ReMIND

Reactivating neglected heritages, Reweaving unspoken memories
—A study on the adaptive reuse of former asylums into "museums of mind"—

Introduction

ReMIND focuses on the potentials for 'mind museums'—former asylums turned into museums—to provoke emotional responses among visitors and foster critical reflection on the histories and contemporary problems of managing mental illness (MI) in society. The aim of the project is to promote responsible and caring approaches to the heritage of MI, as well as to conjoin complimentary disciplinary approaches from museum and exhibition design and museum studies and develop new research competence for me as fellow and for the host institution in the field of visitor studies.

The project explores the MI heritage landscape through asylums built around Europe from the mid-19th century until the 60s' deinstitutionalisation process in the psychiatric care system. Today, most of these buildings still stand where they were, as unsettling traces and reminders of a grim human, social, medical and architectural story: they are often completely or partially abandoned, left to decay and contributing to urban decline. Their redevelopment is an important challenge that cannot be further postponed. ReMIND will survey the broader European landscape of MI heritage, considering phenomena such as abandonment and adaptive reuse of historic asylums for cultural purposes. However, alongside this general desk-based overview, the main aim is to analyse former asylums that have been recently restored and adaptively reused as *museums*, specifically involving in-depth interdisciplinary pilot case studies on two former asylums: the *Museo Laboratorio della Mente* in Rome (Italy) and the *Bethlem Museum of the Mind* in Beckenham, London (UK). These are examples of what I call 'mind museum' meaning not merely historical museums of psychiatry, but cultural sites devoted to the representation of the history of MI care and treatment that also have the mission to promote awareness about MI today.

My proposal involves three main assumptions. Firstly, that former asylums and psychiatric hospitals constitute a neglected European heritage—one that is disregarded and in danger and that holds an

overlooked potential for disclosing a Europe-wide history, as well as opening a dialogue about urgent current social and cultural issues. Secondly, that the conservation and valorisation of this heritage hinges on its reuse and reactivation, and that this must be planned and undertaken in a sustainable and relevant way from an architectural as well as social and cultural points of view, respecting the often-minor, hidden stories embedded and witnessed by these spaces. Thirdly, that the importance of this built heritage lies not so much in its architectural and historical value, however remarkable, but in the potential of these buildings to act as powerful places for fostering conscious and productive discourses on civility and care. My argument is that upon conversion into public cultural spaces, such as museums, the evocative nature of such buildings can provoke strong emotional and empathic reactions in visitors, which in turn can support and contribute to reflection that 'cannot exist [...] if reason is not associated with an emotion'[1]. At present, we do not have a co-ordinated strategy or sense of potentials for the responsible adaptive re-use of asylums and they are in danger. Likewise, once restored and converted into museums, their potential for effecting attitudinal change in visitors that may help to dismantle stigma and promote collective senses of care has not been yet properly investigated. ReMIND addresses these gaps.

An approach to heritage that focuses on values, meanings, interactions and relations rather than on the physical architectures *per se*, like the one I will adopt in my project, would allow me to critically think through conservation and reuse interventions in relation to the cultural significance, interpretative and selective dimension of heritage practices[2]. This means going beyond an interpretation of conservation as a mere preservation action towards an idea of re-activation and re-appropriation of heritage, opening up an idea of reuse as 'caring for', and 'curating' the built environment. The key point here is that asylum architecture has specific attributes and characteristics that are, in their intended fitness to the purpose of care, historically and socially meaningful. When these are later subject to museum development a multi-layered architecture results, and an analysis of the potentials of this is aided by disciplinary, technical architectural understandings such as mine. I believe that such a transdisciplinary approach is not only needed to comprehensively investigate the issues at stake in the ReMIND project pertaining to the study of all-round sustainable and relevant strategies of conservation and valorisation of former abandoned asylums, but will also contribute to wider ongoing debates about both adaptive reuse and uses of the past and heritage-making.

