy after Nazis rose to power’.<sup>11</sup> Next to be arrested were stateless Jews, labelled as ‘undesirable citizens because of their hatred of totalitarian regimes’,<sup>12</sup> and Italian Jews who were considered dangerous anti-fascists.

The first detention camps were set up in places that were far from important military sites or the front, scattered throughout mountainous areas or in unhealthy, isolated sites. This is why camps were initially built on the islands and in southern Italy and only later, from 1940 to 1943, in the north. There is evidence of camps in Apulia, Calabria, in the Lucania area, in Campania and in Lazio, but also in the mountainous areas of Marche and Abruzzi and in Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna.<sup>13</sup> The largest in size was the camp of Ferramonti di Tarsia, in Calabria, which had ninety-two blocks, covering an area of about 160,000 square metres; there were times when more than 1,600 Jewish men, women and children were detained in this camp.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, ‘I campi di internamento ...’, 666. 8 June 1940 saw the approval of the ‘*prescrizioni per campi di concentramento e località di confino*’ [prescriptions for concentration camps and political confinement], with law no. 442/12267.

<sup>9</sup> Capogreco, *I campi del duce. L'internamento civile nell'Italia fascista (1940-1943)* (Torino: Einaudi, 2006), 78.

<sup>10</sup> We refer here to legislative decrees no. 1381 of 7 September 1938, ‘*Provvedimenti per ebrei stranieri*’ [Prescriptions for non-Italian Jews] and no. 1728 of 17 November of the same year, ‘*Provvedimenti per la difesa della razza*’ [Provisions for the defence of the race].

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Until 1943, this region was the only one to have Jewish prisoners, who were held in the castle of Montechiarugolo and in Scipione.

<sup>14</sup> Carlo Spartaco Capogreco, *Ferramonti. La vita e gli uomini del più grande campo di internamento fascista* (Florence: Giuntina, 1987).

As the front line advanced, fascist concentration camps in southern Italy were abandoned or liberated, in contrast to which prisoners in the centre and north would, unfortunately, experience a completely different fate. On 30 September 1943, the Italian Social Republic was established, again enforcing imprisonment on racial and political grounds.<sup>15</sup> Many of the detention facilities were directly under German control: in the north, new sites for detention camps were identified – often involving the adaptation of existing facilities – and *Polizei- und Durchgangslager* [concentration and transit camps] were built. Fossoli,<sup>16</sup> Bolzano-Gries, Borgo San Dalmazzo in Cuneo and San Sabba (the only extermination camp in Italy) are only a few of the camps from which prisoners were sent to Nazi concentration camps. In the short period between 1943 and 1945, 8,529 Jews in Italy were victims of racial hatred, according to the Contemporary Jewish Documentation Centre.<sup>17</sup>

### **Why were these specific remembrance sites forgotten?**

In the aftermath of the war, the Italian Ministry of Public Education, which was then in charge of the protection of historical and artistic heritage, faced the massive and difficult task of rebuilding a war-ravaged country. Lacking economic, but also, most importantly, cultural resources, the ministry did not deal with the preservation of *recent memories* straightaway, focusing instead on ancient heritage and arts, that is, heritage in the traditional sense of the term.

In the attempt to erase every trace of the tragedy the country had gone through as soon as possible, reconstruction was seen as a way of speeding up the modernization processes that had started in the first decades of the twentieth century without much success due to the complex structure of Italian city centres, which often consisted of several layers of architecture from different periods.

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<sup>15</sup> For a general inventory, which does not include all of the ISR concentration camps, see Francesco Delizia and Andrea Ugolini, 'Luoghi dimenticati, luoghi della vergogna: i campi di prigionia e di transito nazifascisti in Italia', in *La Città Altra. Storia e immagine della diversità urbana: luoghi e paesaggi dei privilegi e del benessere, dell'isolamento, del disagio, della multiculturalità* (Naples: Federico II University Press, 2018), 1991–2001.

<sup>16</sup> About 5,000 people were imprisoned in Fossoli for political and racial reasons and later sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau, Mauthausen, Dachau, Buchenwald, Flossenbürg and Ravensbrück.

