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Topic of the Year: Museum Archaeology

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The museum belongs to the participating community: Social engagement experiences at the Angera Civic Archaeological and Open-Air Museum, Lake Maggiore, Italy

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Abstract

Angera is a town on the Lombard bank of Lake Maggiore whose history dates back to 15.000 years ago, featuring an important role in the commercial network of Northern Italy during the Roman period. Since its foundation in 1974, the local museum enjoys a strong community involvement, recently empowered with a new project that allowed it to turn into "Civic Archaeological and Open-Air Museum". The project invested different social groups and cultural areas outside the Museum, as well as commercial and professional spaces usually not involved in the activities of the Museum, in order to push citizens to behave as proud cultural and heritage ambassadors: exhibitions occupied the shop windows, ancient food and craft products began to revive using the mark of Municipal Denomination of Origin (DeCo), citizens and visitors had the opportunity to become protagonists of social and cultural community development through their own activity, thus generating a sense of belonging to the Museum itself.

 Open Access  Peer Reviewed  **Keywords:** Angera, Lake Maggiore, museum, social engagement, sense of belonging

L'Appartenenza è avere gli altri dentro di sé...
Io non pretendo il mondo intero, vorrei
soltanto un luogo, un posto più sincero,
dove magari un giorno, molto presto, io
finalmente possa dire questo è il mio posto,
dove rinasca, non so come e quando, il senso
di uno sforzo collettivo per ritrovare il mondo.

(Belonging is having others within yourself... I don't claim the whole world, I just want a place, a more sincere place, where maybe one day, very soon, I can finally say this is my place, where, I don't know how and when, the sense of a collective effort to find the world can be reborn.)

Giorgio Gaber, *Canzone dell'Appartenenza*
(*Song of Belonging*)

Introduction

On 27th October 2005, the member States, meeting in Faro, Portugal, signed the Council of Europe Framework on the Value of Cultural

Heritage for Society (rm.coe.int/1680083746; Amari 2017, pp. 36-37; Cartei 2008). The Italian Senate ratified the treaty on 10th October 2019.

The parties to this convention recognise that rights relating to cultural heritage are inherent in the right to participate in cultural life, as defined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; they also recognise individual and collective responsibility for cultural heritage; they emphasise that the conservation of cultural heritage and its sustainable use have human development and quality of life as their goal. Cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently from ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time; a heritage community consists of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within

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the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations.

Museums, engagement and cultural landscape

In this context museums operate by means of deep reflection on their own cultural landscape and community. *Museums and cultural landscapes* was the theme chosen for the ICOM International Conference held in Milan in July 2016. The bond with the community is even stronger in museums that preserve the stories, traditions and collections that have been formed in the same territory and that are linked to local cultural, political and social choices (Chiesi 2009, pp. 5-15; Drugman 2010, p. 25; Varine 2014, pp. 9-10; Ericani 2017; ALES 2018). Reflection and studies on ecomuseums, open-air museums and community museums are important to understand how to develop a relationship between museums and the community (Varine 2005; Dell'Orso 2009; Gennario 2011; Reina 2014, p. 30, 36-38; Garlandini 2014, pp. 89-100; Angelini 2014, pp. 131-142; De Nicola & Zuccoli 2016; Garlandini 2017, p. 18; Delarge 2017, pp. 41-43). If our goal is to involve the community in cultural life and in the protection and enhancement of our heritage, starting from archaeological museums, the main question is: what features in the local territory do we focus on?

The relationships that an archaeological museum could create with society in Canada or Tanzania or New Zealand (Thomas & Lea 2014; Onciul et al. 2017) are necessarily very different from those that are possible in Italy (Parello & Rizzo 2014; Rosati 2016, pp. 128-136; Malfitana 2018).

Our country is dotted with countless pluri-

millennial traces of our ancestors and the past interacts daily with our present, during the excavation of a subway station, at school, in the backyard, as in every tourist and cultural project. Local archaeological museums, which preserve the finds from the area in which they are located, are often the only places where the past becomes present – and if the museum is able to listen to the needs of its community, it can contribute to promoting sustainable development.