The overarching objective of my project is to explore the actual and potential relationship and mutual

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1 DRUGMAN, F. 1998. "Architetti per la Scienza. Acrobati giocolieri visionari." In *Musei per la Scienza*, edited by L. Basso Peressut. Lybra Immmagine.
2 PENDELBURY, J., Y. WANG, and A. LAW. 2018 "Re-using 'Uncomfortable Heritage.'" *International Journal of Heritage Studies* 23 (3); LANZ, F. 2018. "Ambiente Costruito, Heritage e Adaptive Reuse," in *Patrimoni Inattesi*. Lettera Ventidue; PENDELBURY, J. 2009. *Conservation in the Age of Consensus*. Routledge.

intertwinement between contemporary architecture, adaptive reuse, exhibition design practices and emerging theories and methodologies related to museum and critical heritage studies. To achieve this objective and comprehensively grasp the complexity of the issues at stake, I will work at the intersection of different research fields and my study will integrate various disciplinary approaches to rethink adaptive reuse interventions and contemporary heritage conservation and valorisation practices. Building on my own background as an architect mainly trained in Italy and my previous research experiences in museums and exhibition design, contentious heritages and the built environment, I will move to the UK at Newcastle University (UNEW). There, under the supervision of Prof. Christopher Whitehead, I will expand my expertise and skills by learning and deploying research theories and methodologies related to critical heritage studies, visitor studies, and display analysis, especially with regard to the emotive capacity of the museums and visitors' own emotional experiences and reflexivity. These themes indeed are barely known in Italy but considerably developed in the Anglo-Saxon context, with world-leading contribution by my supervisor and other scholars currently based at the Department of Media, Culture, Heritage (MCH) at the School of Arts and Cultures of UNEW. In turn, my own architectural expertise will bring beneficial new dimensions to museological studies of displays and visiting undertaken at UNEW.

State of the Art

Asylums spread in European cities outskirts from the mid-19th to the second half of the 20th century as the 'space[s] reserved by society for insanity'[3]. They were often large complexes whose architectural characterisation and decoration was designed as purposely monumental, and whose boundaries were physically marked by containment walls and controlled access that enclosed introverted and compact spaces organised in rigid layouts. Their spaces were conceived for therapeutic purposes as well as social control and custody, in the positivistic belief that insanity should be 'treated' and could be cured and that the built environment could play a role in doing so[4].

The turn of the 60s saw the height of 'deinstitutionalisation'—notably spurred by the revolutionary ideas of the Italian psychiatrist Franco Basaglia—which marked the end of mental hospitals throughout Europe and beyond and their replacement with community MI services[5]. Deinstitutionalisation was a process of

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3 FOUCAULT, M. 1961. *Histoire de la folie à l'âge classique - Folie et déraison*. Plon. [2006. *History of Madness*. Routledge, p. 251].

4 AJROLDI, C., et al. (eds). 2013. *I Complessi Manicomiali in Italia tra Otto e Novecento*. Electa; TOPP, L., J. E. MORAN and J. ANDREWS (eds). 2007. *Madness, Architecture and the Built Environment*. Routledge; PIDDOCK, S. 2007. *A Space of Their Own*. Springer, FINZSCH, N., and JUTTE R. 1996. *Institutions of Confinement*: Cambridge University Press; PHILO, C. 2004. *A Geographical History of Institutional Provision for the Insane from Medieval Times to the 1860's in England and Wales*. Edwin Mellen.

5 ROTELLI, F. (ed). 2015. *L'istituzione inventata*. Alpha Beta; FOOT, J. 2014. *La 'Repubblica dei matti'. Franco Basaglia e la psichiatria radicale in Italia, 1961-1978*. Feltrinelli; PAULSON, G. W. 2012. *Closing the Asylums: Causes and Consequences of the Deinstitutionalization Movement*. McFarland & Co.; di RUSSO, G., and F. CARELLI. 2009. 'Dismantling asylums: The Italian Job'. *London Journal of Primary Care*; D'ALESSANDRO, R. 2008. *Lo specchio rimosso. Individuo, società, follia da Goffman a Basaglia*. Franco Angeli.

