

**Identification**

<i>Nomination</i>	Crespi d'Adda
<i>Location</i>	Lombardy Region, Province of Bergamo
<i>State Party</i>	Italy
<i>Date</i>	11 October 1994

**Justification by State Party**

The company town of Crespi d'Adda should be inscribed on the World Heritage List for two reasons:

- a It is a rare example of a company town, both because of its privileged position and because its urban and architectural style is unaltered;
- b It bears witness to the most critical period of evolution of modern society, the Industrial Revolution.

Company towns were unusual not only for their urban structures but also, and more importantly, because they reflect the notion of an ordered society and precise economic growth. There were to be found a clearly defined hierarchy, precise roles, and planned economic relationships. They are thus the result of the liberal theories of 19th century British economists and of what has been called "paternalistic capitalism."

Another significant feature of Crespi is its perfect state of conservation. Only Noisiel-sur-Marne (France) has the same quality of retaining its urban structure unaltered. All the other Italian company towns (eg Leumann in Turin and Rosli in Schio), along with New Lanark (Scotland) and Krupp (Germany), have undergone major changes because they are located near large cities.

**Category of property**

In terms of the categories of property set out in Article 1 of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, Crespi d'Adda is a *group of buildings*.

**History and Description***History*

The first company towns were built in Europe in Belgium, France, Germany, and Great Britain, to house the large workforces assembled by the new generation of entrepreneurs to work in their factories, which were established close to sources of raw materials, power, etc. It was not until the creation of the national market following political unification that they were set up in Italy. Crespi, in Capriate San Gervasio (Bergamo), is the most characteristic and complete of these; others were Leumann at Colegno (Turin) and Rossi at Schio (Vicenza).

In 1875 Cristoforo Benigno Crespi, a textile manufacturer from Busto Arsizio (Varese), bought the 1 km<sup>2</sup> valley between the rivers Bembo and Adda, to the south of Capriate, with the intention of installing a cotton mill on the banks of the Adda. He decided to build three-storey multi-family houses for his workers around the mill, and these were erected in the early months of 1878, following an established European model. When the founder's son, Silvio Benigno Crespi, took over the management of the enterprise in 1889 he completed and modified the project, on the basis of a different urbanistic approach and a clearer ideology. He turned away from the large multiple-occupancy blocks in favour of the single-family house, with its own garden, which he saw as conducive to harmony and a defence against industrial strife. He put this policy into practice in 1892 and the

years that followed, with success, since there was no strike or other form of social disorder for the fifty years of Crespi management. In addition to small houses on the model that he advocated, he built a hydroelectric power station to supply his workers with free electricity, public lavatories and wash-houses, a clinic, a consumer cooperative, a school and small theatre, a sports centre, a house for the local priest and the local doctor, and other common services. Silvio Benigno Crespi also supplied his company town with buildings with a more symbolic value, such as the church, the castle (residence of the Crespi family), a new office complex within the factory, and houses for the owners to the south of those of the workers (the former two of these date from the 1890s and the two latter from the early 1920s).

The great depression of 1929 and the harsh fascist fiscal policy resulted in the Crespi family being obliged to sell the entire town to STI, the Italian textile enterprise, which transferred it to the Rossari e Varzi company in 1970. It then passed to the Legler company, which sold off most of the houses. It is currently in the hands of the Polli industrial group, which currently employs some 600 people, as compared with the 3200 employed during the years of maximum activity.

#### *Description*

The entire complex is laid out in a geometrically regular form. It is divided into two parts by the main road from Capriate. The factory, a single, compact block with medieval ornamentation, is situated to the right, on the left bank of the Adda; it contains the offices designed by Ernesto Pirovano, architect of much of the construction carried out during the time of Silvio Benigno Crespi.

On the opposite side of the main road are the houses, constructed within a rectangular grid of roads in three lines. In the original plan these were two-storey buildings occupied by several families, each with four rooms. Nowadays each individual family house has a small garden and a vegetable garden, the latter separating the houses from the lavatories in the rear. The earlier houses can be clearly distinguished from the later ones on stylistic and layout grounds. There is considerable variation in the styles of house, which makes for a pleasing diversity in the townscape.

The church was designed by the architect Luigi Cavenaghi following Bramante's Temple of Santa Maria in Piazza in Busto Arsizio (the home of the founder of the company); construction began in 1891 and was completed two years later. It is at the north end of the town in a square which also includes in its surroundings the school and theatre.

The castle is the work of Pirovano, and was completed in 1897. In style it is an admixture of Neo-Gothic Lombard elements, sculptures, and paintings with Moorish elements from the Veneto. The ensemble recalls the Romantic Gothic period, an impression that is heightened by the use of heterogeneous building materials - the *ceppo* stone of Capriate, fired bricks, and cement.

The cemetery lies at the southern end of the town. It is dominated by the Crespi family mausoleum, an Art nouveau structure, the work of Gaetano Moretti.

#### **Management and Protection**

##### *Legal status*

The entire property was in company ownership until the 1970s and was then split up. There are now four separate categories of ownership: public (belonging to the Municipality); individual private; property of the Legliertex-Polli Group; and property of the Roman Catholic Church (Curia of Bergamo).

