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excerpt

CONSERVATION— CONSUMPTION

PRESERVING THE TANGIBLE AND INTANGIBLE VALUES

Donatella Fiorani
Giovanna Franco
Loughlin Kealy
Stefano Francesco Musso
Miguel Angel Calvo-Salve

Editors



European
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This book presents the papers written by 33 participants following the 6th Workshop on Conservation, organised by the Conservation Network of the European Association for Architectural Education in A Coruña, Galicia, Spain in 2017. All papers have been peer-reviewed. The Workshop was attended by 51 participants from the following countries: Czech Republic, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, Turkey, United Kingdom

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SOWING THE SEEDS OF AWARENESS TO DEFEND CULTURAL HERITAGE

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Introduction

Like the fruits of those seeds sown centuries ago, buildings and places are now an essential part of our cultural heritage. Their golden Age long past, they now risk abandonment, because maintenance costs are often prohibitive, so that tourism could provide an important contribution to sustaining their maintenance.

Tourism is an essential resource for the promotion of cultural sites and for keeping them alive. Traditional and modern technology should be employed whether for a single edifice, a whole village or a small island.

On the other hand, increasing exploitation of such sites may reveal itself to be a double edged sword. By attracting an uncontrolled number of visitors this could result in a more rapid decline of the resource.

Some places have been radically transformed to accommodate ever increasing numbers of tourists, with detrimental results. Rather than being enriched by the authenticity of the site, mass tourism is liable to degrade the authenticity that it is seeking. Sometimes the final result is less authentic and the traditional spirit of the place destroyed, sacrificed to a need to comply to standard 'hit and run' tourist destinations.

Any technical consideration of the intervention or protection of a historical and architectural heritage cannot be made without regard to the intended use of that heritage. When the use of the heritage is primarily touristic, even more so if it involves mass tourism, the reasons that attract visitors to a certain place should also be analysed together with the way in which this product is 'consumed'.

To this end, the policies for tourism exploitation of an area should not be left to the sole interests of the stakeholders but must be programmed and controlled by qualified scientific staff. The crucial matter is the balance between the economical aspect and the need to preserve the unique and distinctive characteristics of the environment surrounding heritage buildings, bearing in mind that some of the lost assets can never be recovered.

Therefore, there is a need to educate local authorities to ensure forward-looking policies and sustainable conservation strategies, in order to sow the seeds of local heritage defence and to disseminate the same seeds in local practitioners and citizens to obtain their support.

These reflections can be developed by apparently very different examples, but similar in view of the need to preserve the historical context they represent.

The route of Santiago has for centuries linked several places of cultural and religious interest along thousands of kilometres. In contrast, the Isola Superiore in Stresa, here used as a case study, is a small fishing village located in the centre of Lake Maggiore (It-

aly). The island belongs to the Borromean islands and for years has been included in the international tourism circuit as one of the most visited areas in Italy¹.

Both of these realities need to deal with ever growing tourist pressure without eroding their authenticity².

Camino de Santiago as heritage of all humanity

Together with Jerusalem and Rome, Santiago de Compostela has been one of the most important Christian pilgrimage destinations. Because of its historic, religious and symbolic significance it forms part of the cultural heritage of all Christians, and it can be argued, of all humanity. With the aim of understanding the reasons why the Camino de Santiago is so important for Christians, and there are still so many people who go along its way every day, some basic issues are here resumed, without being exhaustive and strictly connected to the author's limited experience on site.

Nowadays, more than 200,000 people every day walk along the different paths of the Camino, rich in history and adventure, from France and Spain to Santiago de Compostela Cathedral, where the sanctuary of San Giacomo is located. The three above mentioned main pilgrimages were the cornerstones of a cultural system based on the material presence of relics in places considered sanctified by the Divine presence. Walking the Way has always been a unique and intense experience that for centuries has deeply impressed the believers who have walked along it.

As is well known, to undertake a pilgrimage is a devotional phenomenon common to many religions: it is the representation of the believer's path to divinity through the places where the sacred is represented (Chélini, Branthomme 1995).

The Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI said that "To go on pilgrimage is not simply to visit a place to admire its treasures of nature, art or history. To go on pilgrimage really means to step out of ourselves in order to encounter God where he has revealed himself, where his grace has shone with particular splendour and produced rich fruits of conversion and holiness among those who believe" (Benedict XVI 2010). Next to Jerusalem, where history places the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and Rome, where the martyrdom of Saints Peter and Paul took place, from the 10th century the memory of Saint James also became a place of pilgrimage, where the Pilgrim's spirit could be strengthened through the Apostle's testimony of faith.

But the Santiago Way has always had double significance: not only of a spiritual nature but also a political nature. The quest for purification, through a concrete expiatory path, also corresponded to the need to consolidate Christianity in a territory still contended by Islamism. James, the evangeliser of Spain thus became first the defender of Christians, then the murderer of Moors (*Santiago Matamoros*) who led the armies as an *Oriflamme* (Sabbatini 2008).

In recent times, the Way has gained widespread popularity also thanks to the book by Paolo Coelho, who reinterpreted the original religious meaning in an esoteric and new age light. Today, pilgrimage is seen more as a metaphor for personal life: walking the Way more generally represents the trials endured towards a final goal. It also alternates difficult and peaceful moments where the relationship with other people leaves a mark on people encountered and within the pilgrims themselves. Since the relationship with the deity lost importance, other human values find room: thanks to the sincere desire to

meet others, friendship naturally develops among pilgrims. In order to genuinely fulfil this desire, people can abandon the masks they wear every day; the masks are the external appearance and by the fear of what other people can think or say. Being free of those masks means to show virtues and defects, and by doing so a true contact with others can be made and through this rediscover themselves.

The Camino de Santiago today

In the last 30 years, the Camino de Santiago has become fashionable. Hundreds of people walk the Way without knowing the underlying ancient reasons for its existence. Today the Way is considered as a place for any form of 'human religiosity' and not just for Christianity. This fashion is now also influenced by the culture of walking and running as physical exercise and as a life philosophy, together with the suggestion offered by Paulo Coelho's book.

Pilgrims (tourists?) run from one hostel to another, passing by churches, which are often closed, and looking for the famous rubber stamp, that once absolved pilgrims from paying for lodging and food but now is only a souvenir, considering the low prices of accommodation along the route.

After a long wait to finally enter the Cathedral of Santiago, the final destination of their Way, some visitors don't even stop at the tomb of the Apostle, distractedly visiting the historical, artistic and religious vestiges that surround it.

Contrary to many situations of our times, where collective experiences have been supplanted by individualism, the Camino de Santiago, which was born as an individual experience, has slowly become a collective activity. Sometimes the Way is dedicated to remembering a deceased relative, or to ask for grace for a sick person, or even to draw attention to difficult social situations. There are people who smoke, drink and reinvent the Way as a food and wine itinerary alongside others who run isolated from the world by earphones. There are individuals looking for the authentic experience while others complain about the lack of a connection that allows them to share their experience on a social network.

What does it mean to receive the 'credential' ('Compostela') unless one hour is devoted to learning the history and meaning of the Way?

Reflecting on the impact of tourism to St James's route, does it make sense to try to mitigate these trends, or in other words: is there any reason to make a distinction today between cultural tourism and interesting day trips?

Tourism as a double-edged sword

The cultural value of heritage is not only intrinsic, but is closely linked to the community that comprehends and receives it as a strong testimonial of the past to be passed on to posterity. Without this awareness and without any response on our behalf, all that remains is to accept these new forms of consumerism, through the commercialisation of cultural goods, considered as generic commercial products, the result of which is already before our eyes. It is not necessary to limit ourselves to the most famous Italian cities, there is a large number of minor places, but nonetheless famous, which are invaded for short periods; they have been completely transformed merely to satisfy the requests of tourists, paying attention only to the financial gain aspect. On the other hand, some plac-

FIGS. 1-2. Isola Superiore or Pescatori. View of the Borromean gulf and drawing of 1840 (Arrigoni, Zipoli, Bianconi 1973).



es are abandoned without touristic development despite their history and beauty, risking being left without resources for their maintenance. In this complex context, the debate on the sustainability of historical and artistic heritage tourism needs to be developed.