Angera: A museum born of the community

Angera is a town on the Lombard shore of Lake Maggiore, it now has about 5,500 inhabitants and its history goes back to 15,000 years ago. Its archaeological remains date from the Upper Palaeolithic to the Roman era, and the town played an important role in the Middle Ages. During this period the Visconti were lords of Milan and Angera, so a strong link between the two cities has always existed.

From the 16th to 19th centuries the community focused on agriculture and fishing; churches, convents and craft activities flourished. The twentieth century brought the development of the textile industry, which provided work – with at least 4 factories – up to the 1970s. Later the industrial activity went into crisis, the territory became popular with tourists, and today there are many integrated heritage enhancement projects aimed at the sustainable development of agri-food and tourism companies, with a 'slow and green' vocation.

Angera Civic Museum collects and exhibits exclusively finds from the area, and recounts the cultural and social roots of people who live nearby (Sena Chiesa & Lavizzari Pedrazzini

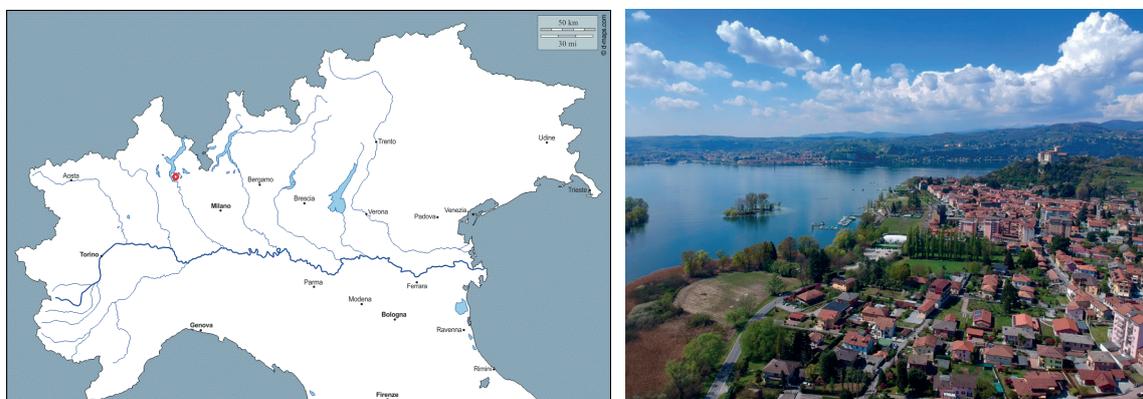


Fig. 1. Angera's location (dmaps.com; by CC BY-NC-SA 4.0 license) and landscape (© Comune di Angera).



Fig. 2. MABA. The Angera Children's Archaeological Museum (© Comune di Angera).

1985; 1995). Like all local archaeological museums, it can therefore play an extremely important role in the collective social conscience related to local heritage. The council founded the Archaeological Museum in 1974; at this time important excavations were underway at the Roman cemetery and in the village. The community wanted to avoid the finds being transferred to deposits or museums in other towns, as had happened in the past. A strong push towards the creation of the Civic Archaeological Museum came from the local inhabitants, who founded the Mario Bertolone Archaeological Historical Association (devoted to the famous historian and archaeologist who excavated many sites in the Varese area and also was director both of Gallarate and Varese museums in the middle of the 20th century; Caramella 2018) and participated assiduously in research and protection, also taking part into urban excavations.