<sup>17</sup> <<http://www.cdec.it/home2.asp?idtesto=594>>, accessed on 26 May 2019. Also see Liliana Picciotto, *Il Libro della Memoria. Gli ebrei deportati dall'Italia (1943-1945). Ricerca della Fondazione Centro di Documentazione Ebraica Contemporanea* (Milan: Mursia, 2002).

This haste was surely the result of speculative pressures, but it was also fuelled by the psychological need to erase chilling and shameful memories of the past and by the political will to get the country back on its feet without dwelling too much on the role it had played in the war and its responsibility for war crimes. For political reasons, it seemed far more effective to have the new Allies focus on the merits of partisan Italy, rather than the faults of fascist times. This was mainly an ideological construct, deemed essential to the building of a new nation, as anti-fascism and the Resistance were minority movements that were not even close to having the vast consensus that had been enjoyed by fascism for two decades.

That new nation would later absorb most of the fascist establishment within the new government structure.<sup>18</sup> As a consequence, almost no attention was paid to places of violence that were not strictly related to the partisan and liberation war; this was especially true of sites linked to the Holocaust.<sup>19</sup>

In the immediate postwar period, most concentration camps were dismissed: palaces, villas, private buildings, warehouses, cinemas, schools, municipal offices, convents, seminaries, prisons, barracks and castles were returned to their rightful owners, that is, civil, religious and institutional bodies. The concentration camps that had been created from scratch were used as detention camps for prisoners of war and fascists or as collection facilities for stateless persons, while others became reception centres for Istrian refugees. The low-quality material with which the camps' blocks or shacks were made and the fact that they were situated in malarial areas or recently reclaimed marshes<sup>20</sup> led to the camps being quickly abandoned, demolished or reconverted for other purposes.

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<sup>18</sup> 'The Italian fascist apparatus went untouched, attempts to purge its personnel [...] proved a failure. In the 1950s it was calculated that sixty-two out of sixty-four *prefetti* had been functionaries under Fascism. So too had 135 police chiefs and their 139 deputies. Only 5 of these last had in any way contributed to the Resistance. Out of 603 chiefs commissioners of police and 1,039 police employees, including chiefs, deputy-chiefs and assistant chiefs, only 34 had links to antifascist groups.' Paul Ginsborg, *Storia d'Italia dal dopoguerra a oggi* (Torino: Einaudi, 2006).

<sup>19</sup> 'Italian Jews, who were the first victims of fascist dictatorship [...], preferred, after the war, to adopt a reconciling approach to remembrance.' Capogreco, *I campi del duce*, 9. See also Robert S. C. Gordon, *Scolpitelo nei cuori. L'olocausto nella cultura italiana (1944-2010)* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2013).

<sup>20</sup> The first detention camp for political opponents and Slavs was built in Marconia in 1938, on a flat reclaimed swampy area in Metaponto, Pisticci (Matera).

## Different and deferred forms of protection

The first conservation order for a concentration camp symbolizing Nazi-fascist ferocity was issued on 14 April 1965 for Risiera di San Sabba, later declared a national monument. The camp, the order reads, ‘is especially important for Italian political history as it is the only Nazi-organised detention camp in Italy where people of different nationalities died for political reasons’.<sup>21</sup> It is interesting, however, that the reasons for conservation stated in the order confirm that, in those years, the priority was to keep the memory of the Resistance alive in Italy, rather than the memory of the Holocaust. This rice-husking plant was made up of a series of blocks built in 1898 on the outskirts of Trieste. After 8 September 1943, it was used as a prison camp for Italian soldiers captured after the armistice and it later became a *Polizeihaftlager* [police detention camp] for prisoners awaiting deportation to Germany and Poland.

