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Topic of the Year: The Sublime Triangle

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INDEX

7 Editorial

Cinzia Dal Maso & Luca Peyronel

11 Memories

What is meant by 'archaeology' today? 13

Daniele Manacorda

Saranda 1998: A vision for Butrint and other cultural heritage strategies 17

Richard Hodges

27 Topic of the Year

'Museums without walls' and sustainable development in Jordan. Some thoughts from the Madaba Regional Archaeological Museum Project 29

Marta D'Andrea, Andrea Polcaro, Douglas R. Clark, Suzanne Richard

The conquest of Akragas: How the past changed the present in the Valley of the Temples (Agrigento, Sicily) 47

Laura Danile, Giovanni Virruso & Claudia Speciale

Community-centred supply chains and sustainable archaeological tourism 61

Peter G. Gould

Archaeology and Cultural Routes: A relationship to develop 75

Alessio Innocenti

'Multicultural Public Archaeology'. A strategy to expanding multicultural audience in Sicilian archaeological museums 89

Flavia Zisa

97 Satura Lanx

- Culture as values 99
Aldo Di Russo
- In the Lombards' footsteps: Proposals for educational visits to localities in the UNESCO serial site "The Longobards in Italy. Places of power (AD 568-774)" 115
Francesca Morandini, Maria Stovali & Angela Maria Ferroni

125 Archaeotales

- The Man in Chains from Baratti, the slave that dreamt of freedom 127
Mariangela Galatea Vaglio
- Medusa, the goddess of Poggio del Molino 129
Mariangela Galatea Vaglio
- Ötzi, the last of the shamans 133
Giorgia Cappelletti

139 News

- Five years of Digital Invasions, and they do not cease to amaze and innovate 141
Cinzia Dal Maso
- What is PArCo, the Public Archeology Park 145
Cinzia Dal Maso
- Exhibited in Populonia the recently discovered Man in Chains from Baratti 149
Giorgio Baratti & Carolina Megale
- Immersive virtual reality: The technology that brings us back to the times of Augustus and Nero 151
Cinzia Dal Maso
- San Giovanni Metro C Station in Rome: An archaeological feast for everyone 153
Cinzia Dal Maso

Faragola. Destruction and reconstruction of an archaeological site 155

Giuliano De Felice

The Symbola Report and professions in archaeology: What the numbers say 157

Chiara Boracchi

161 **Reviews**

Strength and ethics of the context: Giving a true meaning to History and to our lives 163

Daniele Manacorda

Exploring public archaeology 167

Francesco Ripanti

Cinema in the Stone Age or a film about the Stone Age? 171

Alessandra Cilio

Father and Son: Videogame or emotional experience? 175

Giuliano De Felice

‘Museums without walls’ and sustainable development in Jordan. Some thoughts from the Madaba Regional Archaeological Museum Project

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Abstract

Jordan is rich in cultural and natural heritage and home to renowned touristic destinations, as well as to important archaeological projects. However, cultural and natural assets are threatened by the risk of damage, destruction and disappearance, due to lack of conservation, maintenance and safeguards, uncontrolled urban development, and looting. These threats to sites of historical and cultural significance make raising awareness of the value of cultural heritage an urgent priority for building civic pride and the economic potential of sustainable exploitation of cultural assets. This article reviews current strategies for the protection of cultural heritage in Jordan and reports on a new Italian-American-Jordanian project, which aims at developing a new regional archaeological museum for the Governorate of Madaba, central Jordan, which may serve as an educational tool and a springboard for local development and sustainable tourism.

 **Open Access**  **Peer Reviewed**  **Keywords:** Jordan, Madaba, cultural heritage protection, awareness raising, community engagement

Introduction

Jordan is a country rich in culture and history and has a varied natural landscape, factors making the narration of human-environment interactions in the region unique and incredibly fascinating not only for archaeologists and for historians, but also for a large audience of non-professionals, including tourists. However, although at present the region does not suffer from destruction brought by the recent conflicts in the Near East, unlike its neighbouring countries, several factors of archaeological risk threaten sites of historical and cultural significance.

