



CHINA AND ITALY: SHARING CULTURAL HERITAGE EXPERTISE



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CHINA AND ITALY:

SHARING CULTURAL HERITAGE EXPERTISE

EDITED BY
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PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY AS A RESEARCH AND ACTION PROCESS FOR SUSTAINABLE ENHANCEMENT

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THE ENHANCEMENT OF CULTURAL HERITAGE BETWEEN TERRITORIAL INTEGRATION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Nowadays sustainability in every sphere of human activity is highly valued, thus it is not surprising that the United Nations (UN) General Assembly declared 2017 as the “International Year of Sustainable Tourism for Development”, considering sustainable tourism as the solution to revitalize local economies. This decision follows the recognition by global leaders at the UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20) that “well-designed and well-managed tourism” can contribute to the three dimensions of sustainable development, to job creation and to trade.

In order to guarantee conditions for a “lasting, inclusive and sustainable economic growth” based on the development of tourism, the UN indicates the necessity to consider not only its economic and environmental implications, but also social and cultural, factors that are closely connected (<http://cf.cdn.unwto.org/press-release/2017-01-19/international-year-sustainable-tourism-development-2017-kicks>).

This formula would certainly be decisive for the development of countries like Italy - considered by many as a great outdoor museum - where archaeological sites, monuments, museums, libraries and archives, historic towns and cities of culture, provide a multitude of assets on which to base both the cultural and economic future, if properly integrated and enhanced on a broad territorial scale.

In the last decade, there have been attempts to drive the Italian economy towards the promotion of cultural tourism and not just of mass one. However, concepts such as inclusiveness, preservation of place identity, enhancement through networking, rarely have been included in an overall developing strategy. One of the main obstacles has been the fragmentation at all levels of management policies and enhancement of heritage, along with those of local development.



Fig. 1 "Preserving Places. Managing mass tourism, urban conservation and quality of life in historic centres" European Culture Program project (2008-2010) coordinated by ICVBC. The project included some creative labs – as a didactic exhibition staged by students from the historic centre of Rome – raising awareness in the younger citizens on the need for more sustainable tourism (http://www.icvbc.cnr.it/test_eng/1.%20Preserving%20Places_eng.pdf)

Only recently, the Italian Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Activities and Tourism (MIBACT) began to promote approaches of protection and management of cultural heritage based on actions of coordination and integration on a wide territorial basis, stimulating also the exploitation of tourist networks. However, this process has just started and had only an occasional success (<http://www.valorizzazione.beniculturali.it/it/valorizzazione-integrata-territoriale.html>).

An obstacle to the integration and creation of a systematic strategy have been also the tourist market interests, often leading to a branding and "turistification" of the cultural heritage (Re, Porfyriou 2017), resulting into an "artificial" hierarchy of values with UNESCO world heritage sites and major cultural attractions, on top, and less known sites, at the base.

Furthermore, despite the high historical and artistic importance, many less known sites do not have an adequate attention from local governments. Commonly this abandonment causes both the physical degradation of goods and the community disaffection. This status contributes to discourage and penalize isolated enhancing initiatives. Additionally, in some of those cases the decrease in tourist attractiveness is determined by the proximity of big cultural sites. In fact, under the pressure of the tourism market interests, big cultural sites can boast a large number of funds, both public and private, and a booming reputation among the public.

However, although the “spectacularization” makes them particularly attractive to the public, it determines a dual effect, on one hand, of isolating them from their historical and artistic context – subverting the historical hierarchy of values and the local identity – on the other, of casting a shadow on smaller sites placed in the same territory.

Moreover, the lack of a territorial integration penalizes also big cultural sites: even the overuse of that kind of heritage can have negative effects, physically degrading it and, more generally, its context from both the spatial and social point of view (Porfyriou 2010). On the opposite, the integration of cultural resources in the local development policies would have the effect of enhancing the environment of widespread heritage, also favoring its conservation and sustainable use.



Fig. 2 “Art is Science 2016” was the third national event organized by the Italian Association of Archaeometry (AIAr) and ICVBC at the archaeological site of Cottanello (Rieti). It introduced participants to the importance of both humanities and sciences for the preservation of sites and archaeological findings (http://www.associazionear.com/wp/as/?page_id=438)

PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY BETWEEN RESEARCH AND ACTION

If territorial integration brings with it many problems to solve, even the promotion of the cultural heritage is very challenging. It does not end in promotion, but must take into account accessibility to information, the target to which it is addressed and the related interest. This means, basically, that a sustainable development based on the enhancement of cultural heritage would require a major public awareness regarding the importance of preserving both tangible and intangible values of collective heritage.

The growth of public awareness also passes through an adequate communication. However, critical and in depth knowledge on monuments and historic sites, remains too often confined to the university and academic circles. This is particularly true for archeology, where urban excavations usually are being kept away from the curious eyes of the passer-by or interrupted and covered for lack of resources. This distance creates in the public a sense of alienation and the consideration that the archaeological heritage is just an obstacle to modernity. While, on the contrary, would be urged to improve this curiosity and offer a collective support in order to nurture a sense of belonging and care.

