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Managing World Heritage Sites in Jordan: From Practical Experience to Operational Guidelines

An implemented site management plan is –since a few years– a requirement for any new World Heritage site nomination as well as for older inscriptions. This substantial change in the World Heritage List nomination process is an opportunity for the State Parties to the World Heritage Convention to review their conservation management strategies and to introduce, where necessary, changes to improve delivery and implementation of these plans.

The Department of Antiquities of Jordan has –in the past two years– developed site management plans for two of its World Heritage properties: Quşayr ‘Amra and Umm ar-Raşāş. The Quşayr ‘Amra plan was developed in partnership with the World Monuments Fund between 2013 and 2014 while the Umm ar-Raşāş plan was developed with UNESCO assistance in 2015.

Both plans follow UNESCO’s recommendations concerning the establishment of policies and management actions aimed at preserving the Outstanding Universal Value of the sites, and both are part of a Department of Antiquities program to enhance its in-house capacities to prepare and implement site management plans

for its World Heritage properties and for new possible nominations to the list. This means that the ultimate aim of these projects was not only the production of documents and plans for implementation, but also, and perhaps especially, to develop a solid methodology for the whole process of developing and implementing a site management plan using mainly its own professional capacity.

The planning process was based on a few basic elements:

- Analysis of present conditions and identification of factors affecting the conservation and proper management of the site;
- Identification of all site values (including and beyond those already identified as of Outstanding Universal Value);
- Full participation of stakeholders.

The final site management documents are supported by specific Implementation Plans which provide detailed, step-by-step action items that guide the proper adoption of the recommendations they contain.

The entire process of site management planning was documented in order to generate a set of operational guidelines for the preparation of

future management plans, both in World Heritage and in any site where these documents may be required.

This paper will present the methodology adopted for the preparation of these plans, the main characteristic of these plans, and will provide information on the structure and content of the operational guidelines which will become the document of reference at the Department of Antiquities for future planning activities.

Methodology

The methodology adopted to guide the planning process was based on a phased approach consisting of documentation, assessments, and the development of policies and actions, within an established category. These were identified in:

- The **Appropriate Use** of the site, defining how the site should be approached and experienced by the public and by the professionals,
- the **Legal and Institutional framework** within which the protection and management of the site operates,
- the establishment of **Conservation and Documentation** procedures,
- the definition of **Research and Excavation** objectives,
- the development of **Maintenance and Monitoring** programs,
- **Interpretation and Presentation**, providing suggestions for the development of such activities
- the activities related to the implementation and control of **Tourism, Facilities, Services and Infrastructures**,
- the actions related to **Public Awareness and Education**,
- **Community Participation and Economic Development Opportunities**, which opens to the local community the opportunity to participate in the planning and implementation process and derive economic benefit from it,

- the development of **Investment, Marketing and Funding** options.

A first phase of documentation was conducted in order to gathering published and unpublished information on the site from archives in Jordan and internationally. This allowed us to gather studies, photographs, plans, and drawings related to the sites. In fact this phase is of fundamental importance since our experience tells us that site archives are rarely complete and that the gathering of information often allows the discovery of documents that were either forgotten or whose importance was not properly assessed.

This phase was followed by on-site research and assessments and by the organization of several stakeholders meetings and tourism surveys, which together provided information on the state of conservation of the site, on possible threats to its integrity and authenticity, on management and tourism issues and opportunities, and which allowed identifying the causes of the observed threats.

The planning process was based on an inclusive, participatory approach involving a wide array of stakeholders from national and regional institutions, as well as from the local communities and from the Jordanian civil society, including Universities and their students, who were also engaged in assisting one of the projects in gathering tourism information. Extensive stakeholder consultations contributed to the elaboration of a comprehensive conservation and development strategy for the site.

These assessments were followed by the definition of actions towards the improved conservation and management of the site. These actions included conservation, research activities and metric surveys to establish the actual boundaries of the site and of an adequate buffer zone. They also ensured thorough implementation of a management planning process that identified a number of core values besides the established Outstanding Universal Value, and which elaborated policies for each of the identi-

fied main topics concerning conservation and development at the site. The policies were then further elaborated in a number of actions presented in a 5-year action plan and articulated by priority of intervention.

Assessing the Values of the Site

The values of the sites were identified through in-depth technical analyses as well as through broad consultations with stakeholders. Stakeholder engagement was conducted at several levels and through meetings and field activities.

Meetings served to gather information on issues directly or potentially affecting the site, to engage local authorities and the public in the process, and to provide opportunities to the local community to express their views over the future of the site and participate in the identification of opportunities for economic development.

Field activities, such as tourism surveys, served to gather important data on visitation patterns and pressures, as well as to engage local staff and university students in the process.

Meetings such as those that were conducted with various governmental agencies or local authorities, revealed a number of activities that were unknown to the Department of Antiquities and that could potentially affect the state of conservation of the site. These one-on-one meetings were accompanied by regular collective stakeholders consultations, at least twice a year, which allowed institutional stakeholders, UNESCO, and the local communities to share information and be involved in the planning process.

All these activities allowed to re-focus our understanding of the values of the site and to include the local communities, the landscape, and the environment among the factors that shaped the significance of the sites.

This means that besides the more traditional values usually associated with archaeological sites, such as their archaeological, historic,

artistic and architectural importance, we also considered their natural, social, symbolic, educational, and economic values in order to have a more balanced view of the sites and of the emotions and expectations they generate in the community and among the public at large.

These core values are further reinforced and enhanced by the international recognition of the sites' **Outstanding Universal Value** and of their **authenticity** and **integrity**, which have gained both sites the nomination to the World Heritage List.