To better explain this contradictory aspect, a small Italian case study is reported here with the risks it faces from an uncontrolled growth in tourism, and which are leading to a real erosion of heritage – a heritage that can be saved if this positive trend is also managed positively. Obviously, this site does not even remotely have the importance of the Santiago Way, but even from a small example of how tourism can transform a village forever – a village that can represent one of the many villages along the way – it is possible to draw useful suggestions.

The example presented here refers to a small touristic island on Lago Maggiore, in the North West of Italy: Isola Superiore also named as Isola dei Pescatori, in Stresa (Figs. 1-2). The island is part of the Borromean islands and for years has been included in the international tourism circuit as one of the most visited areas in Italy, although it is the only island outside the property of the Borromeo family – powerful feudal lords of the area since the sixteenth century.

With its 100 meters of width and 350 meters in length and its fish shape, the Isola dei Pescatori, despite being the smallest and poorest of the Borromean Islands, is the only one to be permanently inhabited throughout the year. Today there are only about thirty people living there, a drastic reduction compared to more than a hundred during the last century. It can be accessed by the boats of the national shipping company, their frequency being intense in the summer months, decreasing in winter. These boats are also used by dozens of people employed in restaurants and businesses on the island, along with motorboats of the public service and private boats of residents and visitors.

The history of the island is ancient: in the medieval age there was already a village of fishermen gathered around a chapel of the 11th century, a small cemetery and an array of narrow streets with a 'fishbone' shape, ending at the 'tail' of the island, where the port and some landing ramps for boats are positioned and used by fishermen as an outdoor space dedicated to the making and repair of nets. In the 18th century the external

features of the built heritage were already completely defined and similar to the current ones. The ancient village, famous for its picturesque atmosphere, has always been lived in by fishermen, whose main occupation persisted until the 1980s. This prevalent activity has ensured the presence of people over the years and they have taken care of the built environment and shores. In order to guarantee their livelihoods, the fishermen themselves contributed to the conservation of various fish species, using traditional methods that restocked and maintained the natural lake habitats.

Over the past two centuries, the life and economy of fishing has been integrated with the tourism of Italians and foreigners, including various artists and some illustrious guests, present in private residences and quality hotels, which flanked some trattorias and inns and the commercial activity of souvenir kiosks, once managed by islanders.

Currently, several private houses, no longer inhabited by residents, have been taken over by the short-term rental market, while most commercial and catering activities are run by owners who reside elsewhere, as do almost all their staff.

Several factors are threatening the island's environment and its built heritage, well reported in several books since 19th century (De Vit 1887; Marzi 1991). From Montesquieu to Rousseau, from Byron to Stendhal, many celebrities have travelled here, telling the beauty of the classic Grand Tour on Lake Maggiore with its islands.

The tendency to turn almost all traditional houses and apartments for residents into holiday houses is a vulnerability, significantly linked to the strongly fluctuating dynamics of use and habitation: tourist invasion in the summer months and depopulation in winter. This means that permanent residents (who are not more advantageous) are pushed away in favour of tourists (who can spend much more in a short time). The houses are likely to lose their traditional, individual, interior appearance in favour of standardised houses, with small apartments, characteristic of a tourist chain or other private companies. This trend guarantees that, outside the tourist season, these houses will always be empty, further depopulating the village. This strain on such a small and fragile territory puts the environmental, social and cultural identity of the island under pressure. The main risk is that its identity (Pisoni, Spadoni, Zacchera 2010) disappears forever in the face of a commercial, uneven and conflicting decline of each activity. Fishing has for centuries been the main source of income for the inhabitants of the Isola Superiore, giving it its second name and its typical character. The island's economy has supported the interests of mass tourism more than those of its own inhabitants, fishing activity is reduced to a few people, destabilising the territory and its fragile balance. An additional vulnerability is that no one looks after the coastline anymore, so no one can see that the increase in engine power of tourist boats is slowly eroding the shores and the whole contour of the island (Figs. 3-6), bringing the water closer to the main external road, usually occupied by souvenir kiosks. These same kiosks, along with the exterior areas of bars and restaurants, now extend and obstruct the view of the lake, with a disorderly occupation of public land. Even the anthropised landscape risks severe deterioration due to the lack of implementation of planning strategies, maintenance plans, and coordination of different areas of knowledge aimed at its protection. The medieval footprint (Marzi 1991) and the picturesque nature of the island are constantly threatened more by the lack of governance than by the needs of tourist businesses. This is because the former can control the latter: good governance can allow a reasoned and respectful use of the existing historic buildings, even with tourist purposes, without giving total freedom of action, but still ensuring the life and mainte-



FIGS. 3-4. Isola Superiore or Pescatori. Private and public trip boats to reach the island.