The conservation order of 1965, however, concerned only part of the site, namely the mill and part of the courtyard where the destroyed crematorium once stood. The remaining areas were not considered to be of enough historical testimonial value to justify their preservation. This decision was heavily criticized at the time, including by Romano Boico, the Trieste-based architect who transformed this once rice-husking factory into a Resistance museum. Boico did not seek to present the concentration camp as it had looked like, but rather wished to make the ‘utter, widespread squalor [of the place as a whole] rise to a symbol and become itself a monument’.<sup>22</sup> He decided to remove the watchtowers, some of the staircases built by the Nazis and window and door frames, in a process of artistic subtraction aimed at turning the mill into a monolith. Although he preserved the plaster on the cell walls, on which there was graffiti carved by prisoners, he reduced the inner part of the camp to an architectural skeleton, dismantling the wooden floors of upper storeys and leaving only vertical

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<sup>21</sup> With decree no. 510 of 15 April 1965, Italian President Giuseppe Saragat declared the rice-husking plant in Sabba a national monument. *Decreto di vincolo del complesso “Risiera di San Sabba” prov. di Trieste*, Ministry of Public Education on 14 April 1965. Museo Civico di Risiera di San Sabba.

<sup>22</sup> Massimo Mucci, *La Risiera di San Sabba. Un’architettura per la memoria* (Gorizia: Libreria Editrice Goriziana, 2012).

and horizontal support beams to obtain what is now called *Sala delle croci* [room of the crosses] (Figure 16.1).

It took time for Italy to gradually accept responsibility for racial deportation. From 1965 to the 1990s, no order was issued to preserve these remembrance sites. In August 1999, an order was issued to preserve the largest detention camp for Jews, stateless persons, foreign enemies and Slavs ever created by the fascist regime:<sup>23</sup> the camp of Ferramonti, in the Municipality of Tarsia (Cosenza). Built between June and September 1940, the camp held up to 2,019 inmates in August 1943. It was the first camp to be liberated by the Allies, in September 1943, and it was officially closed in December 1945. At the end of the 1950s, most of the barracks were still standing; they were later torn down by local farmers for building material and to make way for the Salerno–Reggio Calabria motorway, the construction of which began in 1974. When the order to preserve this former concentration camp was eventually issued in 1999, the site was a farmable area and less than a dozen of the ninety-two original barracks were still standing. The conception of the site of the monument is different to that in the conservation order for San Sabba and closer to article 14 of the Venice Charter of 1964. As a consequence, the order adds that protection shall be extended not only to the surviving buildings, but also to the entire area of the camp, focusing no longer on *pars pro toto* [a part taken from the whole], as in San Sabba, but on the entire area, thus including the *bare place* that the legislator had recognized as historically, politically and culturally important (Figure 16.2).

[INSERT FIGURE 16.1: B/W]

Figure 16.1. Risiera di San Sabba (TS). Site plan reconstructed by Marino Palcich and project by Romano Boico, including only courtyard and crematorium (Mucci, *La Risiera di San Sabba*, 22,

52).

[INSERT FIGURE 16.2: B/W]

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<sup>23</sup> *Conservation order for the concentration camp of Ferramonti di Tarsia* by the Italian Ministry of Cultural activities of 30 August 1999.



Figure 16.2. Ferramonti di Tarsia (CS). Cadastral plan in the conservation order and reconstruction of the camp overlaid with Google Earth satellite image (in Dario Rose and Aurelia Lupi, ‘Un approccio archeologico allo studio topografico del campo di Ferramonti di Tarsia (CS)’, *Bollettino Unione Storia ed Arte* 7/III serie (2012, 2013), 145).

The conservation order for what was left of the *Polizei- und Durchgangslager Bozen* [Bolzano police and transit camp], in the Municipality of Gries,<sup>24</sup> was unfortunately issued very late by the Autonomous Province of Bolzano. The camp, made up of old sheds that had previously been used by the Italian army, came into service in the summer of 1944. It was managed by the SS stationed in Verona and run by German, South Tyrolean and Ukrainian military troops. Prisoners included political opponents, Jews, Gypsies (Roma and Sinti) and Jehovah’s Witnesses. The camp of Bolzano was the only camp in Italy to also have labour camps.<sup>25</sup> During the ten or so months that the camp of Bolzano was active, between 9,000 and 9,500 people were sent from there to the camps of Mauthausen, Flossenbürg, Dachau, Ravensbrück and Auschwitz. The camp area covered a surface of 17,500 square metres. A conservation order was issued on 10 March 2003 only for the surrounding walls, the last remaining part of the camp after social housing projects were built on the site from the 1960s onwards (Figure 16.3).