Angera Council inaugurated the Museum in 1982, thanks to work by the universities of Milan and Pavia (Miedico 2015a, pp. 84-85). During the early years university staff oversaw the organization of the Museum and managed it; in the 1990s, honorary curators and members of the Bertolone Association took care of the Museum and continued to keep inventories of all that was found. Volunteers tried to keep the Museum open and active. However, scientific activity was gradually reduced, archaeological research became increasingly rare, and no dedicated staff was hired. In a few years the arrival of a new generation and lack of citizens' involvement led to the Museum being substantially forgotten. In the early 2000s there was a first inventory update and a new layout, but there was no stable staff for opening times and no educational services were organized. In the period 1995-2008 the museum had about

150 visitors a year. Since 2010, the council has decided to invest in redeveloping the Museum, appointed a curator, selected a company to implement the project and made available the funds needed to carry out research, organize cultural events, and participate in calls for funding. Thanks to the constant collaboration with the Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape Superintendency and to co-financing by the Lombardy Regional Authority, the curator has produced electronic inventories and a GIS-based digital archaeological map; after defining and digitizing the local archaeological heritage the Museum was able to start proposing cultural programs and events to enable the community to develop an increased awareness of its heritage. Museum operators conducted an informal survey and interviewed citizens and administrators, passers-by, neighbours and shopkeepers, and it emerged that most residents did not know that there was an Archaeological Museum in Angera. Basic instruments were created to enhance community involvement and engagement: educational activities, guided tours, conferences, communication systems and social media development. The cultural proposals were "traditional", generated by the Museum and aimed at citizenship; the community was not involved in the planning phase. However, visitor numbers grew rapidly, from 150 to 1,800 in the first year, to over 4,000 in 2014. Museum service users were mainly schools plus a group of regular enthusiasts, in addition to a few occasional visitors. The school-age public was particularly interested and pupils began to bring parents, grandparents and friends to the Museum (Wood 2013, pp. 217-220): the management decided to encourage services aimed at families and to create, within the structure, the MABA - Angera Children's Archaeological Museum.

The curator designed accessible bilingual panels, iconographic captions and games; the latter were made by Angera artisans, who decided to donate them to the Museum (Perin 2017, pp. 33-41). Involving new audiences seemed very difficult, so an improved analysis of the community became essential (Kadoyama 2018): after better understanding the potential audience, we could find a way to involve people who were not used to attending the museum or inhibited by a sense of inadequacy. In many cases complex sociological analyses are inappropriate; people were not keen to make themselves available for specific interviews and indeed the request might create distrust and further alienate sectors of the community. In Angera we found that many inhabitants had not been informed about – or stimulated to feel interest in – discovering our past.

We tried to ask some questions to visitors, to the parents and grandparents of school pupils who came to the Museum, and to customers in a bar near the Museum, in a completely informal way. Some told us that they did not feel motivated to enter the Museum, they believed that it only served to accumulate dust and that money invested in the Museum was wasted! Some revealed to us that they had never entered the Museum for fear of not being informed or educated enough to understand the tales recounted there. It was time to leave the Museum Comfort Zone and meet people who had never crossed the threshold. It was essential to make sure that people could understand that the Museum belonged to them and told of their past, from various perspectives. It was necessary that residents could identify with the stories told in the Museum and see their own past in them (Trofanenko 2006, pp. 95-109; Watson 2008; <http://www.participatorymuseum.org/chapter8/>; Gabriel 2011; Golding & Modest 2013, pp. 11-31; Turci 2017, pp. 200-201). The Museum also had to demonstrate its ability to generate an economic return - even if entry was free – by stimulating interest in tourism, crafts, local food and wine and other commercial activity related to the museum. It was no longer enough to offer or produce culture “from on high”, it was necessary to generate a need for culture, a sense of belonging to the Museum, as well as pride in being part of the local cultural heritage. Measuring the economic interest generated by museums is very complex and it is difficult to think of a valid system for

any territory or country; recent research by the Egyptian Museum of Turin is interesting (Bertacchini & Pregliasco 2018) and there are many texts to consult (Re 2006; Montella 2009; Sanesi 2014). The Museum had to be able to directly involve artisans and traders, restaurants and doctors, young and old people, teachers and students. It had to show itself to be a useful public service; the Council had to be justified and invited to take care of it, in order to guarantee its availability to the community (OECD 2018). Local inhabitants should therefore wish not only to take part in cultural proposals, but also to propose new ones, to invest time, energy and public and private economic resources in the Museum.