After a concise presentation of the main highlights of Jordan’s cultural legacy, the article will review threats to cultural heritage and strategies to monitor, protect and preserve sites of cultural and historical significance. These insights will provide the framework to report on a new Italian-

American-Jordanian initiative started in 2015 to endow the city of Madaba, central Jordan, with a new regional archaeological museum – the Madaba Regional Archaeological Museum Project (MRAMP). Although MRAMP is at an early stage of development, the inspiring principles of the project pivot around best practices in the protection and management of cultural assets and the relationship between archaeology, community engagement and sustainability.

Cultural Legacy and Touristic Trends in Jordan

From the point of view of history and archaeology, Jordan is generally regarded as a ‘peripheral area’ compared to Egypt and Mesopotamia, considered more advanced ‘centres’ in the development of complex societies in ancient times. However, the country bears witness to all the basic stages in the developmental trajectory of Humankind from

early Prehistory to the modern age, which left an abundant cultural heritage (Cordova 2007; Adams 2008). The transition from hunter-gatherers to food producers, the birth of the first cities, the creation of territorial states, the ages of the major Near Eastern empires – from the Assyrians, to the Babylonians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, and Umayyads up to the Ottomans – left traces in the cultural heritage of Jordan. Moreover, Jordan was crossed by some of the most important ancient tracks of inter-regional connectivity, such as the routes of copper, incense, spices and even the Silk Road.

The country is connected with the history of the three monotheistic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, for which the Jordan River is a holy place. It is home to locations mentioned in the Bible (e.g., Mount Nebo, near Madaba, and Lot's Cave, near Safi) and the Qur'an (e.g., the Cave of the Seven Sleepers), and saw the early days of Christianity (e.g., Bethany and Machaerus) and Islam (e.g., the tombs of Prophet Mohammed's companions).

Finally, Jordan boasts five UNESCO sites (UNESCO 2017): Qusayr Amra and the desert castles (since 1985), Umm ar-Rasas (since 2004), the 'Baptism Site' at Bethany Beyond the Jordan (since 2015), Petra (since 1985), and the Wadi Rum Protected Area (since 2011), from north to south. In addition, there are at least eight natural reserves at places with historical and cultural significance. They are the Yarmouk Forest Reserve (since 2010); the Ajloun Forest Reserve (since 1987), the Dibeen Forest Reserve (since 2004), the Azraq Wetland Reserve (since 1978), the Shaumari Wildlife Reserve (since 1975), the Mujib Nature Reserve (1987), the Fifa Nature Reserve (since 2011), the Dana Biosphere Reserve (since 1989) (RSCN 2015).

For all these reasons Jordan has become a destination for international tourism, targeting a wide range of consumers, from cultural and religious tourism to wellness and medical tourism (Dead Sea), up to emergent and developing ecotourism and outdoor tourism (biking, hiking and diving), and the portfolio is going to expand further. Outdoor tourism is a relatively recent trend in Jordan, and The Jordan Trail has been launched recently as a major initiative to promote these kinds of activities. This is a 650 km route crossing the Country north to south, from Umm Qays to Aqaba, for a 36-day journey through archaeological sites

and landscapes hiking and camping (JORDAN TRAIL 2017).

Local tourism represents another pillar of this sector of Jordan's economy. From the early 2000s, Jordan has diversified its offerings for Arab tourism at the regional and inter-regional levels, enhancing sectors such as medical tourism, with qualified clinics and spas attracting visitors from the neighbouring countries, the development of infrastructures for international conferences and meetings, especially at the Dead Sea, and amusement parks and shopping malls (Al-Hamarneh 2005, p. 52). Beside this, religious tourism represents a sector that has been enhanced over the past twenty years, promoting tours and pilgrimages to Biblical sites, as well as to sites connected with Islamic religious heritage (Al-Hamarneh & Steiner 2004; Al-Hamarneh 2005, p. 52).

However, despite the key role of tourism in Jordan's economy, significant sectors of the Country's cultural heritage reside under several serious threats.

Threats to cultural heritage in Jordan

Although Jordan does not suffer from destruction brought by the recent conflicts in neighbouring areas within the Near East, like Syria and Iraq, there is a wide range of factors threatening sites of historical and cultural significance in Jordan. Lack of protection, maintenance and control puts sites at risk of damage and destruction coming from abandonment and natural erosion, uncontrolled land development and agricultural intensification, looting and vandalism. Moreover, both the lack of development for tourism at some sites and uncontrolled touristic development at others equally threaten sites of historical and cultural significance.

