

The Museum of Ledro: an incubator for cultural, economical and ecological development

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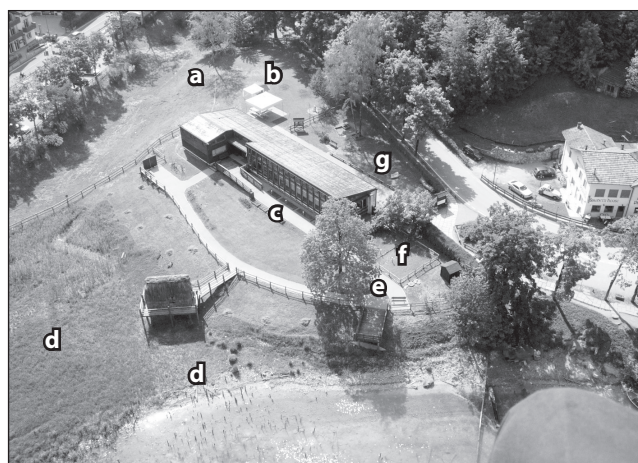
With its 30-35.000 visitors per year, Ledro is a consolidated reality in the field of publishing and museum education. In Trentino, it is the 4th most visited museum (together with MART, Castello del Buon Consiglio and MTScNat)^[1] despite its location in a geographically isolated valley.

The Ledro pile-dwellings stand on the west coast of the lake Ledro at 650 m.s.l.

It is probable the valley was already frequented in Mesolithic times and that in the Neolithic some human groups settled down there. The increase in the number of population, though, dates to the Bronze Age when the pile-dwelling was built. In modern times inhabitants have always been aware of the presence of a thick “net” of poles within the lake, considered as an ancient barrier in order to consolidate and to enhance the lake-level. The broad area with timbers (4.500sm; 12.000 posts) was brought to light in 1929, due to a large reduction in the water level caused by hydroelectric works (Fig. 4). That year



■ Fig. 2 View of the lake from the back of the museum and view of the last reconstruction of the first pile-hut



■ Fig. 1 – plan of the museum and of its park and facilities: **a** new village; **b** fire-place for Prehistoric tea; **c** flowerbed for linen; **d** archaeological area; **e** ring tour; **f** flowerbed for cereals; **g** pre-historic botanical garden

the Sovrintendenza alle Antichità di Padua started a series of excavation campaigns, taken over – in the 60s and the 80s by the Museo Tridentino with stratigraphic criterion. Since 2003 a programme for the monitoring and the survey of the archaeological area and of the timbers’ conditions has been started.

The Museum was built from 1968 to 1972 and displays the objects from the excavations of the 1960s. Nowadays findings from Ledro can be seen, beyond the Museo delle Palafitte, at the MTScN, il Castello del Buonconsiglio, il Museo Civico do Riva del Garda and in Padua at the Soprintendenza and the Anthropology Department of the University.

The first reconstruction of a pile-dwelling dates to the 1940s on the basis of ethnoarchaeology and the suggestions of prof. Battaglia, who ran the first excavations. Also in the following reconstructions or brand new constructions, we cannot speak of experimental archaeology because no scientific data

from the excavations could be used (Fig. 2).

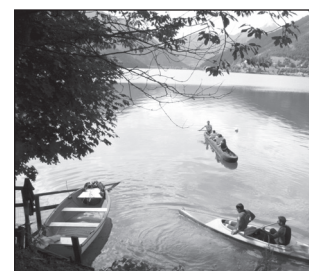
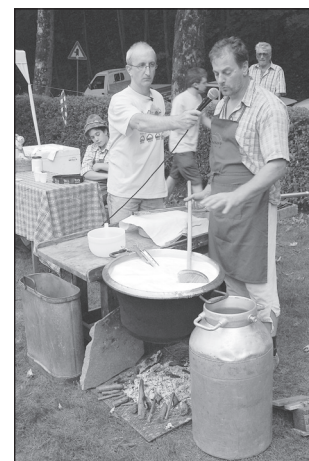
The didactic village was inaugurated in 2006 and it is a likely reconstruction of a part of the pile-dwellings as it could be found on the banks of several lakes about ca. 4.000 years ago. Among those, pile-dwelling n. 3 stands on a ‘Stelzbau’ structure (‘wooden legs’), as it was found also in Ledro (Fig. 1).

The short term aim of the Museum is to boost the consensus of the public towards the structure and its activities, in order to launch a broad and long term project aiming, within 10 years, to turn Ledro into an international research centre on the pile-dwelling settlements of the Alpine region and for imitative archaeology and museum education.

There is no doubt the new village has increased the suggestion of place in the visitors’ emotional approach, amplifying the evocative potential of the activities the museum offers. From the needed renewal and enlargement of the mu-

seum will be the source of the new scientific and educational projects.

During recent years, managing data show how relevant the increase of visitors has been. In facts, albeit scarce the number of people working at and for the museum (in total 18/20 people), and a reduced seasonal opening time (nine months), the figure of visitors amounts to 35.000 paying visitors per year, in which schools represent roughly the 10% coming from different regions (besides the closest, Lombar-



■ Fig. 3 Various activities in Ledro

1 “Minicifre della Cultura 2009” MiBAC – Segretariato Generale – Ufficio Studi – Gangemi Ed., 2009

dia, Emilia Romagna, Toscana, Liguria, Marche, Rome and Germany). If we have to highlight some of the peculiarities of the Museum, we can consider its point of **strengths**: as a focus on one single prehistoric period and theme. It allows us to specialise in the issue and in its communication with educational activities. Moreover, having two distinct operative seasons one mainly for schools during spring and autumn and one for the general public in summer – it helps us to concentrate upon completely different programmes and events during the two seasonal operating periods, where the summer school *Officina Ledro* is a stimulating think-tank in which professionals in the field can meet and converse.

