

## **Tourism management of archaeological sites within an urban context: a balanced compromise between preventive conservation and cultural use.**

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Some months ago, when we started to think of this topic, I accepted with enthusiasm the idea of presenting some experiences organised by the Centro di Conservazione Archeologica of Rome in the field of conservation of archaeological sites in the urban environment.

I was thinking of the Roman Forum and the Crypta Balbi in Rome, of Ostia Antica, of Jerusalem and so on as examples.

All of them being sites characterised by a great number of visitors and by the existence of public structures for management.

Then, during the preparation of the paper, I found myself asking if the real emergency in terms of use and protection of cultural heritage is represented by this category of sites, or if a better example could be found elsewhere.

That's how I convinced myself that the real emergency today and even more tomorrow, will not be in those sites in the urban environment, known, visited and sometimes also maintained, but in the tens of thousands of sites where decay and destruction are everyday events because they have been abandoned, or because they are poorly managed.

Sites that yesterday enjoyed a "a certain oblivion", but today are entering more and more into the big circuit of so called "cultural tourism".

### **EVERYDAY CULTURAL PROPERTY SUFFERS IRREVERSIBLE DAMAGE DUE TO THE LACK OF EVEN MINIMAL PROTECTION MEASURES**

The consequence of this, if we want to turn the above statement into a constructive key, and if we want to act in a logical and effective way, is that we should orient our future efforts towards three objectives:

- stop active causes of decay due to inappropriate behaviour;
- stabilise the state of conservation of cultural properties bringing it back over the limit of sustainability;
- enhance the conditions of use for the "cultural client"

I therefore thought it would be useful to present three initiatives carried out by the Centro di Conservazione Archeologica of Rome in the field of training, maintenance and raising awareness.

The first initiative that I am going to present is relative to a training programme for site directors, that we organised for UNESCO financed by the Italian Foreign Ministry, Co-operation and Development Department

"Training programme on Conservation and management of Archaeological sites for staff of Syrian and Jordan departments of Antiquities"

The programme was designed for ten civil servants of the Department of Antiquities of Syria and Jordan; directors of some of the most important sites in the region (Petra, Jerash, Amman, Palmyra, Damascus etc). Among the various activities carried out, the group, in collaboration with various European specialists, analysed two archaeological sites with the idea of creating a plan for the protection, conservation and development of the sites.

The two sites, Palmyra in Syria and Umm Qais in Jordan, were selected from many, because they were believed to have common conditions with most Mediterranean sites.

Each site was studied and analysed in situ for three weeks. Six weeks of work followed in our Centre in Italy. During these last six weeks the difficulties individualised in situ were analysed and put in order to form a list of problems on which a strategy could be formulated when a management plan was outlined.

First a mission statement was defined:

*To let the public to appreciate the site in its landscape and conserve both for future generations.*

Second, the conditions for a proper implementation of the mission statement were established:

- *In their complete historical, cultural and natural values.*
- *At minimum risk to structures and natural features*
- *Into a network of sites in the region*
- *With cultural, social and economical advantages for the local community.*

Third a strategy for designing an action plan was outlined. The resulting strategy was made up of 14 areas of action.

These are:

*interpretation*

*documentation*

*legislation*

*social relation-ship (local communities)*

*excavation policy*

*human resources*

*conservation*

*information (museum, raising awareness)*

*infrastructures*

*circulation-trails*

*added services*

*general maintenance*

*visitors relation-ships*

Research with an international outlook followed this analysis to individualise any solutions adopted elsewhere in similar cases that could represent a valid answer to our problems – an answer that could be used in the programme.

I will not show any of these solutions now because I don't believe that these are of interest here today. What is of interest here is the methodology.

This allowed us to separate the general and broad problem of site management into 14 parallel plans of action corresponding to the same number of lines of research finalised in defining the level of actual knowledge and to verify the practical value of applicability on site.

In fact, even if in certain cases it was easy to find the answers to problems, the reality is that in the majority of the fields lacunas and lack of knowledge were encountered, thus to suggest specific research development.

The second initiative that I would like to present is related to the study and application of techniques of maintenance of archaeological structures in sites open to the public.

This programme, began by CCA 15 years ago, is based on the principle of:

- *recovery of original techniques*
- *use of local material*
- *use of the local workforce*

This programme runs on two parallel lines of practical execution:

- *the conservation interventions and*
- *direct on site training.*

Such choices, applied to mosaics, mural paintings, stone structures in various countries in the Mediterranean area (Italy, Tunisia, Turkey, Israel, and we are ready with programmes for Greece Albania Syria Jordan and Yemen) were planned based on extremely simple principles:

- *compatibility*

- *sustainability*.

Compatibility because techniques and materials used re-propose history and chemical-physical compositions of the originals;

sustainability because the availability of local people and materials make the operation economically convenient and socially beneficial.

Some of these programmes have been active and independent for years demonstrating in the field their value and their efficiency such as the Capitolini Museums and Ostia Antica in Italy and Masada, Zippori and Mamshit in Israel.

