

MAR - Miniera ARGentiera

From mining village to open-air museum
from 2017



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MAR - Miniera ARGentiera is a cultural urban regeneration project that aims to protect, enhance and revitalize the ancient mining complex of Argentiera (Sassari), one of the greatest examples of mining archaeology in Sardinia, largely abandoned and in disuse. The main challenge of MAR is to regenerate the former mining village through the implementation of bottom-up projects and initiatives, becoming a positive and sustainable model, exportable and adaptable to other situations, which puts local communities at its core and involves them in projects of self-organization. The goal is to transform the village into an internationally-renowned center of experimentation and multidisciplinary artistic production: abandonment meets culture and becomes an opportunity for growth and development, to mend and redefine the relationship between man, art, architecture, and landscape. MAR, promoted by the association LandWorks in partnership with local institutions, aims to create a positive impact on society and generate sustainable social value, building an open and inclusive space, a place of dissemination of knowledge in close connection with the local community and its heritage.



Credits: Alessandro Virdis

WHERE

The village of Argentiera is one of the greatest examples of mining archaeology in Sardinia. The project for the valorization of the whole village has its operative and planning headquarters in some interesting spaces that the municipal administration of Sassari partially renovated in 2007 (thanks to the European program POR FESR) and then entrusted to the LandWorks association. The most significant areas are: the Pozzo Podestà, the main space of the complex where exhibitions, conferences, and events are organized; the old wooden Laveria (the washery), the most representative building, which today houses the permanent exhibition "MEMORIE"; the former electrical workshops overlooking the Laveria that, due to their strategic location and size, are used as an infopoint and also host conferences, workshops, and exhibitions about the mine. Directly managed by the association LandWorks, these spaces propagate the projects that aim to enhance the village in its entirety and, in the future, expand to the neighboring villages.

CONTEXT

The Argentiera mining area, located in the Municipality of Sassari, on the north-western coast of Sardinia, represents an extraordinary example of the melding of environmental, historical, cultural and touristic value. The area, which covers 61 square kilometers, is recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site and is part of the Historical and Environmental Geominerary Park of Sardinia. The village of Argentiera, which in the past had 2,000 inhabitants and today has only 70, was created as a mining community and takes its name from the material extracted from the deposits of lead, iron, and argentiferous zinc. The mine, which was used in Roman and Medieval times, resumed its excavation activity in 1867, and then ceased opera-

tion in 1963. Currently, most of the residential buildings are in a state of abandonment or severe neglect and the landscape is marked by areas contaminated by the concentration of heavy metals, a consequence of previous mining. In addition to the houses, there is a church and a small cemetery but there are no social services, nor services for health, sports and leisure, and very few for tourism: a cafeteria on the square, a kiosk on the beach, a hostel, and a residential hotel. In spite of the lack of services and the state of neglect, during summertime the area is brought to life by a consistent influx of tourists, who seem to appreciate a holiday in an area with specific environmental and historical-cultural values.

LOCATION

Rural

TYPE OF SPACE

Village

ORIGINAL FUNCTION

Industrial (mine)

YEAR OF CONSTRUCTION

1867

MAIN HISTORICAL FACTS

3rd century B.C. - 5th century A.D. (Roman era): opening of the mine.

1867: mining resumes.

1963: mining ceases.

2007: the City administration repurposes some of the spaces thanks to the European program POR FESR.

2011: LandWorks organizes international operative itinerant workshops of art, architecture and landscape in places of particular historical-environmental value but in a serious state of neglect and abandonment.

2012: the LandWorks cultural association is founded.

2015: first LandWorks workshop in Argentiera.

2017: LandWorks Plus and other organ-

izations sign a partnership agreement for the valorization and reactivation of the village.

2018: participation and victory in the Culturability call for ideas.

2019: creation of MAR-Miniera Argentiera, the first open-air mining museum in augmented reality.

SURFACE AREA

80.000 sqm

OWNERSHIP

Public and private.

The renovated spaces are the responsibility of the City of Sassari even though they are privately owned (5 buildings, the streets, the well).