First, the main touristic attractions in Jordan included in the heritage trails mostly represent certain periods of the history of Jordan, like the Hellenistic, Roman-Byzantine, Umayyad and Crusader periods. Conversely, important sites of the pre-historical and early historical periods that represent some of the major achievements made by past communities in Jordan in the development of complex societies are not included within touristic paths and heritage trails and strategies for tourism development and suffer from abandonment and destruction,

either from land development, looting or decay. These factors deprive the local communities of a large sector of their cultural heritage, both as part of their history and legacy and, by lessening the diversity and variety of the touristic experience that Jordan might offer, in terms of the economic benefits that might come from sustainable exploitation. How the MRAMP connects with the latter aspect is discussed later on in the text.

In the second place, vandalism, abandonment and natural erosion due to lack of maintenance of archaeological sites are also frequent factors creating archaeological risk, due to a general lack of appropriate economic resources allocated for conservation and protection of cultural assets that threaten equally sites developed for tourism and open to the public and sites that are not. Frequently sites enhanced for touristic development are largely abandoned or little visited suffering the same conditions of sites where the development did not take place. As is discussed later on, this was the case, for example, of the Archaeological Park West in Madaba, where MRAMP is based, when the latter project started.

On the other hand, a one-to-one relationship between site development for tourism and their protection should not be established simplistically. In fact, unregulated tourism development represents a dangerous threat to archaeological sites. As an example, recent studies based on the case of Petra demonstrated that deregulated flows of huge groups of visitors led to sandstone weathering and abrasion due to leaning or sitting on structures or climbing or uncontrolled humidity and episodes of vandalism (Paradise 2012; Comer & Willems 2012). Likewise, the lack of development of infrastructures and strategies to prevent and manage natural and anthropogenic risks within and around the archaeological site had a negative impact on the development of the local communities (Comer & Willems 2012, pp. 511-512, 514, fig. 7). This suggests that land development and cultural heritage management should be coordinated at an institutional level. We further elaborate on this aspect in the following paragraph.

In the third place, uncontrolled land development and intensification of agriculture also represent threats to cultural heritage sites (see, for example, Al-Rawashdeh & Saleh 2006; Zerbini & Banks 2015) with road cuts, building

activities, and quarrying operations to extract materials for construction causing damage and destruction to cultural heritage sites. Frequently sites or areas within them that are damaged or destroyed have not been subject to archaeological investigation and documentation, which means a permanent loss of knowledge along with non-sustainable land development.

Finally, looting to dig out artefacts to sell illicitly on the antique markets is also a major threat to archaeological sites in Jordan. A steady stream of looted materials from archaeological sites in Jordan to the antique market has been documented dramatically for a long time, revealing that illicit digging put hundreds of archaeological sites at risk of disappearing altogether (Bisheh 2001; Brodie & Contreras 2010, 2012; Kersel 2011, 2012; Politis 2002).

Protecting and preserving Jordan's past

The issues discussed in the previous paragraph suggest that the challenges to safeguarding and management of cultural heritage within contemporary societies are: 1) effective monitoring strategies and timely actions for the protection of cultural assets, 2) novel ways of communication aimed at raising awareness of the intrinsic civic values of cultural assets, 3) appropriate education strategies, and 4) community engagement. These aspects are briefly discussed below in relation to some relevant examples.

Over the last twenty years, the use of open-access repositories of historic and recent aerial photographs and satellite imagery has proved a successful tool for recording and monitoring the condition of cultural heritage sites over time and detecting potential damage, destruction and looting. The now-declassified American military satellite images from the 1950s-1970s code-named Corona (Casana & Cothren 2013) and the Aerial Photographic Archive for Archaeology of the Middle East (APAAME) collection of historic aerial photos and those taken from 1997 by the Aerial Archaeology in Jordan Project (AAJ) (Kennedy 1980, 1998; Kennedy & Bewley 2001, 2004, 2009, 2010; Kennedy, Bewley & Radcliffe 2011) are primary sources for the development of databases for heritage protection.