Still has to be considered the complexity of the subject and the inadequacy of the research world in communicating it properly to the public. Communication is a skill, one must have studied, and know how to do it.

Even the media have some responsibility in the lack of communication on this subject. This is partially due because media give little or relative importance to that which is un-important for the country and public opinion. Moreover, media are subjected to the market laws and news on cultural heritage does not increase the sales of newspapers. Therefore, they are interested in the cultural heritage only to denounce violations or destructions, to talk about economic transactions, or, rarely, in case of archaeological extraordinary finding.

In such a context, every opportunity to approach the public to the cultural heritage can and must become an action to be exploited in a knowledgeable and well-balanced way. This is what prescribes the "public archeology", not a real discipline, but rather a container of many actions and field applications that share three very specific areas of interest: society, economy and politics.

The "public archeology" has many definitions, but summarizing it can be interpret as a way to develop a relationship with citizens. It is a participatory process of building knowledge and identity based on community involvement and a thorough

analysis of public needs. In fact, there are no protocols of action and it is necessary from time to time to experience appropriate solutions.



Fig. 3 “HULBrIC 2016” full immersion course, organized by ICVBC and University of Rome “Tor Vergata” offering a highly qualified training on the conservation, planning, valorization, management and social participation issues relative to small historic towns, across different cultures, in an interdisciplinary and comparative way (<http://hul-bric.net/training/training-hul-bric/>; on the right photo by Gianluca Gasbarri ©)

Based on the experience gained in the field over the years, I would suggest at least three lines of action to be pursued:

- The communication of research results,
 - The community participation,
 - The training.
1. **The communication of research results.** Rarely a researcher is also a good communicator, because the academic world has its proper language and rules, often very different from those of generalist information. It is necessary to combine the quality and quantity of academic information with the immediacy and simplicity of the common communication. During recent years ICVBC has heavily invested on the communication of research to the general public, trailed at every level - conferences, debates, open days, exhibitions, fairs of small and medium enterprises - and exploiting the potential of multiple media and tools - interviews on radio, TV, newspapers, websites, social media, informative publications and open source technological applications -.

2. **The community participation.** In order to increase public awareness on the heritage and to bring this in the everyday life of a community, ICVBC has also experimented participatory approaches, attempting a real cultural operation. Indeed, the economic development of small communities can start from the promotion of cultural heritage as long as it is improved the sense of belonging and identity. The researchers can support this process, by soliciting and coordinating synergies present in an area, and by studying social participation solutions able to bring forward the most sustainable results. This challenge has been carried out by ICVBC on several occasions, particularly in the cases of small communities or “borghi”, getting interesting results (http://www.icvbc.cnr.it/Progetto%20bilaterale%20ITALIA-CINA_Priverno-Tongli.pdf; http://www.icvbc.cnr.it/test_eng/Territori.pdf).



Fig. 4 “Bilateral project Italy – China for the exchange of experiences in urban conservation and implementation of the UNESCO’s Recommendation HUL”, between ICVBC and the World Heritage Institute of Training and Research for the Asia and the Pacific Region under the auspices of UNESCO (WHITRAP Shanghai) (2014-2020). The project includes social participative discussions on local development initiatives (on the right photo by Gianluca Gasbarri ©)

3. **The training.** The bridge between the cultural memory and civic society is created through training. In this perspective the ICVBC has promoted different training paths and contributed with multiple actions at various levels (<http://hul-bric.net/>; <https://www.cnr.it/it/diplomazia>; <https://www.cnr.it/en/node/929>). Not only by offering highly qualified training through research for university students, professionals and for Italian and foreign public administrations; but also by promoting a better knowledge of the territory and heritage among younger generations, considered as multipliers of culture,

towards their families and the entire community. ICVBC has experimented various approaches and solutions for teaching.



Fig. 5 “WaterSchool. Promoting the sustainable use of water through the knowledge of the water cultural heritage - 2014” training course for primary schools, organized by ICVBC. The project included some creative labs on the enhancement of water cultural heritage as a didactic exhibition staged by students

CONCLUSIONS

In order to guarantee conditions for a “lasting, inclusive and sustainable economic growth” based on the development of tourism, there is the necessity to evaluate a strategy taking into account not only the economic and environmental implications, but also the socio-cultural ones. This means undertaking a process of research and actions, that at first must bring the community closer to the heritage by developing a sense of belonging and care, then have to make people aware of both the cultural and economic potential of cultural heritage.

Communicating research results, the community participation, the training are some of the key actions required coming from the “public archeology” and aiming

at developing a relationship with citizens, and that have been for years the focus of ICVBC's research and actions.

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This first volume collects some of the papers presented during the international conferences organized by the two Institutions, respectively in Rome on November 2014 and in Dazu on June 2015, when exploring their respective fields of interest and expertise. The following three volumes will be dedicated to the results of the three bilateral research projects financed under the mentioned Agreement and undertaken in the period 2016-2019.

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