Introduction: Lights and shadows on the interpretation of Cultural Heritage through community-engaged participation

Introducción: luces y sombras en la interpretación de los estudios del Patrimonio Cultural a través de la participación ciudadana

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In 2012, we celebrated the 40th Anniversary of World Heritage Convention. During that year many world-wide events took place addressing the importance of participatory education and interpretation together with the emergence of new strategies to manage cultural heritage sites. The last years have been key to show application and advances concerning this topic, as could be valued in the Menorca Conferences on Best Practices in World Heritage (2012 and 2015).

In November 2012, John Jameson and Alicia Castillo led several sessions during the ICAHM International Meeting in Cuzco, Peru, where these topics were discussed and debated. From then on, we have tried to collect the texts that you can read here today. Besides, *Complutum* Journal has published two more issues related to the topic that rounds up with this special number.

The articles refer to all the ICOMOS Ename Charter principles established as guidelines on interpretation and presentation. These examples raise the potential of cultural resources to heighten public sensitivity to the rich cultural heritage these heritage resources represent. In addition, the studies presented here show how we are taking the first steps to connect multiple perceptions of the past –all of equal importance– that must be transmitted or facilitated by the cultural heritage manager.

The common theme of these texts is that they show alternative and innovative participatory approaches in cultural heritage interpretation. Innovative narratives; elitist and powerful discourses (especially, the disconnection between local communities and the site management); the need for site management education and training; and the effective development and sensitive interpretation in all communities, not just the minorities are the first themes considers by the authors. Most of the articles show holistic approach studies (beyond public archaeology, management, anthropological theory, etc.) demonstrating the importance of this kind of eclectic proposals to understand the value of the past in the present. Is it a déjà vu approach? This is the question posed for you and I hope this special number and the included cases invite you to rethink about it.

Participatory Model

Today, the application of a participatory culture model and collaborative relations between specialists and laypersons are central components for an effective interpretation of cultural heritage sites. On November 2012, John Jameson and Alicia Castillo led several sessions during the ICAHM International Meeting in Cuzco, Peru, where these topics were discussed and debated. During 2012, we celebrated the 40th Anniversary of World Heritage Convention. Likewise, many world-wide events occurred that year addressing the importance of participatory education and interpretation together with the emergence of new strategies to manage cultural heritage sites. The past years have become key to show the application and advances concerning this

ISSN: 1131-6993
http://dx.doi.org/10.5209/CMPL.54744

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The chapters in this volume relate to the ICOMOS Ename Charter principles established as guidelines to interpretation and presentation. These examples raise the potential of cultural resources to heighten public sensitivity to the rich cultural heritage these resources represent. Also, they show how the first steps are being taken to connect multiple perceptions of the past, all of equal importance, which must be transmitted or facilitated by the cultural heritage manager.

The common theme of these chapters is showing alternative and innovative participatory approaches in cultural heritage interpretation. The chapters cover several topics: innovative narratives; elitist discourses (especially, the disconnection between local communities and site management); the need for site management education and training versus empowering people independently from experts; and the need to develop effective and sensitive interpretation in all communities, not just the minorities. Conservation strategies and techniques, management and interpretation together with an analytical theory probably conform the best way to understand the role of archaeology in the present. It is not enough with only a point of view to give a constructive proposals or ideas. Theory versus management, management versus conservation, archaeology versus heritage, expertise (top-down) versus lay (bottom-up) discourses are ineffective as research challenges. Holistic models are welcome and necessary to improve or understand heritage studies and the value of the past in the present. Is it a déjà vu approach? That is the question posed for you and I hope this special journal number and the cases presented invite to you to rethink about this.

