



Advancing Sustainable Transition and Resilience in post-mining Areas

IO3 1st Case Study

Italy

Idrisi Cultura e Sviluppo



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Place: Casteltermini, Agrigento, Italy

Period of activity: 1800 ca. - 1988/1993

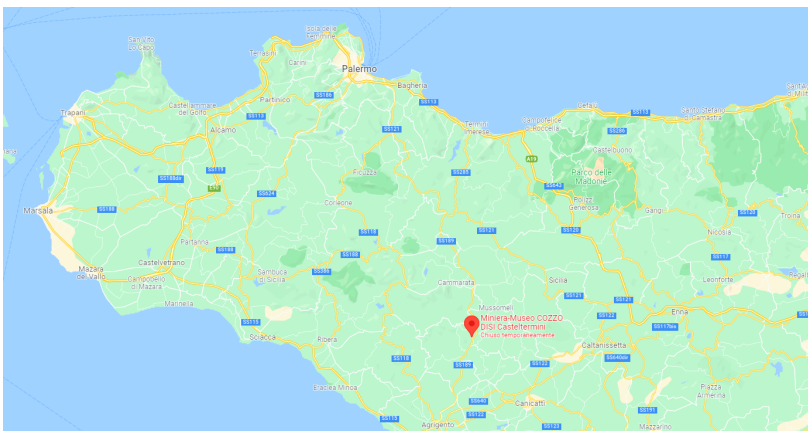
The Zolfara Cozzo Disi (Cozzo Disi mine) is a sulfur mine located in the province of Agrigento, near to the municipality of Casteltermini: in detail, in the middle of Valle del Platani.

The mine was built in Montelongo, whose landlord was the Bastiglia family. The date of foundation is set before 1839.

Once the mineral deposit was discovered and the property passed from Bastiglia to Pace, the mining site became one of the most important Italian sulfur mines and also the last to be closed in 1988, following the Regional Law n.34. Despite its closure, the sulfur mine was maintained until 1993 and, later on, it slowly started to become a museum.

The Region of Sicily defined in 1991 (Regional Law no. 17) the guidelines in order to convert the sulfur mine into an industrial and archaeological museum, although the revitalization process is still ongoing.

Although incomplete and unavailable, the Cozzo Disi mine is already identified as crucial Sicilian cultural heritage and part of its original landscape, along with several manufactured goods and archives, are at disposal of a wider audience.



As previously mentioned, the mine Cozzo Disi was born in the territory of Casteltermini: the owner, the Count of Bastiglia, started the excavation work during the 1st quarter of the XIX century, after noticing a layer of sulfur that emerged at the base of Montelongo. Cozzo Disi rapidly became one of the most relevant economic activity of the Platani area, although marked by numerous tragedies, including the largest Italian mining disaster ever recorded. The site's instability slowly led to its closure during the 1980s.



“On July the 4th 1916, while the miners of Cozzo Disi and Serralonga (already merged into a single mining site) were at work, a formidable roar was heard: repeated explosions caused by the contact between sulphide, firedamp and the flame lamps carried by the workers themselves.

More than 80 workers perished due to the sudden explosions.

The rescue attempts were both improvised and clumsy and, moreover, unsuccessful.

Towards Transition & Post-Mining Cultural Heritage: Cozzo Disi Museum

Cozzo Disi is an example of the revitalization, in terms of cultural heritage, of a post-mining complex, however marked by public bodies and municipalities' uncertainty: the post-mining site still awaits a full inauguration in favor of cultural tourism and the local community.

The Cozzo Disi Museum was indeed established as a "cultural asset of inestimable value" with the Regional Law n. 17 - 1991.

Managed directly by the Region of Sicily for more than 20 years, it was then entrusted to the Municipality of Casteltermini (Agrigento).

During 20 years of revitalization-oriented activities, 4 underground and 1 surface redevelopment interventions were completed.

Despite the investments, the complex is not available to citizens and is not available as a cultural asset in its entirety.

As underlined by the museum's cultural mediators "in several European mining sites (...), artificial underground paths have been created to satisfy and therefore attract flows of visitors".





Flotation Plant yet to be restored

In Cozzo Disi the underground passages already exist and are fully accessible: “it would be enough to clean the access roads and to attract potential visitors”.

Then, what is missing?

As stated by the aforementioned Cultural Mediators who take care of Cozzo Disi, “mining tourism in Europe ensures an annual flow of over 200.000 visitors, with several peaks registered in Belgium, United Kingdom, Poland”. What is missing is the planning vision on the part of the public administration, which is unable to draw an example from the good European post-mining revitalization practices.

There is also a question of timing: post-mining areas such as Cozzo Disi are constantly at risk of flooding. Without adequate preventive measures, they risk to collapse completely.

“It would be a serious loss that would greatly complicate the future of the Museum which is today only partially completed”: the cultural institution would be forced to give up definitively the most prestigious part of its asset, without adequate investments.

Bibliography and resources:

Infantino S., The sulfur mine and its people: Montelongo-Cozzo Disi, Tipografia Paruzzo, Caltanissetta, 2005

https://www.facebook.com/cozzodisi/?ref=page_internal

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