In fact, since the early 1990s the new possibilities provided by computer technologies and Geographic Information Systems (GIS)

were applied to compile national inventories of archaeological and historic sites in the form of databases for heritage protection. The Jordan Archaeological Database and Information System (JADIS), realized in collaboration between the Department of Antiquities of Jordan and the American Center of Oriental Research, was the first pioneering tool of this kind developed for the protection of cultural heritage sites in Jordan (Kana'an & Palumbo 1993, p. 207; Palumbo 1993, 2012; Palumbo et al. 1995; Savage 2007). In time this constituted the core of the new Middle Eastern Geodatabase for Antiquities - Jordan (MEGA-J), promoted by the Getty Conservation Institute, the World Monument Fund (WMF), and the Department of Antiquities of Jordan (DoA). It is an open-access national web-based inventory of archaeological sites (ca. 12,000) managed in a GIS environment intended to record and monitor the condition of archaeological sites in Jordan to develop management strategies (Myers & Dalgity 2012). Begun in 2015, the Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East and North Africa Project (EAMENA) is based at the Universities of Oxford, Leicester, and Durham and supported by the Arcadia Fund and the Cultural Protection Fund. Also through a cooperation with APAAME, remote imagery, cartography and reports are used to locate potential archaeological sites and make a risk assessment in relation to a range of factors of threat, including conflict, intensification of agriculture, building activities, natural erosion, and looting (Bewley et al. 2016), entered in a public, open-access database, which aims at being constantly updated (EAMENA 2016). Finally, the Digital Archaeological Atlas of the Holy Land (DAAHL) has been developed by the Center for the Interdisciplinary Study of Art, Architecture and Archaeology (CISA3) of the University of California San Diego and by the Laboratory of Geo-Archaeological Information Applications (GAIA) of the Arizona State University. It is a web platform using spatial information systems to manage data on around 8000 southern Levantine sites collected into a single database. It allows for spatial queries that can be used as a tool for research, for planning sustainable land development operations and for monitoring threats to archaeological sites (Savage & Levy 2014).

A recent study based on a survey among archaeologists working in Jordan suggested that lack of standardization among the

different databases is considered one of the shortcomings of this approach to the monitoring of cultural heritage (Drzewiecki & Arinat 2017, p. 76). This issue has been the focus of a recent initiative organized by the Association Incontro di Civiltà and under the patronage of International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property (ICCROM), bringing together representatives of governments, foundations, associations, scholars, and experts in cultural heritage management and digital technologies to discuss principles, protocols and methodologies to develop a standardized platform for documenting cultural assets threatened by natural or anthropogenic factors. It has been stressed that networking, international cooperation, and community engagement are prime drivers of common initiatives for documenting and monitoring cultural assets (De Caro 2017, p. 29; Bouchenaki 2017).

The survey made by Drzewiecki and Arinat regarding online databases for cultural heritage protection in Jordan indicated that they are used more as research tools and to record the conditions of cultural heritage sites than as tools for planning sustainable land development (Drzewiecki & Arinat 2017, p. 76). However, the Madaba Ring Road remote survey represents a case of successful cooperation between the DoA and the EAMENA Project, which assessed the potential impact of the construction of an 18 km road, currently underway, around Madaba. The survey identified 141 potential archaeological sites within the area impacted by modern construction, 11 of which had already been damaged and 86 of which were not registered in MEGAJ (Zerbini & Banks 2015; Bewley et al. 2016, p. 921). This suggests that monitoring and risk assessment are basic steps in the protection of cultural heritage but that strategies have to be elaborated, at an institutional level, to make these databases potent tools in driving the planning processes of land development and agricultural intensification in order to minimize the threats.

Similarly, in 2011, in response to natural and anthropogenic threats to cultural heritage in Petra, the UNESCO Amman Office launched the Risk Mapping Project in Petra, in partnership with the Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation at the Katholieke Universiteit Leuven and in cooperation with the Petra Development and Tourism Regional Authority



Fig.1. Map of the Madaba region with archaeological sites mentioned in the text (DigitalGlobe, CNES / AIRBUS through Google Earth, © Google 2017; edited by MRAMP).