[INSERT FIGURE 16.3: B/W]

Figure 16.3. Bolzano – Gries (BZ). Reconstructive drawing of what the camp looked like in summer 1944 by Cesare Zilio (Circolo Culturale ANPI Bolzano, *Quaderni della memoria* 1, 1999).

The destiny of Fossoli camp began to be discussed just after the war and somehow before the *Museo al deportato politico razziale* [Museum to those deported for political and racial reasons] was

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<sup>24</sup> Conservation order no. DPG-Lab 706 by Bolzano Autonomous Province of 10 March 2003.

<sup>25</sup> The main labour camps were located in the Municipality of Merano, in Certosa (Municipality of Senales), in Sarentino, in Moso in Passiria and in Vipiteno. Other labour camps were also active in Dobbiaco and Colle Isarco.

opened in Carpi<sup>26</sup> in 1973. The site had first been a prison camp for Allies, then a concentration camp for Jews under the jurisdiction of the Italian Social Republic and finally a *Polizei- und Durchgangslager* [police and transit camp] managed by the SS. It was made up of an older lot, called the ‘old camp’, in the northern area, which has been almost entirely destroyed; this was later complemented by a ‘new camp’, which is still standing today, in the southern area. After the war, this state-owned site was used as a detention camp for fascists, a refugee centre, a village for the community of Nomadelfia, led by priest Zeno Saltini, and a reception facility for Giulian-Dalmatian exiles fleeing Istria. In 1984, the Municipality of Carpi acquired the property and, four years later, launched an international restoration competition that did not lead to anything. The Fondazione Campo Fossoli was established in July 1995 and recognized a year later as a charity by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage. It eventually took over management of the camp in December 2000. The declaration of the cultural interest of what was left of the concentration camp was presented on the late date of 26 May 2011.<sup>27</sup> It should be emphasized that, as in Tarsia, the protected area included the ‘new camp’ and the remaining sheds, as well as the ‘old camp’ to the north, today a natural reserve without artefacts of any kind. Extending protection to both sites proved essential, as the two sites allow visitors to comprehend the actual size of the camp and the number of people imprisoned, but also the extent of the tragedy that unfolded in this place during the war. Fossoli is considered one of the most important collection and transit camps in Europe, along with Drancy in France, Mechelen in Belgium and Westerbork in the Netherlands (Figure 16.4).

[INSERT FIGURE 16.4: B/W]

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<sup>26</sup> For more information on this topic, see Giovanni Leoni, ‘In memoria dell’altra Resistenza: Il museo Monumento dei BBPR a Carpi’, in Marzia Luppi and Patrizia Tamassia, eds, *Il Museo Monumento al Deportato politico e razziale di Carpi e l’ex Campo di Fossoli* (Bologna: Bononia University Press, 2016), 29-52. Andrea Ugolini and Francesco Delizia *Strappati all’oblio. Strategie per la conservazione di un luogo di memoria del secondo Novecento: l’ex Campo di Fossoli* (Florence: Altralinea, 2017).

<sup>27</sup> *Conservation order for former concentration camp of Fossoli* by the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities, issued pursuant to article 10, paragraph 3, letter D of legislative decree no. 42/2001 of 26 May 2011.

Figure 16.4. Fossoli (MO). Cadastral plan in the conservation order protecting both the ‘old camp’ and the ‘new camp’, with reconstruction of the entire concentration camp by Chiara Mariotti and Alessia Zampini (see Ugolini and Delizia, *Strappati all’oblio*, 88).