CONCESSION

Free cession

CONDITION BEFORE ACTIVATION

Vacant

WHEN

TIME OF DAY USED

Morning	7am	1pm
Afternoon ...	1pm	7pm
Evening	7pm	1am
Night	1am	7am

Workdays: 10%

Weekends: 90%

Winter: 5%

Spring: 15%

Summer: 70%

Autumn: 10%

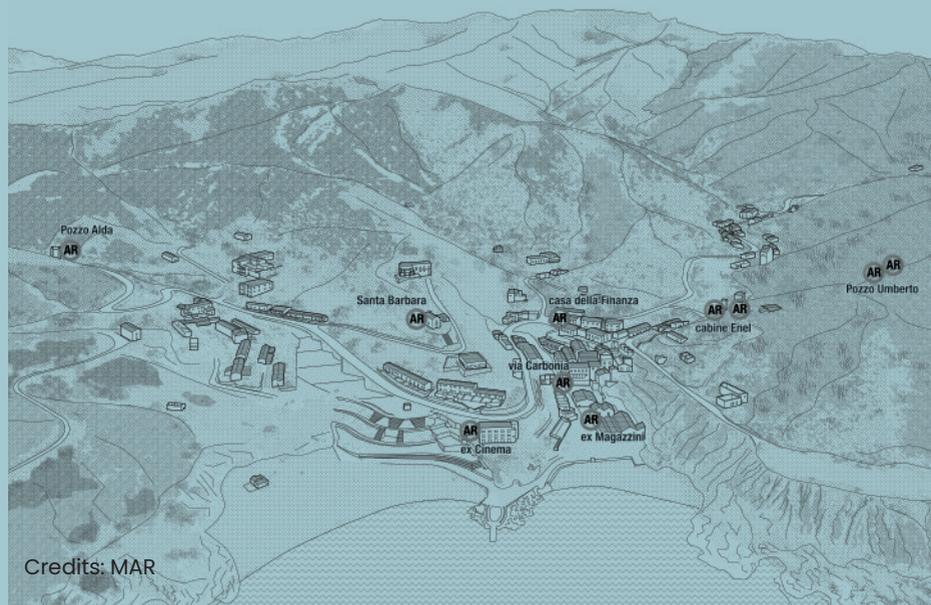
OPENING HOURS

Always open

AVERAGE USERS PER DAY

Argentiera village: 100

Museum: 30



Credits: MAR

WHAT

The proposed activities include workshops and experimental laboratories, an open-air mine museum, studies and research, artistic and scientific residencies, as well as cultural and recreational events and experiences. A varied cultural proposal is offered to a public that is not only local, but international, which involves artists, architects, and landscape designers alongside performers, singers and dancers, in an attempt to promote the inclusion of local youth, students, the elderly, and guests of the neighbouring migrant reception centres in the spirit of cultural and social integration. The goal is to reclaim and return the spaces and their identity to the community, giving them shape, establishing connections between the memory of what once was and the abandonment, as well as promoting a renewed cultural, social, touristic and ecological interpretation. For this purpose, MAR tries to create a calendar gathering all the different activities, and to concentrate the events in the period between Autumn and Spring, promoting a form of tourism that is not linked to the beach season.

SURFACE IN USE

1,900 sqm

THEMATIC AREAS

Culture and arts
Design, crafts and production
Education and training
Technology
Tourism
Welfare

The program, which is organized along interdisciplinary and long-term guidelines, is supported by the collaboration of all partner institutions, experts and professionals from the world of landscape, architecture, art, urban sociology, education, cultural economy,

design, visual and multimedia arts and contemporary artistic production.

CULTURAL PRODUCTION

Museum
Public art
Visual arts
Music and sound
Workshop
Exhibitions

USER DEMOGRAPHIC

Children
Families
Local community
Young people
Other: students and tourists

COLLABORATIONS

Artists and creatives
Associations and collectives
Citizens and local community
Companies
Professionals and freelancers
Public administrations and public authorities
Universities and schools

NETWORK

Local: businesses, associations, DADU-Dipartimento di Architettura, Design e Urbanistica (Department of Architecture, Design and Urban Planning of Sassari University), Accademia delle belle Arti di Sassari (Academy of Fine Arts of Sassari), Istituto di Istruzione Superiore Devilla di Sassari (Devilla High School, Sassari)
Regional: Historical and Environmental Geominerary Park of Sardinia, Sardegna Teatro
National: Lo Stato dei Luoghi, businesses
International: foreign universities

WHO

For the cultural regeneration of the village of Argentiera, LandWorks (LW) cultural association has created for the first time ever a memorandum of understanding, called MAR, by gathering the Municipality of Sassari, the Historical and Environ-

mental Geominerary Park of Sardinia, the Department of Architecture, Design and Urban Planning of Sassari University, the Sardegna Film Commission, the Academy of Fine Arts of Sassari, Devilla High School of Sassari, the Erasmus-ESN association of Sassari, and the Formore Istruzione cultural association, with the active participation of other institutions, as well as local and international organizations. The driving force and soul of the project is the LandWorks cultural association, while the project partners are involved in specific actions. The spaces transformed into a museum were made available free of charge by the administration, and the open air areas are now free for public use, such as squares, streets, and open spaces in addition to disused or abandoned areas that host the works produced during the workshops with students, professionals and international artists, as well as the augmented reality works of the widespread museum.

MANAGING ORGANIZATION(S)

1. Associazione Culturale LandWorks (association, 2012)

PEOPLE INVOLVED IN THE MANAGEMENT

1 part-time employee
1 freelancer
3 city tour guides
10 collaborators
10 volunteers

HOW

NATURE OF THE INITIATIVE

Bottom-up

TYPE OF MANAGEMENT

Horizontal

ECONOMIC SUSTAINABILITY

80% Public grants
20% Tickets and entrance fees

TYPE OF ACTIVITIES

95% Free
5% Paid

Focus on the cultural production

ARgentiera in Augmented Reality

ARgentiera in AR is an innovative exhibit and tour that combines historical and mining memory with the artistic exploration offered by technological innovations.