While rethinking about it, may I remind you that in the recent past, globalization forces have created a need for contextualizing knowledge in order to address complex issues with collaboration across and beyond academic disciplines, using more integrated methodologies that include the participation of non-academics and increased stakeholder involvement. Successful programs empower and motivate lay persons towards a more active involvement, not only in the archaeological fieldwork, but also in interpreting and disseminating joint processes of archaeologists and lay persons collaboration, generating "multivocality" within a participatory culture model. In these cases, participatory approaches often apply public/professional mediation within established principles of public interpretation. At times, this complements the academic perceptions of the past, but in others, it challenges or replaces them. Cultural heritage specialists should embrace these collaborative opportunities that eventually strengthen public support and appreciation of archaeology and cultural heritage (Jameson and Eogan 2013; Jameson 2013).

Twenty-first century archaeologists are increasingly engaged in publicly interactive research and interpretation programs that attempt to convey archaeological information to the lay public. At the same time, there are several international documents, for example, the Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention, 2005, Council of Europe) or the Best Practices Document on World Heritage (Menorca 2012 and 2015) stating that the community must be involved in cultural heritage management.

As in other aspects of the postmodernity period, old and new working models in archaeological management coexist, creating an endless number of contradictions between what is said and done, what is intended and achieved. The following articles illustrate these issues very well.

Articles in this special issue

Examples from different parts of the world are included in this issue allowing to better understand where we are today in our efforts to facilitate community involvement and participation. These chapters emphasize three basic premises:

1) Community involvement plays a seminal role in heritage management processes, including knowledge dissemination on cultural heritage, both by lay persons and experts (understanding both as a simplification of the multitude scales and kinds of people and communities under these two labels);

2) Continuous ability of diverse communities of people to perform cultural practices in relation to a site will ensure its, and their survival. Consequently, communities show alternative and innovative approaches to cultural heritage interpretation.

3) Importance of improving methodologies of participatory processes and social perception studies in Cultural Heritage management as an opportunity to show archeology today.

There are several recurrent topics in the different articles, and it is interesting to highlight:

Innovative Narratives

Kristin Barry, in her discussion on novel possibilities or interpretations to make the past come alive, proposes a unique approach to the interpretation of Mayan architecture. She observes that people from Mayan cultural traditions have adopted the works of tourist art, reflected through architecture. This has led to new interpretive narratives that imply local transformation in the appreciation and revaluation of Maya archaeological sites.

From a more practical perspective, Monique Van der Dries urges to put into practice the Ename Charter principles in conflict areas, such as the site of Tell Abata in Palestine. She concludes that there is a need for more inclusive strategies in interpretation that take into account modern conditions of society. But what will happen, she asks, if the local situation a heritage manager or archaeologist is working in makes it very hard or almost impossible to apply the cardinal principles of one or more of these charters, conventions, codes of conduct, and standards? These guidelines, the author maintains, tend to be optimistic and positivist, in a sense that they emanate the engineering of the heritage domain through top-down instruction of archaeologists or heritage managers. She discusses the challenges of the Tell Balata Archaeological Park project in Palestine, where it is almost impossible to comply with such professional standards and to follow the 2008 ICOMOS Charter due to the political, social, and economic situation.

In a similar vein, Jorge Gamboa analyzes the possibilities of inclusive interpretation of urban archaeological remains as a new channel to help improve socio-economic conflict in the growing city of Trujillo, Peru. The challenge of reassessing the archaeological spaces incorporated within the peripheral districts of Trujillo, he says, certainly implies a search for local participation in the solution of the problem; what should occur in the adaptation to social, economic, and cultural conditions of each area. The primary goal here is to enable local community to take an active role in the diagnosis and management of each heritage site. In these case, local education is paramount as a vehicle for strengthening identity and community values in areas facing problems of environmental degradation, urban insecurity, and high rates of unemployment.

Garrofini and Funari show how they formulated new discourses based on the materiality, and get to be more inclusive with communities through the museum of Parana State in Brazil. The increase of visitors and variety of profiles proofs the good strategy of Public Archaeology.

The need for new narratives is presented by Veysel Apydin's work. The author exposes how discourses are manipulated in several sites in Turkey, and how some scientific interpretations, insensitive to local ethnic and religious values, like the case of Çatalhöyük, lead to the site being ignored by most of the community. It is clear that the interpretation for these sites is not successful.