Here we present some of the experiences acquired in recent years by the municipality, the result of continuous archaeological research, a constant dialogue with the community, a deep respect for citizens' knowledge, needs and skills, together with an attractive plan to develop tourism. Numerous activities have been carried out with the community; here we describe the strategies and development of some projects which involved external intervention by entities, individuals or private companies not usually involved in the life of a museum, and which may seem to have little in common. The examples given required the participation of parts of the community that knew little about the Museum and considered of scarce interest that which happened inside. We have chosen not to go into the scientific details, for which we refer to the Museum publications. Experience has shown that without detailed specific knowledge and a deep understanding of the exhibits, heritage and territory, no cultural project can hope to generate social engagement. A museum's scientific credibility is a fundamental starting point for obtaining the trust of the community – and consequently its participation and the availability of local knowledge and resources. Experience has also shown us that to implement social engagement projects we need a long-term vision, and effective and lasting coordination. Even when local people willingly participate in the planning and implementation phases, it is unlikely that all the actors will be constantly involved for long periods.

In Angera it was possible to carry out complex projects because the Council decided to invest funds in culture in order to improve the social

context and to increase tourism, and because all the projects were managed by committed and competent personnel. The political decision makers and scientific and administrative staff must necessarily have a coherent vision and plan and be able to play their roles in synergy; in the case of Angera these last conditions were particularly favourable.

EXPO2015, Archeo & Food and Products with Denomination of Municipal Origin (De.Co.)

The subject of food interests and unites a large section of the population, regardless of historical or archaeological training; a strong stimulus for the creation of projects able to increase popular involvement in this theme came from EXPO 2015: Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life (Expo 2015). Angera Archaeological Museum houses biological finds related to local agricultural production and food consumption. In response to requests received from the Agriculture and Culture Department of Lombardy Regional Authority, we decided to use the Museum's archaeobotanical heritage (Grassi & Miedico 2015) to build an enhancement project, conceived and implemented together with several artisans, farmers and restaurants. We chose as the subject of our project the bread found in numerous burials in the Roman graveyard – carbonized, but still intact. The two-thousand-year-old Angera bread was analyzed by Mauro Rottoli and Elisabetta Castiglioni, who identified its ingredients: spelt flour and stone-ground whole wheat, water, salt and yeast, probably brewers', in line with the practice indicated by Pliny for the Roman *Cisalpina* area (Pliny *Nat. Hist. XVIII*, 68). This bread has been found in three shapes: the

quadratus, a round loaf divided into 4 by a cross-shaped groove which made it easier to break; the braid – evidence of ancient aesthetic tastes and bakers' skill; and the bread bowl, which was called *Tazina* in the local dialect.

The Slow Food Convivium (www.slowfood.com) of the Varese area was involved and the Council invited bakers and cooks to collaborate in the revival of Angera's two-millennia-old bread recipe.

Claudio Mei Tomasi, chef of *Il porto* restaurant, and Claudio Giombelli, an Angera baker, accepted the challenge and devised a recipe that was faithful to the original ingredients, as well as being tasty and sustainable. It is worth remembering that neither of them had ever had much to do with the Museum until that time, but now they are among its best ambassadors.

The Council appointed and convened a commission made up of experts from the historical, gastronomic and commercial sectors. The commission studied and defined the recipe proposed, and developed product specifications, marketing rules, procedures and forms to request production and sales. Anyone who wants to produce Angera Bread must respect the ingredients and procedures indicated in the disciplinary; whoever sells or serves Angera Bread should offer clients explanatory material (approved by the commission) which tells its history and invites them to visit the Museum in which the ancient specimens may be seen.

That's the way the idea of a municipal denomination (De.Co.) originated, representing a certification granted by the local Council to a product, closely connected to the locality and its community.

