

### 3.4 Monumental Cemetery of Staglieno, Genova.

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#### 1. Introduction

Genoa, the capital of Liguria, is the sixth largest city and seaport in Italy and one of Europe's largest cities on the Mediterranean Sea. Also worth noting is that a part of Genoa's old town, "La Superba", was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2006. The Staglieno Cemetery, located on a hillside in the Bisagno valley and extending over an area of 330,000 m<sup>2</sup>, was built in the 19th century and marked a perfect historic and cultural parallel to the events, ideals and life concept of a rising society. For the population, Staglieno not only is a place of commemoration and remembrance but also an important artistic and historic heritage of the city.

Up to the first half of the 1800s, the aristocrats were buried in churches or in their private family chapels while citizens of the general populace were interred in common areas located within the city. With Genoa's annexation to Napoleon's Empire in 1805, compliance with the rules of the edict of Saint-Cloud became compulsory; likewise, during the succeeding years, when Genoa became part of the Italian Kingdom, new solutions were urgently required to solve the problem of the increasing number of burials. In addition to the demand for greater hygiene, enlightenment and post-revolutionary motivations were also emerging. This also led to the need for a type of burial which had to be both public and democratic, situated in a formal and institutional site - the cemetery - which declared the equality of all men, at least in the face of death. These motivations were, somehow, shared by those Ligurian intellectuals who were inspired by the Enlightenment and who participated in the equalitarian and laic spirit of the social and functional reorganization of the country following the Revolution of 1789.



Fig. 1 Monumental Cemetery of Staglieno: "Il Boschetto". Photo by Angelo Lucardi.

#### 2. Values and Attributes

Staglieno is one of Europe's most important cemeteries in terms of the beauty of the sculptures and their quantity: more than 300 sculptures, 290 chapels and 460 "nicchioni" all concentrated in a single site. The wide range of artistic styles, from Neoclassicism, Realism and Symbolism to Liberty and Art Deco, gave rise to a great school of sculptors, including the likes of Santo Varni, Lorenzo Orengo and Giulio Monteverde. The cemetery, a real open-air museum, has always been a source of pride for the city and from the early decades of the 1900s has been a must destination for foreigner visitors travelling in Italy.

The cemetery, from its beginnings, developed intensely to represent, historically and culturally, the events, ideals, customs and fashions of a period and a vision of death of a rising social class: the Genoese bourgeoisie. While its **historic-artistic value** is certainly quite obvious, a more detailed



Fig. 2 Marble bust. Photo by Angelo Lucardi.



Fig. 3 Example of historical evidence - Priario Tomb. "...Easy and elegant speaker, a master of criminal law, erected by the widow...". Photo by Angelo Lucardi.

analysis will also show a just as strong **social-anthropological and economic value** considering the large numbers of visitors generated by tourism. Numerous areas of the cemetery are reserved for different religious creeds and in fact areas for Protestants, Orthodox Greeks, Muslims, Jews and laic have co-existed from the very beginning. This inter-religious and laic dialogue is still today of incredibly important **social value** ensuring cohesion among different communities. The immense historic park designed together with the main architectural structures also creates **cultural-scenic value** and, because of the wide variety of botanic species, also has an unquestionable **ecological value** (it is a huge green lung for the city of Genoa). Thanks to an agreement between the Municipality, the University of Genoa and CNR-ISMAR the Staglieno 2000 project, a stone restoration school, was created in the cemetery to provide scientific and operative personnel with training for conserving the metals of the funerary monuments. As a result the potential **educational values and incentives for scientific research** in the field of restoration and conservation are also quite evident.

#### 3. Vulnerability and Risk Assessment

The vastness of the site, the number and complexity of the works and their coexistence in areas still in use make site conservation a very complex operation. The poor state of preservation of the sculptures and chapels as well as the increasing annual temperature range make this cultural heritage fragile and vulnerable to any hazards. In fact, we know that structures are damaged immediately and ruined by severe forms of degradation, and that they tend to disintegrate even more after a short time as conditions become more extreme. Various types of destructive phenomena have been identified including delamination, capillary rise, salinity, sulfation and corrosion of metals, while portions of sculptures continue to break and fall off. The park has also undergone a general abandonment as demonstrated by the uncontrolled growth of vegetation, roots and climbing plants, which also causes the paths to break. This uncontrolled growth of vegetation and the lack of constant cleaning of the green areas might also cause fires also considering the lack of fire-fighting systems and evacuation paths for visitors. The overall abandonment of the site, and the lack of video surveillance systems, is an open invitation to theft and other acts of vandalism. But among all the different vulnerability factors, the strongest and most intrinsic to the site is its geographic location. Already in 1858 during the construction of the church of the Pantheon (burial place of illustrious Genoese and a perfect replica of the famous structure in Rome), the weakness of the land on which the construction was to be built had already been confirmed. The same problem occurred in 1874 during the construction of the mausoleum for the nation's hero Giuseppe Mazzini. The Monumental Cemetery of Staglieno was built starting from the foot of a hill up to its peak and along the Bisagno river and thus the area has always been susceptible to floods, overflows and landslides.