putting large state hospitals out of service while releasing and shifting the patients into different, mainly community-based, care systems including a wide set of services (varying according to country) such as rehabilitation centres, day centres, supported housing and other services and facilities. Deinstitutionalisation was occasioned by several factors, from cost-cutting and the spread of psychoactive drugs to a radical reassessment of the approach to psychiatric treatments and mental-health care. It was a revolution driven by idealistic principles, but sadly brought unintended consequences[6]. In Italy, forty years after the so-called Basaglia Law (L.180/13.05.1978) the current situation of treatment and care of people affected with mental-health problems is highly problematic[7]; the same happens—often invisibly—in many other countries. Doubtless, mental hospitals were places of unspeakable pain, medical mistakes, of social and human marginalisation and containment, 'total institutions', as Michel Foucault and Erving Goffman separately described them[8]. Their reputation has been worsened by journalists, sociologists, Hollywood film-makers and even many in the psychiatric profession, such that their closure is easily seen as unambiguous social progress. Certainly, for some patients this has been the case. But for many others, and their families, it is not.

Among the many ongoing consequences of deinstitutionalisation, there is the slow and gradual process of closure of those buildings dedicated to the hosting of people affected by various kinds of MI problems, namely asylums and psychiatric hospitals. As with the overall deinstitutionalisation process, the dismissal of these buildings was largely unplanned and unmanaged, and the closure of asylums took years. While no maintenance, no staff, and no investments were put into the ageing structures, many patients remained within their walls waiting for a better location. Today, four decades on, most of these buildings have fallen into disuse, deteriorating in the landscape, often completely or partially abandoned and misused, notwithstanding the social memory that they embody and their unexploited potentialities. Indeed, even though they represent a sizeable asset (not least as real estate), their difficult memories and their architectural features make them difficult to manage and therefore they are often considered by their administrators either as problems or as a mere architectural assets to be exploited, rather than as resources[9].

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6 PAULSON, George W. 2012. *Op. Cit.*

7 LANZA, M. G. and D. SALA. 2018. *Matti per Sempre.* https://mattipersempre.it; Web site: http://www.vittimedella180.org/.

8 FOUCAULT, M. 1961. *Op. Cit.*; FOUCAULT, M. 1975. *Surveiller et punir*: Gallimard; GOFFMAN, E. 1961. *Asylums*. Anchor Books.

9 Among others see: CHERCHI, P. F. 2016. *Typological shift. Adaptive reuse of abandoned historic hospitals in Europe.* LetteraVentidue; MOON, G., R. KEARNS and A. JOSEPH. 2015. *The afterlives of the psychiatric asylum: the recycling of concepts, sites and memories.* Ashgate; J., ALUN, R. KEARNS and G. MOON. 2013. "Re-Imagining Psychiatric Asylum Spaces through Residential Redevelopment: Strategic Forgetting and Selective Remembrance." *Housing Studies*, 28(1): 135–153; CRIPPA, M. A. 2013. "Il Moderno Processo di un'Istituzione Psichiatrica, affermata e poi negata." *Territorio* (65): 74–80; KEARNS, R., ALUN J. and G. MOON. 2010. "Memorialisation and remembrance: on strategic forgetting and the metamorphosis of psychiatric asylums into sites for tertiary educational provision." *Social & Cultural Geography*, 11(8): 731–749; J., ALUN, R. KEARNS and G. MOON. 2009. "Recycling former psychiatric hospitals in New Zealand: echoes of deinstitutionalisation and restructuring." *Health & Place*, 15(1): 79–87; MOON, G., R. KEARNS and ALUN J. 2006. "Selling the private asylum: therapeutic landscapes and the (re)valorization of confinement in the era of community care." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 31(2): 131–149; FRANKLIN, B. 2002a. "Hospital–Heritage–Home: Reconstructing the Nineteenth Century Lunatic Asylum." *Housing, Theory and Society*, 19(3-4): 170–184; FRANKLIN, B. 2002b. "Monument to Madness: The Rehabilitation of the Victorian Lunatic Asylum." *Journal of Architectural Conservation*, 8(3): 24–39; JONES, K. 1993. *Asylums and After. A Revised History of the Mental Health Services: From*

As Carla Yanni argues 'there's a stigma attached to mental illness, and the stigma extends to those buildings that housed its sufferers'[10]. Thus, most of them remain where they were, as unsettling traces of a past deemed to be forgotten. Their severe deterioration contributes to local social and urban decay, their spaces taken over by squatters, by the newly marginalised, the homeless and drug addicts, and their buildings become dangerously precarious. Today the integrity of these buildings is threatened due to deterioration and abandonment or, conversely, due to radical conversions that are not always compatible with their layered histories and multi-faceted meanings. The research-informed identification of sustainable, relevant and effective strategies for the conservation and valorisation of these buildings is an urgent issue.