Since 2015, the Giombelli Bakery has produced about 30 kg of *quadratus* and braid forms of Angera Bread every Thursday and



Fig. 3. Angera's two-thousand-year-old bread (© SABAP CO-LC-MB-PV-SO-VA all rights reserved), making the modern version in Angera and the 'Tazina' with pike and vegetable soup (© Comune di Angera).



Fig. 4. A detail of the herb exhibition and the experiential map of local herbs (© Comune di Angera).

restaurants with seasonal soups as a typical 'Made in Angera' dish.

Every year Angera's primary school classes come to the Museum and knead bread made according to the ancient recipe. "The Bimillenary Bread of Angera" project was presented at EXPO2015, in various national and international contexts, and has been the subject of articles in local and national newspapers, travel blogs and of tasting proposals. Interest has continued over the following years and keeps alive the curiosity of visitors, who want to see and taste it.

In 2015, following the food and wine trend, the council, with the SlowFood Association, organized the first Archeo&Food convention, dedicated to the local agri-food heritage and Lake Maggiore's biodiversity; the first year the conference was centred on bread. In 2016 we focused on sweet chestnuts, starting from the ancient fruits found in Cislago in a 5th century AD farmhouse and displayed in the Museum (Grassi & Miedico 2015). The conference involved consortia of chestnut growers, Swiss and Italian forest research institutes, and restaurants which proposed theme menus, together with carpenters and fishermen, who discussed the importance of chestnuts in the diet and chestnut wood in the Verbania shipbuilding industry, for fish repopulation and fishing net dyeing.

In 2017 attention turned to the history and production of honey, stimulated in first place by a Bronze Age museum exhibit. Biologists, researchers from Ispra JRC, and beekeeping associations were involved. We started from the history of bees and their use by humankind over the millennia, and of the use of honey in nutrition and in pharmaceuticals and described some of the causes of bee mortality. The

workshops and visits to local beekeepers, set up an exhibition dedicated to historical beehives, loaned by the Agriculture and Apiary Museum in the Benedictine Fathers Abbey, Final Pia (SV).

In 2018, a review of archaeological finds related to fish studies carried out by Verbania CNR on Lake Maggiore and a general renewed interest in lake fish led us to choose this theme for the 4th Archeo&Food convention. The conference was accompanied by tastings, theme menus in local restaurants, photography exhibitions and entities associated with fishing, involving the Milan Civic Aquarium and Hydrobiological Station, researchers, fishermen and companies dedicated to fish repopulation.

In 2019 the 5th Archeo&Food theme was *Herbs, Aromas and Saffron on Lake Maggiore*. Local archaeobotanical discoveries, recent studies concerning the use of herbs in different historical periods and the resumption of saffron cultivation nearby, which is destined to become another certified local (De.Co.) product, suggested the topic. Speakers also discussed studies of plants' organoleptic properties, the use of wild food plants and contemporary gastronomy. Theme menus, experiential itineraries, guided tours and workshops accompanied the conference. The Archaeological Museum set up an exhibition too, organized in collaboration with Le Sinergie farmhouse, which produces Angera Saffron, aromatic organic herb teas, essential oils, macerated oils and ointments.

Each conference directly involved citizens, entrepreneurs and artisans, making the community more aware of the possibilities offered by the sustainable fruition of cultural heritage. Nutrition history and biodiversity proved to be particularly stimulating topics,

generating interest and social engagement from a large sector of the local community. The producers have become proud protagonists of millennial activities and achieved great visibility; schools have focused studies on the various themes; local traders have set up small exhibitions dedicated to them in shop windows. The participation of restaurants and agricultural producers grows every year; the Council has been able to generate constructive and effective initiatives and the Civic Museum has played the role of 'heritage hub' for public and private interests.