Fig. 4 Presence of "black crusts". Photo by Lucardi.



Fig. 5 Detail of marble sulfation. Photo by Caranza.



Fig. 6 The Pantheon. Photo by Angelo Lucardi.

PRIMARY HAZARD	SECONDARY HAZARD	VULNERABILITY	IMPACTS (site scale)
FLOOD	LANDSLIDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Geographic location of the site</li> <li>- Excessive urbanization outside the site</li> <li>- Unauthorized building outside the site</li> <li>- River bed too low and narrow</li> <li>- River bank too low</li> <li>- Low level of the cemetery</li> <li>- Lack of systems to drain water inside the site and along the river</li> <li>- Lack of evacuation plan</li> <li>- Unworkable cultural heritage evacuation plan</li> <li>- Restoration workshop situated in the flooded area</li> <li>- State of abandonment of the site</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loss of lives</li> <li>- Loss of cultural heritage and tangible heritage</li> <li>- Loss of historical memory and intangible heritage</li> <li>- Loss of traditional artistic techniques</li> <li>- Economic damage</li> </ul>
FIRE		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Abandonment of historical park and uncontrolled growth of vegetation</li> <li>- Lack of fire-fighting systems</li> <li>- Vandalism</li> <li>- Lack of evacuation plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Loss of lives</li> <li>- Loss of cultural heritage and tangible heritage</li> <li>- Loss of historical memory and intangible heritage</li> <li>- Loss of traditional artistic techniques</li> <li>- Economic damage</li> </ul>

#### 4. Mitigation interventions.

Planning a sequence of preventive measures requires differentiating the interventions that may be carried out on the short term from those that will need longer periods, also considering the complexity of the operations as well as their cost. Another key distinction for an actual and possible effectiveness of the project as a whole requires defining the interventions that should be carried out within the site and the ones that will also affect the buffer zone, the surrounding areas and those located upstream.

MITIGATION MEASURES	INSIDE THE SITE CH	OUTSIDE THE SITE CH
SHORT TERM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Implement actions to prevent theft and vandalism.</li> <li>- Activate a video surveillance system and a patrol system.</li> <li>- Implement historic park maintenance actions - botanic diversity preservation</li> <li>- Create a flood warning device inside the site</li> <li>- Create a fire escape system</li> <li>- Create shelter areas and clear evacuation signs for visitors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Prevent unauthorized construction</li> <li>- Create a general evacuation plan in case of floods in the whole of the Bisagno valley</li> </ul>
MID-LONG TERM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Create a water drain system inside the monumental cemetery</li> <li>- Start and complete the restoration of non-movable works</li> <li>- Restore the gallery pavements and the park pathways.</li> <li>- Restore the arcade roofs and renew the walls, eliminating rising damp and saline efflorescences</li> <li>- In case of tombs whose property cannot be established, allow the Municipality of Genoa to auction them off and ensure their restoration and maintenance</li> <li>- Create an emergency professional team with deep knowledge of the surroundings, available within a few hours and totally independent as for logistics, equipment and skills.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Excavate the river bed, currently too shallow and - where possible - enlarge it</li> <li>- Raise the embankment of the river</li> <li>- Create a system to drain water along the river path</li> <li>- Construction of non-frame method without slope cutting, slope without alteration.</li> </ul>

#### 5. Conclusions.

At present the Municipality of Genoa, the Superintendence for the Architectural and Artistic Heritage of Liguria and the writer are trying to define the composition of the team that will take care of preparing the DRP in cooperation with the regional environmental services and the various stakeholders. Several critical issues will have to be addressed, primarily the lack of communication between the institutions, which will make the involvement of private stakeholders even more problematic. Complex technical issues will have to be faced, such as the integration of the DRP with the pre-existing Environmental Services Plan and the structural and restoration works; moreover, sufficient funding is needed to ensure the performed works are implemented and maintained, also considering that the Monumental Cemetery is still used to this day. At the same time, we intend to prepare a preliminary study to address the future application of the Monumental Cemetery of Staglieno to the World Heritage List of UNESCO as the first in line in a transnational site of European Monumental Cemeteries.