The author questions if the communities have to interpret and use the archaeological sites as a tourist resource for visitors, or rather look for other ways of enrichment through independent and scientific values and studies.

But, classical interpretative discourses of archaeology could be continued to empower communities too; this is specially shown in European rural areas. The work of local specialists (closer to the local communities and even belonging to them) shows this too. The problem of the discourse is not Archaeology, but maybe the way and tools used to approach it as well as the profile of the communities. This is part of a European research project in several Iron Age sites (Álvarez and Rodríguez)

Finally, the studies of social perception in different Spanish urban contexts (Castillo et al)

reveal that academic discourse is unknown by most people. It also shows that World Heritage and archaeology are seen as a brand or label without any historical or cultural value; these perceptions are important to consider in the early planning stages of site management and interpretation.

The issue of the disconnection between local communities and site management can be traced back to two main causes: elitism of officials and academics, and the politics of power.

Elitist discourses or discourses of Power

The problem of following elitist or academic and traditional discourses is easy to see in urban archaeology in Spain (Castillo et al, Delgado and Pastor): in general, performing archaeological interventions in cities before carrying out civil works projects is compulsory, however, requirements for spreading and disseminating contents of professional reports on the findings of archaeological studies are weak or non-existent. In addition, when the findings are preserved and exhibited to the public (urban integration), the interpretation of the sites and structures is poor and very elitist (displaying technical photographs and discourses requiring technical knowledge and insight to understand them), in the best-case scenario. What is worse is that many times, the interpretation is very classical with a romantic vision and a bad conservation (i.e., the aesthetic and monumental and "spectacular" aspects of the sites highlighted at the expense of other features).

Sometimes, the importance of scientific and conservation discourses placed on top of alternative or contemporary visions is clear. That is because alternative interpretations are not considered and official discourses are elitist and disconnected from urban dynamics in general; the interpretations are unacceptably limited in scope.

A similar situation is observed in the case of the Çatalhöyük site in Turkey (Apaydin), where a small percentage of local people visits the site because they "don't agree" with the scientific interpretation. In spite of all efforts made, the integration between the international team and the local community is not as effective as it should be.

Besides, in Turkey (Apaydin) we can see a classic example of the political manipulation of information through the interpretation concerning the recent past (Armenian conflict). Nevertheless, the community, with different traditions and religions, is respectful of the Armenian heritage, where this heritage seems compatible with the local culture or other practiced religions in the area.

In the case of the Maya architecture in Chizten Izta (Barry), commercialization and tourism have generated a new way to visit the distant past, where the new scenography and aesthetics catch the visitor's eye (i.e., by illuminating the pyramid at night). The economic power of tourism dominates the scene. Maya people accept this discourse and have made it part of their culture today.

The Need for Site Management Training

Articles from Monique van den Dries, Jorge Gamboa, Ana Pastor and Alicia Castillo, Marta Domínguez and Ana Yañez discuss management staff training needs. They show there is a need to train individuals who deal with people, not just with stones or materials. Therefore, the training of site mangers on resource information and specific interpretive methodologies is sorely needed.

Veysel Apaydin analyzes the education programs in two areas of Turkey and comments on the importance of adapting them to the local social and cultural context. In similar ways, Álvarez and Rodríguez have shown this situation in the context of Late Iron Age archaeological sites in central northern of Spain.

Funari and Garrofini clearly show the history of Brazil as an example of increasing participatory archeology in the academic context.

Developing interpretation in all Communities, not just minorities

We are very critical with World Heritage sites and other cultural properties because they show a power and dominant vision about the past that hampers portraying accurate and up-to-date idea about the past. But the problem is

more complex: most people do not understand the interpretation of the sites from the perspective of the experts; the elitist and scientific interpretations dominate the discourse. In these cases, it is necessary to balance the weight of the interpretive discourses to connect people to the cultural values represented by the archaeological sites.

