



The Historical Enterprise

Stories and Memories of Industrial Labor in Fvg: A Protocol for Audiovisual and Multimedia Practice

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Situated at the intersection of film and media studies, storytelling, and digital humanities, and financed by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (*Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza*, PNRR) as part of the Next Generation EU (NGEU) programme, this thesis examines and analyses the north-eastern Italian region of Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG) as a living archive and heritage of labour, creativity, and social and industrial transformation. It departs from a starting question that guided the project throughout the research: can the story of a territory and its community be told through its industrial heritage and the audiovisual memory of work, and if so, how might this be achieved through contemporary tools of preservation, storytelling, multimedia, and digital engagement? To address it, the project designs, implements, and evaluates what it terms a protocol of intervention *on* the audiovisual and *through* the multimedia, a key dual formulation that captures its core ambition to act both upon archival materials, through mapping, recovery, digitization, and cataloguing, and through multimedia practices that reinterpret and return those materials to their original community as well as to future research with-

in contemporary modes of narration, exhibition, and digital access.

The research concentrates on the industrial development of the FVG region within the broader Italian context, from the early twentieth century to the post-war decades. Emanuele Felice's account of Italian economic growth has been a key starting point for the understanding of the country's industrial heritage. Three economical historical phases structure the first steps of research: the emergence of early capitalist production and mechanization (1901–1915), the crisis and reconversion of industry between the two wars (1918–1939), and the post-war reconstruction and expansion (1944–1973), during which the FVG region actually consolidated its industrial identity and the country entered what Felice calls its "economic miracle." Across the provinces of Udine, Pordenone, Gorizia, and Trieste, the project seeks a key goal: to reactivate its past, returning industrial heritage to the communities that generated it and reframing the audiovisual archive as a dynamic and living system of relation between people, materials and histories, instead of functioning as a static archival repository.

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The first contribution of this project is infra-structural. Through extensive fieldwork across public institutions, private foundations, company archives, as well as local holdings, the project managed to assemble and catalogue a corpus of 516 audiovisual items dispersed across 22 archives, producing the first systematic mapping of materials connected to the industrial memory of FVG, which the project called the *Mappa del Lavoro*, or Map of Labour. This was a key aspect of the research, because no comparable survey on industrial heritage existed before at the national or regional level. The mapped materials span 8mm and Super8 amateur films, 16mm and 35mm industrial productions, television documentaries, promotional reels, and audiovisual interviews, collected across corporate, institutional, trade-union, broadcast, and family contexts and across sectors from metallurgy and chemicals to food, textiles, as well as wood industries. These materials reach from the Fascist period through the boom to the neoliberal restructuring of the late twentieth century, as a matter of fact testifying to the multiplicity of voices and technical forms through which industry was recorded and imagined, proving the richness of the region's industrial heritage.

These heterogeneous materials were read and analysed as dispositifs that actively and willingly construct visibility. The analysis draws on "useful" and industrial cinema, on Acland and Wason's, and Hediger and Vonderau's accounts of the productivity of media, together with Elsaesser's attention to commissioning, occasion, and addressee (Auftrag, Anlass, Adressat) as the circumstances that shape industrial film. It frames the corpus through what Česálková and Dotto term "work-motivated films," which offer both a representation of and a social guidance to the working world and anchor public conceptions of labour to particular senses of place. This allows distinct typologies of sponsored, corporate, amateur films to be analysed together without flattening their production contexts and their meaning, foregrounding the strategies through which

labour was rendered intelligible, desirable, and a matter of belonging for the communities.

From a methodological point of view, the thesis crosses historical and archival research, ethnographic and oral-history fieldwork, and digital humanities practices of geomapping, data visualization, and digital storytelling, integrating perspectives from production studies as well as memory studies. Driving the whole is an ethics of care, which couldn't be ignored: drawing on the codes of ICOM, the Museums Association, and the Peabody Museum, the project articulates six principles of ethical stewardship: responsibility, transparency, repatriation, cultural sensitivity, collaboration, and shared authority, and tests them against the absence of any Italian national framework for the treatment of audio and visual sources, both from the Ministry of Culture and from archives across the Italian territory. Theories of brand heritage and storytelling further inform the creation of new audiovisual materials, ensuring that each enterprise is treated as a precise historically layered subject shaped by continuity, memory, heritage, and collective experience.

Two case studies anchor the inquiry. The Chiozza starch factory, founded at Perteole in 1865 by the chemist Luigi Chiozza, a figure connected to Pasteur and to European scientific networks, exemplifies the recovery of intangible industrial heritage: from the postwar and economical miracle years, through nineteen new interviews with former workers and key political figures from those years, two conducted in the Friulano language, alongside twelve donated audiotapes of recordings from the 1980s and 1990s. Here the collective trauma of the factory's closure emerges, read through Sturken and the notion of ontological security as a process by which a community refounds itself through memory. The Danieli private archive, by contrast, offers the rare case of a self-taught industrial entrepreneur who was also both amateur filmmaker and archivist; its 111 items, catalogued for the first time according to the European EN 15907 and EN

15744 standards, reveal the embedded relationship between industrial heritage and the various technologies of its visual recording.

Restitution is the project's concluding movement and one of its most tangible outcomes. The documentary *La memoria del riso*, directed by Federico Ercoli and first presented at Palazzo Economo in Trieste, transforms the Chiozza testimonies into a public narrative form, converting what Aleida Assmann calls storage memory into functional memory. A forthcoming site-specific exhibition within the restored factory extends this work into space, staging four thematic rooms that, through Nora's *lieux de mémoire*, Lefebvre's social production of space, and Bennett's exhibitionary complex, turn the industrial site itself into an arena where community, history, and identity converge.

The thesis thus offers both a substantive account of one region's filmed industrial past and a transferable contribution, which is the second most tangible outcome of the project: a replicable protocol for the identification of heritage, mapping of sources, selection of case studies, preservation and creation of materials, and its restitution, designed for application well beyond FVG, to comparable industrial legacies of other regions, and, potentially, elsewhere. In treating the industrial enterprise as a producer of audiovisual history rather than merely its subject, the project repositions audiovisual memory and industrial heritage as a living resource for historical research, education, and community engagement, and the archive as a space of dialogue.

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