From Archaeological to Open-Air Museum

In 2016 another initiative was launched which required community involvement, and to prepare which the Council, with its Archaeological Museum as study centre, had been working for some years: the Angera Open-Air Museum (Miedico 2017, pp. 188-195). Local inhabitants and visitors learnt the way to the Museum, but they asked where the exhibits came from and whether, in addition to the Roman era and the famous Rocca Visconti castle, there were no other visible historical remains. Angera had over 300 archaeological sites, but none of these were open to the public. The community began to learn about local ancient history, but knew little about medieval, Renaissance and later periods. Grandparents' traditional work began to disappear, including fishing, knitwear manufacture and carpentry. Local dialect was used by elderly folk for chatting among themselves. The Mario Bertolone Historical Archaeological

Association closed due to a progressive decline in membership, but there were – and still are – many enthusiasts who continued to collect and read ancient documents, gather images and knew of local stories and intangible traditions. People interested in local history were therefore involved in the project to map local monumental, cultural, landscape, immaterial, public and private heritage, in order to create an Open-Air Community Museum. This Museum was inaugurated on 1st May 2016 with 40 sites of interest. The success in social involvement became evident when people told us that we had forgotten some places that were important in the local collective memory, including the first hospital, popular festivals, devotional paintings, locations of wartime events, and old occupations.

The Open-Air Museum had reawakened a community sense of belonging; people wanted to participate and add something to this collective heritage. In 2017 we added 6 new sites, selected from those reported by individuals. A local historian, Luciano Besozzi, published a book dedicated to Angera's devotional cults (Besozzi 2017). The study indicated 4 new sites to be included in the Open-Air Museum, and enabled the choice of devotional chapels considered most important for the community. The project revived the memory of missing churches and forgotten festivals. An awareness of paintings in deconsecrated churches that were once objects of local devotion emerged. There were memories of festivals dedicated to women, sick people and livestock, and research into these yielded important information on local cultural roots.

The Council sought a way to make visible history and works preserved in inaccessible places, in the rectory or in private homes; for the Open-Air Museum we chose in the first phase an analogical method and involved Andrea Ravo Mattoni, an artist who had already worked in Angera (Dal Sasso 2019, pp. 48-60; www.ravo.art). Ravo has achieved international fame but has remained attached to the Angera community; he returned in 2019. For the new project, funded by the Tourism Dept. of the Lombardy Regional Authority, he created six paintings on PVC canvases in which he reproduced with spray paint details of paintings not accessible to the public. The canvases were affixed to the external walls of private buildings near where the church or



Fig. 5. Andrea Ravo Mattoni's Santa Liberata painting (© Comune di Angera).

painting was located. Council and Museum staff set up an experiential itinerary and the rediscovery of these works allowed locals and visitors to become aware of historic collective rituals and patrimonies, some private, that became part of Angera's collective cultural heritage.

Junior high school students, periodically involved in Open-Air Museum guided tours, began to complain that they did not feel represented by Museum sites chosen by adults. It has been noticed, especially in small municipalities, that young peoples' sense of identity often becomes detached from where they live, which leads to a loss of pride in it and a desire to leave. If the community wants to transmit its values to younger generations, appropriate paths need to be found, but this will only be possible if community identity, a sense of belonging, and historical and cultural heritage are perceived as important values (Petraioia 2002, pp. 81-86). Awareness of local values significantly changes young peoples' attention to their surroundings (De Nardi 2012, pp. 33-57). The municipality took up the challenge: the Open-Air Museum did not propose a project to local schools, but built it together with them, entering into the academic program. School students created a new map, which represents their local heritage. They put into practice a direct and effective project, which led to the involvement of families and covered many different disciplines, to discover the local area and its traditions (Van Lakerveld & Gussen 2011, pp. 15-29; www.eumm-nord.it; www.playourplace.it). Pupils proposed various possibilities, voted for them, and decided to call their museum *MirabilAngera, Angera dei Ragazzi*. They presented this work to the public on May 1st 2019, together with the logo, printed on a metal road sign, which was mounted in each of the selected places.