Nevertheless, although the study of former asylums is expanding, this is still an under-researched area. To date, relevant research has largely been undertaken within the fields of geography, medical history and cultural sociology. Most of these studies have been developed in the Anglosphere, (especially the UK, USA and Australia) concentrating on the establishment and growth of MI care institutions in such countries in relation to the important legal bodies and legislative changes inaugurated during the period from the mid-19th century to the 1960s. The few foundational publications that investigate the topic from an architectural point of view mostly emerge from geography and historical studies; they largely contribute to the knowledge in the field, providing a fundamental basis. Likewise, few publications address the topic from a heritage and museum studies perspective and they mainly focus either on psychiatry historical museums and collections or on the relationship of museums in general (i.e. not only 'museums of the mind' but also art museums and others) to people with MI problems[11]. No studies, to my knowledge, have yet focused sufficiently on adaptively reused asylums as 'mind museums' and similar exhibitions, and their impact and in fostering awareness toward MI, notwithstanding statistics that show that mental disorders are on the rise and bias and misinformation still determine predominant attitudes toward them.

Innovative and interdisciplinary aspects

My project responds to these circumstances. It will advance a novel and interdisciplinary perspective on these issues by focusing on the study of possible strategies for the conservation and valorisation former asylums. Meanwhile, by researching on the adaptive reuse of former asylums as 'mind museums', it intends

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the Early 18th Century to the 1990s. The Athlone.

10 YANNI, C. 2007. *The architecture of madness: insane asylums in the United States*. University of Minnesota Press, p. 151.

11 E.g.: GALE, C. 2014. "A Museum of the Mind." *Museum Worlds: Advances in Research* (2): 167–169; COLEBORNE, C. and D. MacKinnon, eds. 2011. *Exhibiting madness in museums*. Routledge, 2011; BRÜGGEMANN, R. and G. SCHMID-KREBS. 2007. *Verortungen Der Seele - Locating the Soul*. Mabuse-Verlag GmbH; DODD, J. 2002. "Museums and the Health of the Community." Pp. 182–199 in *Museums, Society, Inequality*, ed. R. Sandell. Routledge.

to investigate their role in fostering 'heritage-emotion-reflexivity' (HER) on MI today to help dismantle stigma. HER is a developing framework that builds on ideas of emotional reflexivity[12] with specific reference to heritage settings whose emotive properties foster visitors' reflexivity on societal issues, whether purposively or not, and whether instantly or subsequently. The framework is being developed in ongoing collaborations between the supervisor and me in work relating to migration in museums, which is an additional reason for the choice of supervisor[13].

ReMIND is a problem-oriented and concept-driven research programme. It focuses on the urgent question of the preservation of former asylums and unfolds this issue by grounding its investigations in the hypothesis that former asylums can be understood as a European 'neglected heritage', the preservation and valorisation of which can be best achieved through re-activation via adaptive reuse. It does so by combining theories and practices from architectural studies, adaptive reuse and exhibition design—known to me because of my background as an architect—with emerging theories and research methodologies from critical heritage and museum studies. In his 1961 *Madness and Civilization,* Foucault points out that the practice of confinement 'has European dimensions'[14]. Similarly, the evolution of confinement into treatment and of confinement places into asylums and mental hospitals occurred roughly uniformly throughout Europe during the 19th century with the rise of positivistic psychiatry. About a century later, thoughts and practices referring to radical psychiatry circulated and took root around Europe, fostering the rise of the deinstitutionalisation process. Former asylums are the silenced physical traces of this ambiguous and under-researched chapter of European medical, legal, architectural and social history. If, as Sharon Macdonald has argued in her 2013 *Memorylands*, there is a common way of 'doing the past' in Europe, including complex negotiations around difficult and neglected heritages, then the management of historic asylums has a compound significance. Former asylums in Europe need to be understood as a distinctly European heritage—both because of their European significance as sites of MI history and memory and because of the typically European processes of silencing, management and valorisation to which they are subject. Their presence also illuminates questions and concerns about the results of recent deinstitutionalisation processes and the current social, political and medical attitude in many European countries toward MI, leading to engagement with mental health and what this means to people today.