A quick search on the internet page *Vincoli in Rete* [conservation orders online] of the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities,<sup>28</sup> which has been active since 2012, confirms how this part of our cultural heritage remains very much neglected. By way of example, the first fascist detention camp in Italy, the camp of Pisticci, is not protected yet, while the castle of Montechiarugolo (PR) is protected as a medieval building, but not for having been the first collection centre for stateless Jews from Northern Italy before 8 September 1943. The same is true of the huge detention camp of Urbisaglia, in the Marche region, which was also one of the first camps set up by the then Ministry of the Interior, as early as June 1940, on the premises of Villa Giustiniani Bandini within the Chiaravalle Abbey, in Fiastra. Again, the conservation order only concerns the building and it does not mention that the place was a detention facility during the Second World War. There is also no trace of this in the historical record of the Marche region for that building, updated in 2019.<sup>29</sup>

Other concentration camps are not preserved at all, despite being part of monumental buildings like Villa La Selva in Campo di Bagno a Ripoli (Florence), which was first a civil detention camp and then, from 1943 to July 1944, an Italian Social Republic concentration camp for Jews awaiting deportation in the Province of Florence.

The consequence of this systematic oblivion is the loss of material traces and signs of this sad part of our history. A case in point is the concentration camp of Borgo San Dalmazzo (Cuneo), set up from 8 September 1943 for Jews awaiting deportation; after the war, it was abandoned for twenty

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<sup>28</sup> <<http://vincoliinrete.beniculturali.it/VincoliInRete/vir/utente/login#>>, accessed on 26 October 2018. The *Vincoli in rete* (VIR) online database contains data from government central and peripheral archives of the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and it is constantly updated.

<sup>29</sup> Another forgotten concentration camp is in Servigliano, in the Marche region, opened in 1915 for Austrian war prisoners. The fascist government used it as a detention camp for soldiers (January 1941–September 1943) and, from December 1943, the Italian Social Republic used it as a transit and concentration camp for Jews awaiting deportation (October 1943–June 1944).

years and today all that remains is a courtyard and parts of a building that have been incorporated into a school.<sup>30</sup> Unfortunately, other camps have completely disappeared, such as Coreglia Ligure, the camp in the former hotel Commercio in Forlì, the camp in the Umberto I Military School in Tonezza del Cimone, , the camp at Vo' Vecchio near Padua, and many others.

### **A different approach to the conservation of twentieth-century heritage**

From the end of the 1980s onwards, Italy saw a sharp increase in cultural outputs relating to the Holocaust: books and films made Italians more aware of what had happened in their country. Although this led to the establishment of a *Giornata della Memoria* [Holocaust Remembrance Day],<sup>31</sup> it didn't result in radical changes in heritage conservation laws:

History is considered as such if facts and events are told in full without omissions, whether they are heroic events, or rifts and conflicts within a country leading to civil war, as both positive and negative events are instrumental in us learning the lessons history has to teach.

This remark is taken from the introduction to a bill of law for the protection of the Second World War heritage of memories.<sup>32</sup> The meaning of the proposal is clear: the time is ripe; the last witnesses are dying and with them the memory of what happened. The memories of the events of the Second World War, just like those of the First World War, deserve to be considered as collective heritage and, as such, preserved.

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<sup>30</sup> The nearby railway station, from which trains to Auschwitz left, remains untouched and is today the site of a deportation memorial.

<sup>31</sup> Gordon, *Scolpitelo nei cuori*, 271-298.

<sup>32</sup> Bill of law by senators Ulivi, Massucco and others, from 5 March 2003, called 'Estensione della tutela di cui alla legge 7 marzo 2001, no. 78, al patrimonio storico della Seconda guerra mondiale' [extending protection granted by law no. 78 of 7 March 2001 to Second World War historical heritage], presented for a second time and reviewed on 20 May 2015.

In March 2001, the Italian Parliament passed a law to protect former First World War sites with specific implementation tools.<sup>33</sup> It was then proposed to extend the law to Second World War heritage sites, in order to fill a regulatory gap in the conservation of this more recent heritage and to compile an inventory of such sites, as a first step towards further legislative actions. Although a research and documentation project on fascist camps conceived and curated by Andrea Giuseppini and Roman Herzog has been active since 2011 – and became a continuously updated website<sup>34</sup> in 2013 thanks to an agreement with the Central Archives of the State in Rome – the information contained on the internet site is unfortunately still not part of the national conservation database, on the grounds of which conservation orders are issued.