The map features eleven sites, and for each one they created an icon and wrote descriptive texts in Italian, English and French. The map is printed on ordinary paper, which can be written on or coloured using pencils. After failing to agree on the twelfth site, the young people decided to leave a white space inside which everyone, visitors included, could draw their favourite place. The Open-Air Museum now has 50 sites, of which the Archaeological Museum is site n° 1. The site map can be downloaded from the website www.angera.it, where

bilingual historical and artistic descriptions can be found. Every year, from May to October, the Tourist InfoPoint offers four free guided tours per month. Two have an historical and artistic theme, different each time, and are conducted by qualified professional guides; one monthly tour is intended for physical well-being and includes longer walks accompanied by Nordic walking instructors; one visit a month is naturalistic and environmental, accompanied by qualified guides who choose to contemplate particular aspects of the local landscape.

The development of 50 sites of interest has led many hoteliers, holiday farms, sport centres and restaurants to collaborate, offering hospitality, theme menus and advertising local products. Private participation has contributed to the venture's success and to the involvement of the community, which is increasingly aware of heritage and therefore more interested in collaborating and being part of it.

The Angera experience has also involved the neighbouring municipalities, which are inaugurating similar Open-Air Museums and working on an integrated plan for culture, which has recently been proposed to the Lombardy Regional Authority.

From the Archaeological Museum to the "Others" world: the richness of diversity in a community with ancient multiethnic roots

Over the millennia, Lombardy has been traversed by countless different peoples, who settled especially near the major routes, along rivers and on lake shores. People from Central Europe crossed the Alps and brought with them their products, cults and traditions; they founded villages and cities. Others came from the south, interested in Nordic amber, trade and fertile land; they brought lathes, writing, special bronzework and new ways to cultivate vines. Still others came from the Adriatic Sea, up the River Po, the River Ticino and Lake Maggiore, bringing to inland areas many Mediterranean products, languages, values, fashions and gods. In 49 BC the inhabitants of Cisalpine Gaul obtained Roman citizenship and soon became part of a vast empire that touched all the countries of Europe and the Mediterranean. The waterways allowed the meeting of innumerable cultures that participated in the territory's cultural, social



Fig. 6. Matronae Altar, 1st century AD (© Civico Museo Archeologico Villa Mirabello di Varese).

and technological development, conditioning cults, ways of dressing, and the language (Miedico 2015b, pp. 13-29). Archaeology helps us to reflect on migrations, cultural encounters and multi-ethnicity (Baioni et al. 2011; Garcia & Le Bras 2017). From 2016 to 2018 the Archaeological Museum proposed a three-year integrated project entitled *The Museum and the Others*, where “the others” are people of foreign

origin who lived in Angera and Lombardy; this territory became their homeland. The first year we dedicated our research to *The Cults of “the Others”*: in Angera there were Celtic cults, a temple of Isis, dedications to Mithra and Cybele and the first Christian citizen of whom we know the name, *Maraotes*, was born in Syria (Gambari & Miedico 2016). Among the various local cults the *Matronae Dervonnae* aroused great interest: divinities of mothers, children and destiny, depicted on an altar dancing under an oak tree, holding hands in a particular way. (Miedico 2016a; Miedico 2016b). The *Matronae* altar, found in Angera in 1909, is kept in the Varese Archaeological Museum, but members of our community wanted to replicate the Dance of the Goddesses, *The millennial dance of Angera women*, so the Civic Museum organized lessons for schoolchildren, mothers and grandmothers.

2017 saw a study entitled *In the Others’ Shoes*, devoted to archaeological evidence related to weaving, ancient clothing, and ornaments worn by ancient populations and often linked to the owner’s ethnic origin. (Tassinari & Miedico 2017). The theme suggested various initiatives that were promoted by the Council, including an exhibition on the history of weaving in Angera. The exhibits related to weaving and decorative objects were on show in the Museum’s display cases, but the exhibition continued outside, occupying the shop windows in the main street of the village. Near the Museum there is a building that in the 20th century housed an Italian knitwear company named SAMA, *Società Anonima Maglificio Angerese*. Almost all the women of Angera and many from the



Fig. 7. Angera children perform the Matronae dance (© Comune di Angera).