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12 BURKITT, I. 2012. "Emotional Reflexivity: Feeling, Emotion and Imagination in Reflexive Dialogues." *Sociology* 46 (3): 458–472.
13 WHITEHEAD, C., and F. LANZ. 2019. "Only Connect': the heritage and emotional politics of showcasing the suffering migrant." In *Connecting Museums*, edited by M. O'Neill and G. Hooper. Routledge; LANZ. F. and C. WHITEHEAD. 2019. "Exhibiting Voids", in *Handbook of Art and Global Migration*, edited by B. Dogramaci, and B. Mersmann. De Gruyter; WHITEHEAD, C., and F. LANZ. 2018. "Museums and a Progressive Sense of Place", in *Museums and Communities*, edited by J. Walklate and V. Golding, Cambridge Scholars.
14 FOUCAULT, Michel. 1961 [2006]. *Op. Cit,* pp. 39–40.

While I do not ignore the possible generalisability of the research to non-European contexts (e.g. the US), I am particularly concerned to see them as situated cultural practice and to contribute to the literatures on European heritage, in which MI does not currently figure. In this, I draw on an emerging interpretation of heritage as a processual use of the past for making the present and future[15]. Notably, former asylums can be regarded as difficult, dissonant, uncomfortable or dark heritage and, in particular, as a neglected heritage, comprising artefacts rarely or only recently considered in literature, hidden stories and collections including historical remains, residual spaces and architectural leftovers, intentionally or unintentionally overlooked, often because of their awkward nature, and despite the 'cultural work' they might perform in the present.

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[15] Harrison, Rodney. Heritage: Critical Approaches, Abingdon: Routledge, 2013: 4.

Project Overview	
Fellow name	Francesca Lanz
Hosting Insitution	Newcastle University, School of Arts and Cultures – Media Culture Heritage Department
Supervisor	Prof. Chris Whitehead
Title of research project	Reactivating Neglected Heritages, Reweaving Unspoken Memories. A study on the adaptive reuse of former asylums into "mind museums".
Acronym	ReMIND
Project Duration	15th June 2019 – 14 june 2021 (24 months)
Funding Scheme	H2020-MSCA-IF-2018 Project ID 841174
Project Abstract	ReMIND focuses on the potentials for 'mind museums' (former asylums turned into museums) to provoke emotional responses in visitors and foster critical reflection on the histories and contemporary problems of dealing with mental illness (MI) in society. Its objective is to fill some relevant scientific gaps on the subject, as well as to conjoin complimentary disciplinary approaches from museum and exhibition design and museum studies and develop new research competence for me as fellow and for the host institution in the field of visitor studies. ReMIND explores the MI heritage landscape through asylums built in Europe from the mid-19th cent until the 60s' deinstitutionalisation process in the psychiatric care system.Today, most of these buildings still stand where they were, often completely or partially abandoned, left to decay, and contributing to urban decline.ReMIND will survey the European landscape of MI heritage considering phenomena such as abandonment and reuse of historic asylums for cultural purposes.However, alongside this general desk-based overview, its main aim is to analyse former asylums that have been restored and reused as museums, specifically involving 2 indepth interdisciplinary pilot case studies.Nowadays we don't have a sense of potentials for the responsible adaptive re-use of asylums and they are in danger.Likewise, once converted into museums, their role in effecting attitudinal change in visitors that may help to dismantle stigma and promote awareness toward MI has not been properly investigated.ReMIND addresses these gaps. To do so my study will integrate various disciplinary approaches to rethink adaptive reuse interventions and contemporary heritage conservation and valorisation practices.I will work at the intersection of different research fields, moving from Italy to UK at New Castle University to learn, deploy and contribute in implementing theories and methodologies related to heritage studies, visitor studies, and display analysis.