Others have been temporarily suspended owing to lack of funds or interest. The reason for this is a contradictory mechanism where economic interest and therefore investments in research decrease in areas where the resources needed are extremely modest.

And so, in this strange world of great investors and great projects, what should be the strong point: its great economic advantage, becomes its weakness.

For this reason my second point ends by urging you all to sustain the research in maintenance programmes.

The third and last point in this presentation concerns the raising awareness to themes of fragility of the cultural heritage and its safeguarding.

This is a theme that we timidly raised half way through the 80s when we opened our conservation sites to the public with the sensation that the public was in some way the final beneficiary of our work. Then slowly but surely we became convinced of the soundness of this choice or rather the necessity to continue in this direction of awareness using also more tools for communication such as the realisation of a travelling exhibition.

Briefly reassuming the process that pushed us to invest so much energy in the field of awareness I would start with certain questions:

Who is the final beneficiary of our actions? The answer is the public, and public is the cultural heritage and all the resources that we invest in the profession.

What is our professional aim? Our aim is to preserve the cultural heritage and at the same time facilitate the transmission of its historical message.

Furthermore as conservators we are in a privileged position because we work in the “front line” in direct contact with monuments and visitors.

THE PUBLIC IS THE MAIN USER OF THE CULTURAL HERITAGE

OUR AIM IS:

- *to preserve CULTURAL HERITAGE and*

- *to facilitate the transmission of its HISTORICAL MESSAGE*

## CONSERVATORS

are in a privileged position because their actions are implemented in direct contact with the public (the "front line"). We have to use this position of privilege to catch the attention of the public to communicate:

- *the importance of the HISTORICAL MESSAGE that CULTURAL HERITAGE can transmit;*
- *the fragility of CULTURAL HERITAGE;*
- *the efforts required to preserve CULTURAL HERITAGE*

Our action must be directed to:

- *people that are already interested in Cultural Heritage and therefore are VISITORS and at the same time we have to involve all those that at the moment are not interested:*
- *acting together with the MEDIA*
- *investing in initiatives for CHILDREN, to educate them to be the VISITORS of the FUTURE*

This way our work will have:

SHORT TERM RESULTS (acting directly on Cultural Heritage)

- *to preserve and to manage Cultural Heritage*

LONG TERM RESULTS (acting indirectly on the Public)

- *to facilitate the transmission and the understanding of the Historical Message*
- *to limit potential aggression and to prevent damage*
- *to stimulate participation and to create opinion*
- *to educate future generations*

In the category of long term results the last initiative I would like to present is an exhibition entitled "S.O.S. Save Our Sites" organised by CCA for the Amman Office of UNESCO. The exhibition, made up of 26 panels, divided into three sections, in English and Arabic, presents, with photos, drawings and text:

- *the general meaning of cultural heritage with reference to Mediterranean sites,*
- *the main factors of deterioration*
- *the sustainable solutions to protect and transmit our archaeological heritage to the future.*

The exhibition was presented to the museum and university public of Syria and Jordan.

I would like to conclude this presentation taking up my initial theme: the apparent conflict between cultural use and the safeguarding of the cultural heritage, the juxtaposition between protection and use; "cultural tourism " against " conservation of the Heritage”

This is a phenomenon that found administrators and monuments unprepared. The former engaged in "defensive " management of the cultural heritage; the latter often reduced to ruins on its last legs.

In this situation, the great development of tourism and the demands for greater availability of monuments and sites "for use" has had a detonating effect.

The consequences are: administrations in crisis and monuments in decay.

This explains why "cultural tourism " is today often received as an ominous event.

The truth is another. The increasing interest from more and more people represents the result of the efforts of administrators and operators. It represents the acceptance of the meaning of cultural heritage, and it is itself the justification for so many administrations at work.

If we accept the statement that something is changing in this field, we first have to overturn the attitude of administrators and operators toward the public.

We all work for the public, not against the public.

Our aim is to facilitate the passage of information from the cultural heritage to the public.

Our objective is to guarantee the protection of the cultural heritage and the comfort of the public.

The bad habit of passively enduring the public must leave a place for constructive attitudes based on an active management of the phenomenon.

The public must be guided, not repressed; the damage must be prevented, not cured.

The phenomenon of the cultural tourism must become the impulse for a new attitude for managing cultural heritage: an attitude focused on the transmission to the public of the historical contents of cultural heritage and its preventive conservation.

### Captions

3. Training course in Syria and Jordan on Conservation and Management of Archaeological sites;

4. Training course in Tunisia on Conservation, Documentation and Maintenance of Archaeological Sites

5,6 Implementation of maintenance programmes on archaeological monuments in urban environment: the Arch of Septimus Severus in the Roman Forum.

7. Yemen. Maintenance of monuments by using traditional materials and techniques.

8. Ostia Antica. Maintenance of monuments by using traditional materials and techniques

9. Ostia Antica. The public is the main user of the Cultural heritage.

10. Rome. Musei Capitolini. A conservation work-site opened to the public to raise public awareness.

11-16 S.O.S. Save our Sites. An exhibition of Preventive Conservation on Archaeological Sites.