FIGS. 5-6. Isola Superiore or Pescatori. Tangible erosion of the shores and consequent damage of the stone masonry piers.

nance of those constructions. The tourists visiting the Isola dei Pescatori always wonder at the reason for this name, as no clear or visible sign of this once dominant activity is now apparent and the hit and run tourism of day-trippers is now prevalent.

It is too late to preserve the cultural value still existing on the island and so what can we do now?

Preserving cultural heritage from the gradual consumption: some suggestions for the minor case of the Italian Isola dei Pescatori

On the Island, one of the aims should be the preservation of the identity of the local community, focused on fishing, kept alive by supporting the activities of the few fishermen still partially active and encouraging the entry of young people in this sector. The renewal of awareness, developed in the last few years, of the genuineness and integrity of food could give a kick start to the consumption of local fish as a starting point in the reconstruction of the whole fishing chain. Re-launching this specific culture will mean recovering the traces that survive, even the smallest, and including elements of the entire production chain (shipbuilding and repair of wooden boats, fishing tackle, nets,

protection and restocking of fish heritage, conservation, processing and marketing of fish, etc.). It must involve the companies, schools, research centres and related activities already present on the mainland, and extend beyond the tourist season. The rescue of this activity, without pretending to become the predominant one on the island, can guarantee the constant control and protection of the environment and landscape, starting from the lake and its shores. A priority for the municipality is to repair and protect the shores over the long term – this task should start from the municipality and this important link with the natural environment can again be transmitted to the younger generations.

The task of recognising the values of cultural heritage must be engaged in actively. It is possible to propose thematic itineraries, which can make a significant contribution to the preservation and use of the cultural heritage represented not only by the individual architectural artefacts, but also by that set of tangible and intangible assets that are connected to them. An overall scheme to recover the heritage of the island should highlight key elements to stimulate the discovery of the full range of resources.

Preserving cultural heritage from the gradual consumption: some suggestions for the case of the Saint James's Way

The small Isola dei Pescatori teaches that 'predatory tourism' is not only a threat to cities of artistic importance, but also to small villages. If the authenticity of a village cannot be separated from the life that goes on there, distorting customs, traditions and local economy leads to compromising the value of authenticity of the village first and afterwards, its own prospects of survival.

The Fishermen's Island seems by now compromised, but there is still hope of restoring the cultural value of this small territory. The case of Saint James' Way, a vast territory compared to the island mentioned above, is now beginning to show signs of a gradual transformation linked to mass tourism. It is suggested that this trend be corrected immediately because, as is well known, recovery is more difficult than conservation. For example, the dispersion of knowledge (how to let the art of fishing die in a specific environment, handed down from generation to generation), will no longer allow its recovery and its re-importation will be in vain.

The situation of Way of Santiago is not yet compromised and it is possible to intervene in time. On the way to Santiago there are many villages and characteristic areas that present the same characteristics as the Isola dei Pescatori (small size, small and historic buildings, natural and beautiful environment, historic traditions, the need to cope with growing tourism, etc.). The fact of covering many regions and municipalities, allows each village to be individually analysed, evaluated and protected. However, the Way has its own specific identity, which must be preserved.

The intimate and intangible strength of the Way, which has preserved it for centuries, cannot and should not be lost or reduced, in view of a future possible revision of the tangible path. Those animated by the true pilgrim spirit, care not much about the surrounding environment and therefore it is not necessary to crystallise it at a given historical time or to show historical fakes. The surrounding landscape can be transformed over time, without changing the intimate force that leads pilgrims along the Way. The essential aspect for the modern pilgrim is to have the opportunity to meet other fellow travellers, to commu-

nicate and exchange their experiences, which can sometimes be tiring and challenging, sharing efforts along the way, and not only at the end of the trail.