Under the provisions of Law No 1497 of 26 June 1939 on "Protection of natural beauties" Crespi d'Adda is designated as an "urban centre of historical character and environmental importance," which imposes a number of restrictions on owners. Law No 431 of 8 August 1985 brought the entire area surrounding the river Adda and the woodlands round the urban centre within the terms of this designation. Only the Crespi family mausoleum is protected as an individual monument, under the provisions of Law No 1089 of 1 June 1939.

## *Management*

The relevant administrative body is the Municipality of Capriate San Gervasio. Its Municipal Urban Plan for Crespi d'Adda, prepared according to Law No 1150 of 17 August 1942 and adopted by the Town Council on 23 June 1994, contains regulations controlling interventions on private and public buildings for which official authorization is obligatory. At the time of the submission of the nomination, this plan was open for public consultation, but has since been approved and is in force.

The Consorzio per il Parco Regionale dell'Adda Nord and the Consorzio della Comunità dell'Isola Bergamasca also have roles in connection with the overall management of the area. The Piano Territoriale di Coordinamento (Territorial Coordination Plan), prepared in conformity with national and regional legislation, has been in force since 6 December 1993. It has a wider field of application than the Municipal Urban Plan. So far as Crespi d'Adda is concerned, there are three levels of regulation, affecting areas of natural interest, historical sites and areas with morphological and structural characteristics which must be preserved, and areas which need to be inserted into a specific context (ie those where recuperative measures need to be taken).

## **Conservation and Authenticity**

### *Conservation history*

There has been no programme of conservation specifically based on the cultural and historical significance of Crespi d'Adda. A consistent approach covering the entire complex of industrial, public, and private buildings was maintained so long as it was in the ownership of a single entity (the "company"). Since that time, the private buildings, being in individual ownership, have been well maintained, but there has been some deterioration in the state of the public buildings. These are now the subject of restoration projects, in particular the school, where there is a plan in active preparation for its re-use as a centre incorporating a museum, library, and meeting centre.

So far as the industrial buildings are concerned, only part of the extensive complex is currently in use. As a result some areas are progressively deteriorating. Part of the regeneration project involves their rehabilitation and use for interpreting the town's industrial past. More serious is the condition of the small hydroelectric power station, which is an excellent example of early 20th century *Art Nouveau* architecture. Its technical equipment is still *in situ* and plans are being prepared for its rehabilitation as an industrial heritage museum.

### *Authenticity*

A remarkable degree of authenticity has been preserved at Crespi d'Adda. All the original elements - public, private, and industrial - survive intact: none has been demolished or substantially modified. There are some more recent constructions ancillary to the dwelling houses which are out of keeping with the overall appearance of the town; these will be removed when the Municipal Plan comes into full effect.

## **Evaluation**

### *Action by ICOMOS*

An expert ICOMOS-TICCIH mission visited the town in January 1995 and reported on both its cultural significance and its management and conservation.

### *Qualities*

Crespi d'Adda is an exceptionally well preserved example of a European "company town" of the late 19th/early 20th century. It is outstanding for its completeness, for the minimal level of change that it has undergone over the past 120 years, and, in particular, for the high quality of its layout and its architecture.

### *Comparative analysis*

The "model" industrial town dates back to at least as early as the 18th century, with examples such as Forsmark and Lövsta in Sweden. A more consciously philanthropic or "utopian" element was introduced in the earlier 19th century, as, for example, by Robert Owen at New Lanark (Scotland). The number of planned industrial towns increased throughout the century and into the early 20th century all over Europe and in North America, led by industrialists such as Rossi in Italy, Krupp in Germany, and Cadbury in England. Crespi d'Adda came relatively late in this process, since pre-unification Italy did not encourage the development of large industrial enterprises. Its significance lies not so much in its historical importance but rather in its extraordinarily high level of completeness and authenticity by comparison with other such ensembles.

### *ICOMOS recommendations for future action*

ICOMOS has no doubts about the high quality of Crespi d'Adda, a view strongly supported by TICCIH, and of its future conservation, given the dedication of all those concerned with current projects, but it felt that in this case inscription must be preceded by a thorough comparative study of "company towns."

This study had been carried out by Professor Louis Bergeron of the Centre de Recherches Historiques, École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, the current President of TICCIH. In his report, professor Bergeron identifies two categories of this type of cultural property, the one in northern Europe and North America, inspired by the high Protestant moral codes of the early 19th century, and the other in southern Europe, more securely located within the ideological framework of the Catholic church. In the opinion of this expert, Crespi d'Adda is the most complete and best preserved example of the latter category.

### **Recommendation**

That this property be inscribed on the World Heritage List on the basis of *criteria iv and v*.

Crespi d'Adda is an outstanding example of the 19th and early 20th century phenomenon of the "company town" in Europe and North America, which was an expression of the prevailing philosophy of enlightened industrialists towards their employees. It survives remarkably intact, and part is still in industrial use, though changing economic and social conditions inevitably pose a threat to its continued survival.

ICOMOS, November 1995