# The Faces of Memory: Photographs, Work and People in the Internet Era
## *By Manuel Tonolini*

From 8th to 20th November 2009, the Dalmine Foundation has organized a second edition of the exhibition *Faccia a faccia* at the Museo del Territorio in Verdello in the province of Bergamo. The display has been augmented by personal accounts of worker's activities collected by the museum in the heart of the small town next to the Dalmine steelworks.

This collaborative initiative is one of the results of a two-part workshop that took place on the 21st and 28th November 2008 at the Dalmine Foundation. At that time, scholars and cultural operators met to participate in *Le facce della memoria (The Faces of Memory)* during the Week for Business Culture. The event was dedicated to the relationship among memory, business and territory, and to the new challenges that technology and internet have brought to the sharing of photographic archives.

The conference opened with the public presentation of *Faccia a faccia ("Face to Face"),* a project promoted by the Foundation to valorize work and industrial memories through a travelling exhibition and a website with portraits and group photographs from the TenarisDalmine historical archives and from the personal albums of workers, former employees, their relatives and inhabitants of the area.

*Faccia a faccia* consists of traveling exhibitions, providing occasions to gather together and exchange photos and memories about workers, their relatives and the inhabitants who reflect the social history of industrial areas. The collected photographs, along with those of the TenarisDalmine historical archives, have become part of a website: an interactive space, dedicated not only to the subjects of the images, but also to historians of work and enterprise, whose research is based on images and memories.

The multidisciplinary meeting – whose transcription is available online – on the complex relationship between photography and memory in the age of the social web and online archives grew out of the idea of putting together a dual experience: the exhibitions and the web. The opening included several speakers whose comments covered a range of relevant topics:

- Andrea Serino, a researcher in Psychology at the Study and Research Center in Neurosciences at the University of Bologna, analyzed the psychological and neurological mechanism of recognition of the human face in photographs, highlighting how the human brain interacts when confronted with a human face, whether real or portrayed.
- Gabriele D'Autilia, director of the Foundation Audiovisual Archives of the Workers and Democratic movement as well as professor of Photography, Visual Documentation and New Media

at Teramo University (in Abruzzi on the Adriatic coast), developed the theme of the relationship among private memory, collective memory and photography.

- Marcella Filippa, director of the Vera Nocentini Cultural Foundation and expert of social history and, in particular, the theme of subjectivity, pointed out the complexity and the limits of reconstructing work memory through business photographs, and focused on the theme of social and generational conflict.

- Peppino Ortoleva, professor at Turin University, expert of media and communication, underlined the implications that new phenomena such as YouTube, Flickr, Facebook wield on the concept of shared memory and image.

- Serge Noiret, History Information Specialist at European University Institute in Florence, described the impact of Internet on the social sharing and participation in memorial activities and on the birth of a public history.

Following the opening talks, several memory valorization projects were presented, similar to *Faccia a faccia*. Federico Pedrocchi, journalist and host of Moebius (Radio 24) began with a presentation of Muvi, one of the first Italian projects of a virtual 'in progress' archives concerning everyday life. Elena Romagnolo then spoke about the project Storiaindustria.it, a recent example of using the web and multimedia resources for industrial history.

At the final round table, the directors of three important institutions whose mission is the preservation and valorization of business and labor memory: Luigi Ganapini (Isec Foundation – Sesto San Giovanni), Alessandro Lombardo (Ansaldo Foundation – Genoa) and Giuseppe Paletta (Centro per la cultura d'impresa – Milan discussed the relations among business archives, territory and collectivity.

The following week, on 28th November, the second workshop provided the opportunity for cultural operators, archivists, professors and local administrators to discuss preservation, study and public accessibility of photographic patrimonies, and to explore the possibility of creating new networks of cooperation.

Thanks to the participation of junior and high school teachers from Dalmine and Bergamo, the second part of this workshop analyzed the opportunity for educational development of the project.

Given the range of themes and the in-depth analysis provided by the conference, and as well as the debate with the public and the meeting of cultural, archival and educational operators and local administrators, *Faccia a faccia* proved to be a project that can be exported to other contexts. The initiative can stand up to the technological challenges of the 2.0 web, while maintaining the identity of any project created to valorize the historical archives of a business in a specific territory.