The use of fast vehicles for pilgrims (cars, buses, shuttles) must be carefully assessed and planned. While the sharing of this experience for people who are unable to do so by walking, such as the elderly and disabled, is certainly an advantage, on the other hand the interference of these means with local traffic and slow mobility, which is the real essence of the Way, can be disruptive. In fact, these two paths should not overlap, leaving the pilgrim in a slow and more human-friendly environment, both in the urbanised areas and in those where contact with nature is intensified (Figs. 7-10). Building false environments, villages that simulate the life of ancient pilgrims is contrary to the original spirit of the route. The needs of a pilgrim today are linked to modern basic needs, comfortable but essential, better if traditional and local and therefore particular.

In recent years, the attention paid to the traditional culture of places, as against a commercial globalisation, is increasing. The Way has a very long path and, passing through different countries, the landscape changes, as well as local traditions and customs. The enhancement of these local traditions (not only culinary) could be a strength that gives an added value to the Way. As the Way is long, this gives the chance to discover a less known territory, pleasant as an accompaniment to the spiritual pilgrim's path. In order to avoid the erosion of the territory and the deterioration of local culture and not only that, it is necessary to preserve what is still authentic in villages, churches, places of prayer and meeting points. Wherever possible, it is advisable to prevent the installation of inexpensive and impersonal hotel chains and fast-foods, which can attract a huge number of tourists, without conveying to them anything they cannot find elsewhere. Once again, the dialogue between tangible and intangible (intimate) Way should therefore be improved and not only exploited.

The signs linked to the Camino de Santiago must exist but should not become the new symbols that characterise a territory and that advertise it. They should be silent signs of a more intimate journey that should not take advantage of the natural life of the environment that hosts it and that can naturally change over the centuries. Of course this is the opposite of what happened one thousand years ago, when promoting the Way of St. James meant feeding one of the strongest bastions of Christianity in a territory that had just escaped the control of the caliphate and thanks to the organisation of the travellers' flow, it was possible to bring Spain out of its isolation (Reconquista and Saint James in the role of matamores). The political and of religious reasons were so intertwined that it had become practically impossible to separate them.

Nowadays, the spirit of the place along the Way may already seem compromised, but it has changed many times over the years. In this regard, it is not possible to act on the territory, thinking only about the Pilgrim's Way to Santiago, even if in many respects it is the main resource. It is certainly necessary to support and improve the path, facilitating and preserving the spirit that has kept it alive for many centuries, preventing temporary trends from undermining the original spirit that animates those who decide to travel the Way at a certain time of their lives.

When we have removed these special characteristics, then we will have lost a fundamental cultural, historical and spiritual heritage. Replacing these testimonies with simulacrum will not only mean losing part of the history of Christianity, but perhaps an anthropological heritage will also be lost.



FIGS. 7-8. Camino de Santiago. The impact of natural landscape and of the historic built landscape.

FIGS. 9-10. Camino de Santiago. The interference of the two level of streets in a slow human-friendly environment and in an urbanised area.

Based on this aspect the Churchmen can decide not to be hoteliers, but to offer spiritual hospitality: confessions, listening, lectures. Away from home and more lightened by the distance from everyday life, travellers can be more open and free to ask for help³, searching for the truth step by step along the Way with God. Nowadays many churches encountered along the Way are closed or without the presence of spiritual help.

General Remarks

A growing number of visitors can be an extremely important resource for a territory, presenting many challenges and opportunities (ICOMOS 1999), but with no control, it can often turn out to be a double-edged sword. The impact on the territory, in fact, can be either positive or negative.

It is necessary to improve the value of the whole territory, in order to better manage this resource, where cultural heritage encompasses the places and lives of populations, managing this resource demands that the territory as a whole must be improved. These can help to define the peculiarities of that context with a rich and varied set of resources that characterises that territory, starting from the historic vernacular buildings, which are often abandoned.

