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REVIEWS

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Archeologia Pubblica in Italia. Primo Congresso Nazionale Florence 29-30 October 2012

The first Italian Congress of Public Archaeology was held in Florence at the end of October. It was promoted by the University of Florence and the Florence City Council, and organised by Chiara Bonacchi and Michele Nucciotti. As the organisers argued in their introductory speech, public archaeology is not something completely new to Italy, but still lacks a sound theoretical framework and a thorough evaluation of the diverse contributions of archaeology to the social, economic and cultural life. Therefore, the Congress aimed to be 'an action of public archaeology in itself', besides constituting a moment of reflection on the current relationship between Italian archaeology and society.

The first keynote speaker was Giovanni Maria Flick, a former member of the Italian Constitutional Court, who approached archaeology as a jurist. Flick highlighted that the public is fascinated by archaeology. However, archaeology can cause a disturbance when it is not understood and can be seen as an 'obstacle' to development. He emphasised that in the current financial crisis each country should revert to its resources, and as archaeology is the Italian 'oil' it should be protected. In fact, he reviewed the history of the Italian legislation on cultural heritage protection, emphasising that there is no protection without valorisation. Flick also stressed that the understanding of the past is essential in order to comprehend our contemporary world, and the past should also be taken into account to plan a sustainable future. As archaeology and the past not only are associated with the environment but also contribute to build it, transforming a mere container into an interconnected landscape, Flick argued that the space of museums and the space of life should be merged.

The Congress consisted of six sessions, each session focusing on an important aspect of the relationship between archaeology and the public: Archaeology and cultural identity; The archaeologist today: role and formation; Archaeology communicates with the public; Archaeology and local development; 'Archeonomics': from archaeological research to economy; Archaeology: from the Constitution to legislation. Thirty-seven speakers in total presented their points of view and their experiences, covering a wide range of public archaeology initiatives and debates in Italy and beyond. Moreover, many posters were presented and will also be published in the Congress proceedings.

The first panel, *Archaeology and cultural identity*, was chaired by Guido Vannini (University of Florence), who noted that in a Congress on public archaeology aiming to promote new professional roles, contribute to the research in this field, react to the economic crisis and place archaeology in a more relevant position within the humanities, it is essential to start the discussion with some examples of the contribution of archaeology to shaping local and national identities.

The first speaker, Serge Noiret, recalled the evolution of public history, from its origins in the 1960s with Raphael Samuel and its developments in the US in the 1970s, to its contemporary framework, emphasising how collaboration and sharing of experiences are important, not only within Public History itself, but also providing good examples for public archaeology. The other speakers of this session discussed the contribution of archaeology to shaping local identities in

Italy (i.e. Angela Corolla spoke of Salerno as the City of Arechi II and Lidia Decandia presented a community project in Gallura, Sardinia), as well as national identities (i.e. Khairieh 'Amr, introduced the Jordan Museum, a new national museum, its planning and its outreach programme), especially in war areas (i.e. Carlo Lippolis, focused on Iraq, especially Babylon and Hamlet Petrosian, presented the many issues raised by the excavations of Tigrankert, during the Armenian – Azerbaijani conflict).

The second panel on the role and professional formation of archaeologists was chaired by Giuliano Volpe (University of Foggia) who argued that archaeology is now a multifaceted profession, requiring specialists in many fields. However, none of the new courses after the Bologna process provides a valid training in public archaeology. In this session, Stefania Mazzoni and Ettore Janulardo emphasised the role played by Italian archaeology abroad, while Stefano Valentini presented a new specialisation course in archaeological heritage management. Finally, Andrzej Buko gave an international perspective discussing the role of archaeologists in the former Polish – Kiev Rus' frontier, where different cultures (i.e. the Byzantine and Roman world) and different identities share the same archaeological heritage.

