

NavarraOfficeWalkArchitecture

Strip Park between Caltagirone and Piazza Armerina, Catania, Italy 2001

This project, similar in spirit to the footpaths of Dimitris Pikionis, is part of a programme to put to new use the thirty-five kilometres of a former railway track that had passed through agricultural land and natural landscape between Caltagirone and Piazza Armerina, in central Sicily. Many spectacular engineering works from the 1920s and '30s—viaducts, tunnels and bridges—dot the rugged landscape alongside traditional rural buildings. As the architect says, the railway line “cut into the landscape like a wound, imposing its own laws in accordance with the needs of the machine age.” This project is for the regeneration of the circuit into a bicycle, skating, jogging track, or trekking trail. The project can be read on two levels: the physical and the abstract. The first is concerned with the protection of an abandoned and newly freed natural reserve, and the second with new ways of appreciating the industrial archaeology that has become second nature to the site, alongside farm structures. It is conceived as a trajectory through the unfolding history of the social and economic forces that shaped this part of Italy.

Although an example of early twentieth-century industrial archaeology, it is very different from that which Dimitris designed his prototypical pathway for—the Acropolis and Philopappos Hill—although the intent is the same. It is to re-awaken our attachment to the beauty of nature which triumphs over the machine age.