In order to safeguard these resources, it is necessary to promote specific actions, both on an architectural and a territorial scale. The tangible and intangible heritage, as well as

the customs and traditions of the places and people who live there, must be recognised and valued above all by the citizens themselves. To do this, local government must promote active integration coordinated by research institutes such as universities.

The work begun by the University of La Coruña, Departamento de Representacion de Teoria Arquitectonicas, should go beyond the survey (Taboada, Tarrío Carrodeguas 2000). It should extend to giving guidelines as to how to better understand the cultural heritage of the existing structures, and, from the technical point of view (materials, constructive techniques, historical transformations, etc.), how to repair them in a proper manner. This can control also the extension of the historical masonry buildings (Figs. 11-12) and the new constructions.

The fundamental objective of protecting historical heritage must foster interaction between the public administration and citizens, assisted by researchers with different skills (restoration, design, management, technology, etc.). This means sowing the seeds of awareness of heritage and the fundamental role that must be played by citizens, controlling and sometimes opposing solutions that are not consistent with the joint project.

The interchange of specialist knowledge with the widespread awareness of the people who live daily in the territory, can become a valid tool to control abuses dictated only by economic interests.

There is therefore the need to educate local authorities to ensure forward-looking policies and sustainable conservation strategies, in order to sow the seeds for a defence of the local heritage of each site, thereby spreading the same seeds to professionals and the local population.

This strategy could be effectively applied to both the small fishermen's island in Italy and the vast area along the Way of Santiago. In the small island this strategy was totally missing and now it is gradually starting, still without real comprehension of the value of the island and without a complete masterplan: nowadays local inhabitants are always forced to intervene autonomously, to solve the problems, without a guide that clarifies to what extent they are allowed to do so. This caused both a paucity of interventions or intermittent interventions without any coordination, as has happened in the matter of the partial interventions on the shores. This situation has led to a bottom-up request for management from inhabitants and from local associations. However, more than anything, all attempts by local authorities are welcome, if well thought out and verified. In this sense, architectural conservation can contribute to the future development of tourist sites of historical interest such as pilgrimage sites.

Conclusions

The exploitation for touristic purposes of an historical-architectural heritage is a double-edged sword: on the one hand the resources generated by its use can provide resources for its conservation and protection, on the other hand intensive use may damage the asset. Local authorities have the responsibility to regulate and manage a balanced use of the asset, ensuring that a greater number of visitors can get to know and appreciate the heritage, without causing any deterioration.

The role of the scientific and technical experts must not be limited to providing and applying the most appropriate techniques for conservation and protection. Their deployment must be based on the reasons why visitors choose to visit a particular place and how they use it.



FIGS. 11-12. Uncontrolled houses extension.

Just as the urban context surrounding an architectural work must not be disregarded during a conservation plan, in the same manner the analysis of tourist use cannot disregard the socio-cultural reasons that propel visitors (the beautiful atmosphere of an historic village based on a traditional simple activity, the beautiful view of the surrounding landscape from this peculiar point of view, the peace and quiet, without traffic, that the small island or a particular place can offer with local and traditional food to taste, are only some of the aspects to be preserved). Only with a holistic approach that places these factors at the centre of the analysis, will it be possible to begin an integral protection of the cultural heritage in all its tangible and intangible aspects.

This article summarises some reflections on how to plan a balanced use of historical assets, using examples apparently very different from one another: the Camino of Santiago and the small Isola Superiore on Lake Maggiore, both of which have in common a growing tourist presence, which threatens to compromise the material preservation of the heritage. In this sense, architectural conservation can contribute to the future development of tourist sites of historical interest such as pilgrimage sites.

Notes

¹ <<http://www.stresa.com/borromeanislands>> [Accessed 12 May 2018].

² This paper is part of the workshop activities of the Theme 1a: *Consumption/preservation of heritage/tourism*. General issues, with suggestions arising from the track O Leboreiro – Melide, in the province of La Coruña along the French way.

³ <<https://www.culturacattolica.it/attualit%C3%A0/chiesa-oggi/l-insegnamento-del-papa-oggi/2010/11/07/l-uomo-%C3%A8-pellegrino>> [Accessed 7 February 2018].

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