Today, more than seventy years after the end of the war, these places of remembrance are somehow part of the cultural heritage protected under legislative decree no. 42/2004 (Italian Code of cultural heritage); however, they are still not protected under law 78 of 2001. This is primarily due to a cultural problem, common to many European countries, which was recently and effectively represented in an exhibition titled *Different Wars*, curated by the Historical Memory and Education group of the EU–Russia Civil Society Forum. The exhibition reveals the variations in the narration and perception of the history of the Second World War in modern high-school textbooks of the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Poland and Russia. Versions are still widely divergent, but all are extremely cautious when discussing the countries' responsibilities in the war. While Germany seems more aware and objective in this area, Italy is among the *forgetful* countries, or countries with an 'inconstant memory': in our school textbooks, for example, racism, as a fundamental component of fascist ideology, and Italian war crimes are significantly downplayed.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Law no. 78 March 2001 *Tutela del patrimonio storico della Prima guerra mondiale* [Protection of Second World War cultural heritage].

<sup>34</sup> <<http://www.campifascisti.it>>, accessed on 15 May 2018. Today, there are about 900 registered sites (including concentration camps, labour camps, transit camps, confinement camps, detention camps, internment camps, prisons, camps for war prisoners and ISR camps), not just in Italy, but also in Croatia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Libya, Slovenia and Somalia.

<sup>35</sup> See Valeria Palumbo, 'La Seconda guerra mondiale, a scuola si insegna in tante versioni diverse', *Corriere della Sera*, <<http://www.corriere.it>>, accessed on 14 May 2017; Elena Freda Piredda, 'Sei paesi, sei guerre mondiali: è possibile una memoria condivisa?', *il Sussidiario.net*, <<http://www.ilsussidiario.net>>, accessed on 11 January 2017.

Pursuant to article 2 of the Code of Cultural Heritage, immovable and movable assets of historical value ‘and anything else that is considered by law of cultural value’ are cultural assets and as such part of our cultural heritage. Article 10 includes in the country’s cultural heritage any asset of historical interest, belonging to public and private bodies and institutions, as well as ‘immovable and movable assets of cultural interest, no matter who the owner is, of particular importance for their link to political and military history’ (pursuant to Article 13). Memories of concentration camps are therefore not specifically preserved; Italian laws protect single buildings and artefacts used by Nazi-fascists not as camps themselves, but as sites or monuments already considered to be of cultural interest for other reasons.<sup>36</sup>

However, the protection of remembrance places related to the Second World War – which naturally encompasses memories of the Holocaust, other forms of deportation, mass exodus and other war-related tragedies – relies on the conceptual and legal recognition of those sites as a specific category of cultural heritage. As has been observed,<sup>37</sup> under Italian laws, these sites can be conceptually assimilated into the notion of archaeological parks (article 101 of the Code) because they almost always include important archaeological artefacts and they feature different historical, landscape or environmental values. Nevertheless, Italian law requires these sites to qualify as *ancient* to be protected: this questionable requirement is not only hard to define, but it also leaves remembrance sites in the same grey area as industrial archaeology sites, which are hardly taken into consideration by the *Soprintendenze* in Italy.

Since it is difficult to include in a declaration of cultural interest different kinds of heritage (sometimes just a milestone, a cave, a farmhouse in ruins or even a written document or oral testimony), it would make more sense to associate these sites with the notion of a cultural itinerary:

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<sup>36</sup> This is the case, for example, for ‘rural architectures of historical or anthropological interest, evidence of traditional rural economy’, protected as cultural heritage pursuant to Article 10 of Italian Legislative decree 42/2004, or for ‘immovable assets of particular natural beauty, geological or historical value’ protected as landscape heritage pursuant to Article 136.