Fig. 8. The extended exhibition on the history of weaving (© Comune di Angera).

neighbouring villages worked at SAMA until the 1980s. Local memories are still vivid, and the exhibition offered an opportunity to collect stories, documents and objects: work stools, a canteen ladle, certificates, magazines, photos, yarns, combs, weights, and a still functional Dubied knitting machine. Six panels told the story of the Angera textile industry and were placed not in the Museum, but in shop windows nearby. The factory building was renovated and now houses shops and apartments. The Dubied machine was placed in a display case in the original SAMA building. The owner of the knitting machine, a craftsman from Angera born in 1930, came into the shop where the Dubied stood and operated it, showing passersby how the machine worked (Baietti 2017, pp. 129-138).

This demonstrates that appropriate stimulation of the community to take part in a cultural project can lead to their direct, concrete involvement and commitment.

The research project *In the Others' Shoes* focused on a Celtic bronze pendant from a Roman tomb, an exceptional find of its kind (Tassinari & Miedico 2017, pp. 48-49). The uniqueness of the object deserved an exemplary enhancement. The Council invited local artisans to propose a project to 'bring to life' the Celtic pendant, as had happened with the Angera bread. Carola Caputo, a young goldsmith and gemologist, proposed a jewellery line inspired by the pendant. To create the prototype Carola used some digital images, made a 3D digital model and then a three-dimensional wax replica. The wax model was then cast in bronze using the millenary lost-wax casting technique. The Civic Museum

helped the young goldsmith with her request for authorization from the Superintendency to create a set with pendant, earrings, ring, key-ring, wedding ring, bracelet and necklace, inspired by the original (state-owned) pendant. The brand *I Gioielli di Angera - Linea Dervonia* was born after obtaining authorization and the denomination of municipal origin (De.Co.). The name is inspired by the Celtic divinities *Matronae Dervonnae*.

We conclude the selection of our social engagement experiences with the 2018 project entitled *The Voices of "the Others"* (Miedico 2018). The analysis of ancient iconography and verbal languages, including rock engravings, Celtic epigraphs, foreign names and heraldic shields, focused attention on linguistic change over the centuries, non-verbal communication, and the great quantity of possible languages. Speaking of communication led us to reflect on the type and quality of the communication used in museums (Comunicare l'archeologia 2007; Branchesi et al. 2016; Dal Maso 2018), on the role of language in social engagement and on the most appropriate language for the transmission of collective memory (Miedico 2019, pp. 38-40). We evaluated how often the terms used in archaeological discourse – which are widely present in captions and panels (also in Angera) and which continue to be used even in the most recent archaeological exhibitions – are inaccessible (Gualandi 2014, pp. 39-46; De Felice & Volpe 2014, pp. 401-420). We dared to adopt more inclusive communication routes (Boneschi et al. 2018, pp. 113-119) and we tried to translate scientific language into a more accessible, narrative form, sometimes using puppet theatre (Roggero 2018, pp. 103- 112).



Fig. 9. Angera Jewels, Dervonia style (© Comune di Angera).



Fig. 10. I Piott Company (© Comune di Angera).

In the end, the attention given by the project to the local variant of Lombard language aroused particular interest. The Municipality had long wished to find a way to prevent the loss of the local dialect. Studies on the languages spoken in antiquity provided the pretext to create a working group dedicated to the creation of a digital *Angerese* dialect vocabulary. The group is made up of a member of the Council and senior citizens, who meet in the library every Friday afternoon with a local young linguist, who has helped them to create digital and textual supports. The working group exceeded

the most optimistic expectations and decided to create a theatre and reading company. The I Piott company has already produced its third dialect comedy and frequently proposes dialect readings, as well as dialect courses.

If you would like to know the details of our activities, or if you would like to hear new stories, we invite you to come and visit us in our Civic Museum and follow us on the Facebook *Civici Musei di Angera* page, on the Facebook *AngeraTurismo* page and on our website www.angera.it

We look forward to meeting you!

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