Italian underground cultural heritage: from monitoring to enhancement

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Italy is among the European countries with the highest number of artificial cavities, many of which represent a precious testimony of past civilizations and cultures, and of the continuous link between town development and the underground as well. The Italian underground has historically managed several environmental conflicts and social interactions, in both urban and rural settings. Nowadays the artificial cavities represent a significant segment within the local cultural heritage and have become in the last decades the object of strategic planning addressed towards their regeneration, valorization and public fruition. All these actions, however, need to be based on sound studies and researches aimed at evaluating the opportunity to open to the public sites that could potentially be unsafe. At this regard, monitoring plans and activities, and careful assessment of the susceptibility to failure and collapses, must be performed. Only after the stability conditions have been positively ascertained, underground sites might be considered for valorization, public visits and other activities.
In such a framework, we present in this contribution some case studies (including the underground tanks Cisternone in Formia, Latium, and Palombaro in Matera, Basilicata), also to describe their use at the time of realization, and to illustrate the related "sense of place". Environmental, social, historical and economic reconstructions have been carried out to generate and manage the knowledge of the places selected in order to facilitate their use and contribute to their development, in direct link with the cities where they are hosted. The methodology adopted aims at highlighting the cultural vitality and the identity of these places for the benefit of the local populations, and of tourists as well.

Keywords: artificial cavity, underground, stability, monitoring, enhancement