<sup>37</sup> Massimo Carcione, ‘Per una corretta valorizzazione dei Luoghi della Memoria. Lo stato dell’arte in ambito legislativo’, in Maria Vittoria Giacomini and Ezio Montalenti, eds, *Memoria fragile da conservare*, proceedings of the conference ‘Memoria fragile da conservare: i luoghi della deportazione e della resistenza in Piemonte’, 24-25 May 2013, Cuneo 2013.

a multi-point route characterized by one or more unifying cultural themes, covering a more or less vast area, an intangible network involving dynamic and participatory cultural activities, with a strong bond to the area.<sup>38</sup> Conservation and promotion would blend in such cultural itineraries, encouraging new forms of participation by public and private bodies.

### **How to preserve fragile memories?**

The recurring issue in this chapter is a difficult and topical one: the preservation of these ‘fragile memories’ that find themselves on the border between tangible and intangible evidence and are very difficult to fit into our ‘cultural heritage system’. These memories of relatively recent facts are linked to places or artefacts that are at risk of disappearing, because they were not designed to last and because of their poor intrinsic value.

What also emerges is these sites’ ability to create a unique and true example of common heritage, bringing together different communities from different countries. In this sense, the notion of landscape protection<sup>39</sup> would be more relevant to them, as it refers to the cultural link between natural places and anthropic elements. Protecting these links, rather than single buildings or sets of buildings, means enabling deeper cultural fruition, where space and time acquire greater importance.

Regional governments, local authorities, associations and foundations play an extremely important role in planning activities to develop, implement, manage and promote historical itineraries and parks and, most importantly, in counting, cataloguing and systematizing sites and evidence.

As more institutional actors take part in the process, the conservation tools available increase and diversify. Examples include regional laws, which regulate the participation of local bodies and legal persons following principles of vertical and horizontal subsidiarity, or orders establishing historical parks and cultural itineraries, which define their mission priorities and guiding principles,

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<sup>38</sup> The debate on cultural itineraries at the Council of Europe started in the 1970s; the meaning that has prevailed over the years is that of itineraries as cross-cutting and transactional paths sharing common cultural heritage. They are mainly a means of communication and cultural exchange and a tool to strengthen European identity.

<sup>39</sup> Here, we are referring to the definition of the *European Landscape Convention*, adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe in Strasbourg on 19 July 2000.

or international conventions and treaties, which, on the one hand, prompt member states to update their laws and, on the other hand, promote coordinated actions and the implementation of cultural network systems.

It would be impossible to examine, in this chapter, all aspects of the issue that merit investigation, for example, why, in national and regional laws, in orders establishing historical parks and in the missions of museums and sites, Resistance and rebellion against Nazi-fascism still take centre stage, whereas the build-up to those moments and their tragic consequences are barely mentioned.<sup>40</sup> It is, however, worth mentioning, in relation to the protection of fragile memories, UNESCO's commitment to implementing measures to safeguard intangible cultural heritage and pass it from one generation to another.

We refer, in particular, to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage adopted in 2003,<sup>41</sup> which outlines a series of procedures for the identification, documentation, preservation, protection, promotion and enhancement of intangible cultural heritage. Two lists of particular importance in relation to the content of this chapter are: the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. The latter, in particular, aims to mobilize international cooperation and assists stakeholders in taking appropriate measures. Among the instruments envisaged for the implementation of the principles and objectives of the convention, the Register of Best Safeguarding Practices is of significant interest precisely because it is inspired by the idea of pooling all methodological contributions aimed at protecting 'fragile memories'.

Andrea Ugolini is the author of paragraphs: *Physical places stand the test of time; Prisoners and detention places in Italy; Different and deferred forms of protection*

Francesco Delizia is the author of paragraphs: *A different approach to the conservation of twentieth-century heritage; How to preserve fragile memories?*

The following paragraphs are jointly authored: *Why were these specific remembrance sites forgotten?*

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<sup>40</sup> It should be noted that Italian bill of law no. 139 of 28 April 2006, by MP Valdo Spini, *Disposizioni per la tutela del patrimonio storico della guerra di liberazione e della lotta partigiana* [provisions to preserve the historical heritage of the liberation and partisan war] was never transformed into a law.

<sup>41</sup> Ratified by Italy in 2007.