The itinerary develops along the ancient buildings and wild nature to discover Argentiera, where large-scale art installations enrich the surrounding landscape with animated illustrations thanks to augmented reality, offering a new model of interactive tourism and an innovative way of enjoying the space, open to the territory and accessible for free to a wide audience, with site-specific content.

For the creation of this project, digital creativity artists with different backgrounds and skills have been involved through a national call to explore the theme of the relationship between memory, man and technology and create physical works in paste-up art and digital animation in augmented reality with the participation and active involvement of the local community.





How did your story begin?

LandWorks was founded in 2011 as a laboratory project of the Department of Architecture of the University of Sassari, which organized traveling workshops for the creation of installations of art, architecture and landscape design, with the aim of enhancing cultural landscape assets in a state of serious neglect and abandonment, and triggering bottom-up regeneration processes in a sort of “wake-up call” to administrations and communities. In 2012 the project was organized and became a cultural association, continuing to work on abandoned spaces such

“We want to build a micro-economy of scale for the territory, growing and including the locals in the working process, starting from culture.”

as mines, former military structures, etc. on Sardinian territory. The goal was to work physically inside the places through DIY building practices and the creation of temporary installations, to enhance and regenerate the selected spaces through culture and creativity

with the active involvement of experts, professors, professionals, international students of architecture, art and photography and the participation of the local community, embracing a wide range of creative and performance disciplines (art, architecture, design, dance, music and theater). In 2015, the traveling workshops arrived in Argentiera. At the time, the spaces that now house the museum and our headquarters had been partially renovated by the municipality, but lacked a management plan. Meanwhile, inside the association we felt the need and the desire to take root, to identify a stable place to bring the acquired knowledge and skillsets together, as we knew that regeneration processes require a lot of time due to their complexity (the need to establish relationships with the administration, community, etc). So in 2017 we chose Argentiera as our stable experimentation site. We chose it for its particular historical-environmental value, its touristic-productive disposition, the presence of an active local community, its proximity to the city of Sassari, the airport, the port, but especially for the presence of active partners. In 2018, in partnership with the Municipality of Sassari, Devilla High School and the Sassari University, we won the Culturability call for ideas which, in addition to the economic resources to get started, allowed us to attend a training course to acquire the right skills to deal with the complexity of urban regeneration: fundraising, project management, and taking part in open calls.

Is there a practice or value that represents you and you think may be an inspiration to others?

Surely the project that most represents us is MAR – Miniera Argentiera, the initiative that today holds together the different actions that contribute to the protection, enhancement and revitalization of the ancient mining complex of Argentiera. In this process it has been fundamental to create a partnership agreement with the Municipality of Sassari and other subjects in order to generate a unitary process, since the previous actions were impromptu and fragmented initiatives of valorization. The first action was a museum about the mine and Argentiera, built in 2019 together with the local community, as we wanted to involve the whole village in our considerations and actions, not only the buildings that the administration had granted us through the agreement. We needed a context with which to relate and the construction of the museum was the first step in getting to know

the few remaining inhabitants. From 1963, the year of the mine's closure, until 2007, many buildings had been completely abandoned and all documents, machinery and with them the history of the mine were stolen.

What is the secret ingredient that makes your story unique?

We would like to update the industrial model that gave rise to Argentiera, transforming it from a village of mining production into a place of cultural production. Argentiera was a productive place that operated every day; in the same way, we are working to create a center of continuous cultural production that operates all year round and especially beyond the summer season, focusing on the involvement of tourism that is not related to the seaside, but to culture, because this place is a mine of history. Moreover, the village has hosted many foreigners since its origins, as the company that managed the extraction was Belgian and the workers came mainly from outside the area. We want to start from the local features, from the presence of numerous abandoned spaces that need to be revived and become public spaces to be shared, to be enjoyed with awareness, because in Argentiera you have to come on purpose - to build a slow cultural model made of artistic residences, slow tourism, and connections with the locals.

Over time, a village grew around the mine, with all its services including a cinema, a church, stores etc. Here we want to recreate the same development, building a micro-economy of scale for the territory, growing and including the locals in the working process, starting from culture.

Interview with: Paola Serrittu and Andrea Maspero



Did you know?

The Culturability call

LandWorks Plus (LW+), a participatory project for the protection, enhancement and revitalization of the former mining village of Argentiera, has been funded by the national call Culturability. The call, created in 2009 by Fondazione Unipolis, promotes and supports cultural initiatives that generate innovation in terms of sustainable development and trigger processes of community activation, regeneration and territorial cohesion. The main objectives of the call are to support cultural professionals and organizations in capacity building and growth; to facilitate processes of comparison and open innovation between public and private institutions and bottom-up cultural organizations; to promote access to culture in order to reduce social inequalities; to help spread critical thinking opportunities that educate citizens to be critical and aware.