Referenced or alluded to in several of the chapters, and described by Van der Dries in the case of Tella Abata, is the importance of knowing the tourism strategy and visiting the sites to understand the political conflict, such as in the Israel-Palestine power relationships. In these cases, the traditional archaeological strategy for information diffusion and interpretation is very limited within social and cultural contexts.

In the case of the Trujillo (Gamboa) there are similar problems in interpreting the archaeological urban heritage; the problem there is socio-economic. Apaydin also reflects on socio-economic determinants in Turkey, as he proposes to improve education strategies for archaeological sites.

Castillo *et al*. surveys in Spanish cities show how most people ignore the academic and official discourses; it is clearly necessary to readapt the message to urban archaeology if we want to connect with the people and integrate our scientific knowledge into the imagination of the people.

To recapitulate

The consideration of social and cultural context in the interpretation of cultural heritage sites must take place prior to the archaeological study of the sites to determine the needs and benefits (cultural, social, economic, etc.) of the community from it. At the same time, the archaeological study has to be conceptually focused. If we think of archaeology as a tool for channeling social change, we need to be sensitive and responsive to local social conditions and not only for scientific and international interests. Archaeology should try to address questions about the past starting from the local community, combined with archaeological ethical principles, and move beyond official or textual discourses to develop "independent" discourses, albeit this can be controversial and dangerous for archaeologists, both within and outside academia.

The relationship between community participation and interpretation of the sites is an important topic for current and future research. We are only beginning to evaluate our results and experiences. In these endeavors, we need to work with social science colleagues in fields such as sociology and social psychology in developing methodologies (surveys, focus groups, interviews, ethnographic observations, etc.) that can be applied to studies of archaeological heritage going further beyond our relationship with anthropological sciences. We need to complement these studies with innovative ways to identify and receive input from stakeholders. We also need to develop marketing and social media skills to improve communication about the archaeological dimension of cultural heritage (Castillo and Querol 2014)

Consequently, archaeologists need to work with communication media partners such as interpreters, guides, exhibit designers, and site managers. Cultural heritage managers and other specialists are often more important in resource interpretation than archaeologists, who usually have secondary roles in this stage of scientific knowledge transference to the lay people (visitors and inhabitants). Another way of understanding this is by saying that we need archaeologists who focus on public surveys, heritage studies and management topics –an approach I agree with too. Nevertheless, I include here other remarks to end this introduction: if we accept the multivocal discourse in archaeological sites as the best interpretation, why should the archeologist as a scientist be the most important or essential professional in relation to other specialists in the interpretation context? Is it a good idea that archeologists, who are dedicated to "build" the past, should be the persons to spread it? Do archaeologists have time for specializing in both topics? There is an excessive simplification of the potential cultural heritage has today. Fortunately, times are changing and we are starting to have very good specialists on this topic, and some of them write for us in this special issue.

Acknowledgment

We have collected articles for this special issue from 2013 until today. I was in debt with part of the authors and with this special publication it is solved. Thanks Jorge, Kristin, Monique, Veysel, Marta and Ana for your patience. Thank you also to Ana (whose phD dissertion I am advising), Pedro and Renata who have helped us too with their contribution. *Complutum* offers two articles more that have been evaluated by the Journal (the case of Lara and Jesús and Rodríguez). Maybe, they have included a less participatory approach in interpretation, but they offer a complementary vision concerning social aspects and archeological heritage.

I would like to acknowledge the grateful support of all the authors and the director and secretary (Gonzalo and Jesús) of the Journal and the editorial board team (Ana and Pedro). Besides, I would like to thank John Jameson, for the great effort in part of the collected papers and for sharing his thoughts and notes in some points of this introduction, and for the editing work in English done with part of the articles. Unfortunately he decided not co-edit with me this book. Finally, thanks Andrea Martínez y Cristina Gónzalez, students of Archaeology that adapted the references of several articles to rules of the journal and translated some abstracts to Spanish. Besides, Isabel Salto and Nekbet Corpas who helped with the edition of English of the most of the texts. My life is easier with these women!

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