For both sites we reviewed their Outstanding Universal Value statements, and we found that there is ground for eventually improving them by including more of their outstanding characteristics, which are also emerging thanks to later studies and activities on the ground.

Integrity and Authenticity statements were also reviewed in the light of events that are affecting the sites, and while negative impacts have been identified, these have not reached the point where the integrity and authenticity of the sites may be considered at risk, but it is certainly a call to rapidly implement the actions recommended in the plans, especially as they concern the provision of adequate core and buffer boundaries, and the set up and enforcement of appropriate modalities to manage development works in the area.

Summary of Threats

The conservation, management and presentation of Quşayr 'Amra and Umm ar-Raşāş present issues of various relevance, whose long-term persistence may have an impact on the preservation of the site. The analysis of these emerging issues and their root causes justify their merging in few thematic groups, already mentioned above.

Key issues within the "legal and institutional framework" concern the existing legal provisions for site protection and management and their implementation. They also include site management responsibilities and tasks, and

their distribution among concerned staff and authorities, namely the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities and the Department of Antiquities.

Within the “conservation and documentation” theme, key issues particularly pertain the vision and strategy to conserve the site, as well as the modalities for site conservation and the documentation of interventions and its easy accessibility through the creation of a physical and digital repository of this information.

Within the domain of research and excavation, a key emerging issue is the definition of the strategy and modalities for future investigation and research, with the view to complete and integrate the quantity of studies and campaigns that to date have characterized the main monument building and its immediate surrounding structures.

Maintenance and monitoring are particularly relevant to the durable preservation of the site values. In this regard, key emerging issues concern the strategy and modalities for monitoring and maintenance, as well as the building of capacity of the staff in charge for monitoring and maintenance and their responsibilities.

Presentation and interpretation is another important domain, and it is currently concerned by the lack of a strategy for site visitation and interpretation, including actions and tools to convey the values of the sites. It also pertains to the management of visitors’ impact on the conservation of the sites, as well as the coordination among bodies responsible for the design and development of site visitation and interpretation.

Tourism, Facilities, services and infrastructures are of fundamental importance to allow a pleasant and appreciated visit to the site, and there is a need for their upgrading.

Public awareness and education are relevant in so far as they engage the public in a durable engagement for the preservation of the site. Key emerging issues, in this regard, concern the public knowledge on the cultural and natural significance of the sites, as well as public

awareness on heritage preservation and appropriate behaviours. They also include the definition of modalities and means to enhance public engagement and youth education.

Community Participation and Economic Development Opportunities is of course one of the most important topic to address in order to have the support of the community and to provide possibilities for economic benefits to be locally achieved.

Finally, the thematic group on investments, marketing and fundraising is of key importance to ensure the site continuous availability of funds for projects implementation. In this regard, key emerging issues include the entity of national investments to improve the sites’ conservation and tourist appeal, and private investments in tourism-related activities.

Vision, Aims, Policies and Actions

The assessment of values and the understanding of threats at the site allowed the definition of a vision statement and of policies addressing long term conservation, presentation, and community engagement at both sites. The vision statement in Quşayr ‘Amra stresses the importance of continuing research, documentation and conservation, in consideration of the extraordinary discoveries made at the site in the past 6 years, and encourages education, capacity building and community participation as the basic elements for a successful implementation of long term and sustainable conservation strategies.

In Umm ar-Raşāş emphasis is put on the conservation, presentation and interpretation of the site, on continuing research, and on the participation of the local community in activities concerning the protection and presentation of the site.

The formulation of policies related to each of the themes presented previously carefully balanced the need for preservation and the respect of National laws and of the obligations towards the World Heritage Committee with

the expectations of the stakeholders.

Policies will be implemented through the adoption of specific strategies and actions, which have been classified in terms of priority (High, Medium and Low) and timeframe (1-2 years, 3-5 years, more than 5 years). Generally speaking, the most urgent actions concern the development of an appropriate management structure and of specific guidelines for actions concerning the maintenance, monitoring, tourism management, sustainable use, and presentation of the sites.

This Site Management Plan (SMP) should ideally be reviewed and updated every five years, under coordination of the Site Management Department. A first evaluation will be undertaken after one year from the approval and endorsement of the plan, and modifications will be applied as per relevant emerging needs. This review will include the implementation of new condition assessments, the evaluation of the impacts of projects and actions conducted on site, the drafting of recommendations for possible corrective actions, and the organization of stakeholder meetings to discuss draft recommendations.

Guidelines

These site management planning experiences, conducted following a similar methodology, resulted in the elaboration of basic guidelines which will guide future site management planning activities at the Department of Antiquities.

The guidelines loosely adopt a value-based site management planning approach codified by the Getty Conservation Institute in 2002 (Mason 2002) and by UNESCO in 2013 (Wijesuriya, Thompson and Young 2013) and

have defined a step-by-step procedure for 5 basic phases:

- Preparation (identifying the body responsible for the plan preparation, team composition, and steering committee establishment);
- Data and information gathering;
- Assessments and Analysis (where threats are identified and classified);
- Response (consisting of the formulation of a vision statement followed by definition of policies and actions to implement the plan's recommendations).

The guidelines also provide a suggested plan structure to guide the compilation phase.

The fact that both plans have been developed by a team within the Department of Antiquities obviously provides hope that implementation will follow through with the plans' recommendations.

Both plans in fact identify the need for specific guidelines to be developed, to guide activities such as preventive conservation, site monitoring, and maintenance.

As a management plan is not an end but a beginning of a process, commitment must be towards implementation and follow up, and we hope that in the next conference we will be able to provide an update on the results of our efforts.

Bibliography

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