The third panel, *Archaeology communicates with the public*, was opened by Chiara Bonacchi (University College London) who presented a theoretical and methodological approach to the dissemination and communication of archaeological information. The other papers dealt with a wide range of projects carried out in the Italian context: Paolo Liverani discussed the experience of the FastiOnLine and AIAC websites. Laura Longo introduced the new museological project for the archaeological excavations of Palazzo Vecchio in Florence, the site of the Congress itself. Maria Letizia Gualandi presented the Mappa Project, developed by the University of Pisa, which makes all the archaeological data of the area of Pisa available online, as open data. The interests and needs of the public were also considered by Marinella Pasquinucci who discussed the growth of museums dedicated to underwater archaeology, while Valerio Massimo Manfredi reflected on the balance between scientific authenticity and public understanding in archaeological communication. Finally, Nicoletta Volante and Marco Valenti, from the University of Siena, examined the contribution of experimental archaeology and of augmented reality applications to archaeology, focusing specifically on the work of Archetipo, the digital archaeology spin-off of the University of Siena). In conclusion, Piero Pruneti, chair of this session, remarked

again the relevance of publishing and disseminating the results of any archaeological research and the importance of communicating them in an effective way to the general public.

After the debate, Daniele Manacorda was invited to give a keynote speech, which considered all the topics discussed during the first day of the Congress. He noted that as archaeological research is always a dynamic process between identity and alterity, archaeologists should learn to communicate within each context and with a coherent narrative, avoiding an excessive simplification and without being afraid to remark its complexity. Moreover, archaeologists should be confident in giving meaning to the past, without an excessive sacralisation of the past itself. At the same time, as far as the managerial process is concerned, archaeologists should be aware of the conflicts between protection and valorisation. Furthermore, those concerned by the legislation and management of heritage should reflect on the public of this heritage and the use it is made of it.

The second day opened with the keynote speech by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Firenze, Marco Bellandi, who emphasised the value of public archaeology, connecting it to the outreach missions of universities.

The panel on *Archaeology and local development* was chaired by Isabella Lapi Ballerini (Regional Directorate of Tuscany) who argued that Italian heritage is so strongly connected to the landscape that the boundaries between museum and territory are not as obvious as in other countries: the museum expands beyond its walls and landscape penetrates heritage. Michele Nucciotti compared two projects, one in Jordan and one in Tuscany, emphasising how public outreach was included in archaeological research from the start and how these two developed alongside in collaboration with local communities. Giovanna Bianchi discussed the creation and management of the Archaeological and Technological Park of Colline Metallifere (Tuscany), while Sabino Silvestri presented the case of Itinerario Canosino (Puglia) and Paolo Peduto evaluated the case of Castel Lagopesole (Basilicata). Chiara Molducci gave the point of view of an archaeologist who is also engaged in the local city council. Finally, Anna Patera discussed how public archaeology and rescue archaeology are related.

The panel on *Archeonomics: from archaeological research to economy* was chaired by Massimo Montella (University of Macerata), who introduced the topic discussing the notion of value and how

archaeology can be made relevant to different stakeholders, considering all its values. Paul Burtenshaw offered a theoretical approach, while Silvia Guideri discussed the management of the Archaeological Park in Val di Cornia. Paolo Giulierini presented the experience of the Museum of Cortona, and Giuliano Volpe the approaches of territorial planning by political entities (in this case, Regione Puglia) in relation to archaeological evidence and sites. Finally, Amjad Yaaqba discussed how archaeology and restoration have become an important economic source for some Jordan communities.

The last panel was dedicated to the realisation of the constitutional principles in the actual legislation, and the chair Andrea Pessina (Superintendency of Archaeology in Tuscany) summarised its history and development in Italy. Carlo Francini focused on the management of the city centre of Florence, which is a World Heritage Site; Maria Pia Guermandi presented the preliminary results of the ACE (Archaeology in Contemporary Europe) survey, twenty years after the Malta Convention; then, Elena Pianea, Gabriella Poggesi and Lucia Sarti gave examples of the administration and legislation of archaeology museums and sites in Tuscany.

The final speech was given by Giuseppe Curatola, who summarised the issues debated during this two-day meeting and stressed once again that there cannot be development without archaeology and vice versa, and therefore archaeologists should learn to balance their research interests with public interest for archaeology.

Overall, the Congress was a great opportunity to discuss and compare many initiatives carried out in Italy as well as issues raised by the work of public archaeologists abroad. It was also the starting point for an Italian network of public archaeology, while the next national Congress of public archaeology is scheduled for 2015.

Links

http://www.archeopubblica2012.it/

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