

# Capturing the industrial tangible... and the technological intangible

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Though a small island, Malta has a history of industrial heritage which needs to be looked into. This conference has attracted a number of studies, which tackled the subject from different perspectives. The different viewpoints discussed encompass the various approaches and concepts which differ in content. Nevertheless, common ground has been identified and we need to look at this as a positive start.

What is industrial heritage? This question is key to the papers presented in this collection. Authors specialising in the particular fields have enquired into the definition of the term, as this turned out to be a main concern. The natural tendency when dealing with the subject is to associate the term with a particular period in time - modern industry connected to the Industrial Revolution. However, the term has a wider scope and deals with the physical remains of the history of technology and industry. This characterization broadens the research field. This concept therefore includes the Neolithic tools found in prehistoric temples or the olive presses found in Roman remains. The artefacts are now seen from different perspectives, and give different insights on their functionality, concept of design, sociological information, material used and many other models which all need to be interpreted.

This conference has also touched upon the new challenges and practices currently adopted when dealing with innovative concepts. When discussing conservation/restoration issues, it is evident that a lot of research needs to be done in order to understand how to intervene on objects composed of a mixture of different materials. This sector needs to understand, design and legislate practices that are either unknown or unregulated in this field of practice. This goes hand-in-hand with the educational aspect, wherein focus should not only be given to the academics working in the field, but also the need to educate the public in general. Architectural appreciation needs to be broadened and studies need to be disseminated with the respective authorities to be able to influence decision-making processes. Unfortunately, lack of knowledge in the field, especially when we are dealing with modern history, is failing to preserve certain historic evidence. Although we might be safeguarding tangible artefacts, there is a lack of appreciation of the intangible heritage.

This is surely a field which opens up research not only on innovative areas, but also on artefacts and information already in hand at the respective authorities. Undoubtedly, here we have an important platform where players from different fields can get together to discuss, agree upon or agree to disagree on certain terms and conditions.

It is impossible for the Government to be the sole operator of the vast quantities of cultural heritage material that exists in the country. This conference has also been a good opportunity to hear from different players about their different approaches to the same problem. This is where the Government has to work alongside NGOs and the private sector. It is not solely a matter of funding wherein different approaches like Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes or EU funds can be tapped into. It is also an operational matter wherein different formats of interpretation can be adopted for particular subject matters. In this respect, I thank The Farsons Foundation for giving us all this opportunity and for being leaders in this field here in Malta.

The conference and publication are a step in the right direction to bring the subject to the forefront. Nevertheless, we must move on. The outcome of this conference is the initial spark to start the engines and move the cog wheels. Through its agencies and legislative powers, the Government has to be one of the main instigators to set the framework. However, Government needs the help of the private sector, working hand-in-hand to create best practices and to give direction.

We must also keep in mind an area which always seems to be forgotten: contemporary history. In a few seconds the 'now' becomes the past. Sometimes we do not appreciate the wealth that is currently around us, and how technology is silently but profoundly affecting the way we live: a simple tweet from a protestor can bring about a revolution. Let us become fully aware of this and find a way to capture the tangible and intangible of our present history.

*July 2013*