We can also work to enhance the quality of our offer, targeting our marketing ad personam with a rich and various merchandising and publishing activities.

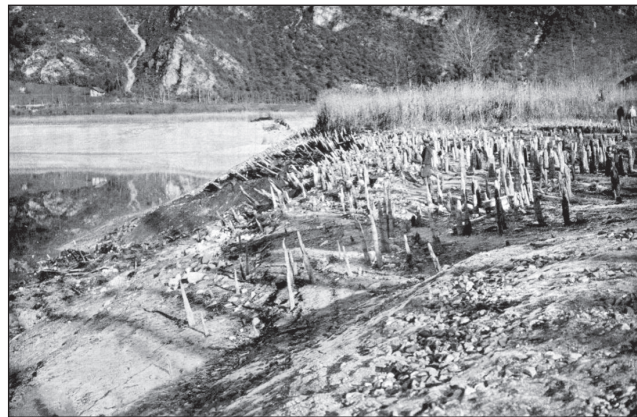
Other points of strengths are the partnership in an international network, and the physical interaction within the urban texture that makes us work as we were “on a show”: that’s also the way we attract part of our summer visitors.

We are aware also of our points of **weaknesses**, which to a certain extent represent the other side of the same coin: as for the focusing on one single prehistoric period and theme which compels us to continuously update the activities of the museum although our staff is limited, while the limited space non isolated from the urban area does not allow us to perform Living Prehistory due to the external audio and sight pollution.

If all this impose a limit on the number of visitors, it represents also an opportunity for the extension of the opening season to 10 months or the implementation of the offer

targeted at the tourists in May and September.

We believe, though, that Ledro can be numbered among the Open Air Museums for some other relevant characteristics such as:



■ **Fig. 4** Historical picture of the excavation of the ‘30s: the emerging piles

- A. **Edutainment** the learning by a lively, enjoyable and playful experience
- B. **The team** composed of a heterogeneous mix of multiskilled and experienced people, enthusiastic and consistent with the museum’s philosophy. Thanks to this emotional approach, Ledro is perceived as somewhere far from the everyday routine, almost a super-place where people can experience the flow of space-and-time.
- C. The museum becomes the centre for the consolidation of the local cultural identity, becoming and forming the Brand of the valley.
- D. The shortage of spaces is partly balanced by the interaction with some other local cultural, environmental and historical institutions and places.

In the future, we do foresee for Ledro and the other Archaeological Open Air Museums a role in the developing of social-

archaeology and to support the creation of a critical mass by:

- A. Developing a constant dialectic model between History/Science, Nature/Environment, Society/Community^[2]

- B. Promoting the **public understanding of research**: not only to narrate the science but the daily efforts in order to achieve knowledge,^[3] where the work-in progress has to be accepted with an interpretative involvement and not passively. In this sense Ledro can also be considered as a science museum and justifies itself as a branch of the MTScNa.

- C. Becoming a scientific research centre in an international network, dedicating more attention to the original archaeological objects.

While in specific, for Ledro, it is considered vital to:

- D. Consolidate its own image in the eyes of the inhabitants of the valley and of the external visitors (tourists) in order to succeed in creating a meaningful and inclusive territorial brand. For this purpose, the Museum has carried on a process of the place’s memory reconstruction named “The Museum of

Ledro Plan Memory 1929-2009 the pile-dwellings in the drawer”, introduced to the public on the last day of *Officina Ledro* 2009.

- E. Practice a social impact on the territory, becoming a sort of “incubator” not only on a cultural level but also on an economic and social one. Improve the communication and the visibility of the Museum, maintaining the limits of space which it has.
- F. Resume the diggings and the studies on Ledro also on a multidisciplinary level.

Summary

Le musée de Ledro, un incubateur de développement culturel, économique et écologique

La première reconstitution des habitats palafittiques du lac de Ledro a été réalisée dans les années 1940, sous l’impulsion du professeur Battaglia qui dirigeait les premières fouilles. Le musée fut construit entre 1968 et 1972, et fut transformé en parc archéologique en 2006. Il est uniquement dédié à la préhistoire et le renouvellement constant de ses activités est indispensable. L’un des principaux objectifs de Ledro, à l’image d’autres parcs archéologiques, est de promouvoir la recherche archéologique auprès du grand public.

Das Museum von Ledro: Ein „Brutkasten“ für die kulturelle, wirtschaftliche und ökologische Entwicklung

Am See von Ledro wurde die erste Pfahlbausiedlung bereits in den 1940er Jahren rekonstruiert auf Grundlage der Überlegungen von Prof. Battaglia, welcher die erste Ausgrabung durchführte. Das Museumsgebäude wurde zwischen 1968 und 1972 erbaut, ein archäologisches Freilichtmuseum wurde 2006 eröffnet. Das Museum setzt seinen thematischen Schwerpunkt auf einer einzigen urgeschichtlichen Periode und es ist deshalb notwendig, dass das Museum regelmäßig neue Aktivitäten anbietet. Eines der vorrangigen Ziele von Ledro ist es – wie bei anderen archäologischen Freilichtmuseen –, das Verständnis für archäologische Forschungen zu verbessern.

2 R. Willis, J. Wilsdon, See through science, DEMOS, 2005

3 Creating Connections, Altamira Press, 2004