and the DoA (Paolini et al. 2012). Sustainable development can only be achieved by means of master plans that, together with risk assessment and evaluation of natural and anthropogenic risks, include capacity building. Training for professionals responsible for site protection is fundamental for forging sustainable touristic exploitation, cultural heritage stewardship

and raising awareness of the fragile nature of archaeological sites among both local communities and foreign tourists (Comer and Willems 2012, pp. 511-512, 514, fig. 7; Paolini et al. 2012). The principles of sustainable development and of complementarity of cultural and economic aspects of development are undergirded by article 2 of the UNESCO



Fig. 2. 1) Aerial photo of the Madaba Archaeological Park West; 2) Ottoman-period medical clinic, now occupied by DoA offices; 3) areas belonging to the Burnt Palace of the Byzantine-Umayyad periods; 4) Martyrs' Church; 5) the Roman road (Photographer: Andrea Zerbini. Courtesy of APAAME. Adapted for this article by MRAMP).

Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (Paris 2005). It states that “since culture is one of the mainsprings of development, the cultural aspects of development are as important as its economic aspects, which individuals and peoples have the fundamental right to participate in and enjoy” (UNESCO 2005, p. 4).

Finally, and most importantly, to be effective, durable and sustainable, strategies for conservation and presentation of cultural heritage should be elaborated in order to not only make cultural heritage sites appealing to international tourism but also significant for local communities by strengthening their connection with their past and legacy. In fact, cultural heritage management strategies should not be developed according to a top-down perspective, but, rather, proceed from a bottom-up and inclusive approach. The agenda of cultural heritage management strategies in multi-layered societies with a complex socio-cultural history has to take into account that there is not just one ‘voice’, but, rather, a mosaic of overlapping stories that have to be

equally valorized and represented. According to the principle of sustainable development undergirded by the UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (Paris 2005), “the protection, promotion and maintenance of cultural diversity are an essential requirement for sustainable development” (UNESCO 2005, p. 8). Moreover, the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage (Paris 2003) defines intangible cultural heritage as “the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith – that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals recognize as part of their cultural heritage” (UNESCO 2003, p. 2). It affirms “the importance of the intangible cultural heritage as a mainspring of cultural diversity and a guarantee of sustainable development” and “the deep-seated interdependence between the intangible cultural heritage and the tangible cultural and natural heritage” (UNESCO 2003, p.1). Therefore, different segments of the community should participate equally in

meaning-making processes connected with a Country's cultural heritage.

Casestudies in Jordan recommend conversations and interviews with the local communities as a strategy to develop unbiased projects for cultural heritage protection and management and to promote their sustainability, as they allow for understanding how different segments of local communities interpret their relation with the past as crystallized in archaeological sites and artefacts (Abu-Khafajah 2010, 2011, 2014; Kersel 2012, 2016; Kersel & Chesson 2013; Vannini, Nucciotti & Bonacchi 2014, pp. 188-189). As is discussed in the following section, this is an important part of MRAMP's approach.

The Madaba Regional Archaeological Museum Project (MRAMP)

Madaba, its region, and the current Archaeological Museum

The Madaba region, which corresponds to the modern Governorate of Madaba in central Jordan, encompasses a number of archaeological

sites, including Tall al-'Umayri, Tall Hisban, Tall Jalul, Wadi Thamad, Mount Nebo, Khirbat al-Mukhayyat, Murayghat, Ataruz, Khirbat Iskandar, Mukhawir, Dhiban, Umm ar-Rasas, and Lahun (Figure 1). International archaeological projects working in the region for decades have brought to light a complex regional history, extending from the stone ages to the modern age (Bikai & Dailey 1996; Harrison, Foran & Graham 2007). One of the four UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Jordan – Umm ar-Rasas – is located within the Madaba region, as well as Mount Nebo, important for religious tourism as it is traditionally identified as the burial place of Moses. However, many of the main archaeological sites in the Madaba region which represent very important stages in the region's development – like the birth of the first cities in the 3rd millennium BC and the rise of ancient states in the Iron Age – are not included within touristic trails.

Madaba itself is a touristic attraction because it boasts some of the most beautiful mosaics of Jordan in churches distributed across the town (Piccirillo 1989; Piccirillo, Bikai & Dailey 1993),



Fig. 3. Map of the Madaba Archaeological Park West. Graphic elaboration by Valeria Gaspari; © Laura Romagnoli and Guido Batocchioni-Studio Strati, Rome/MRAMP.

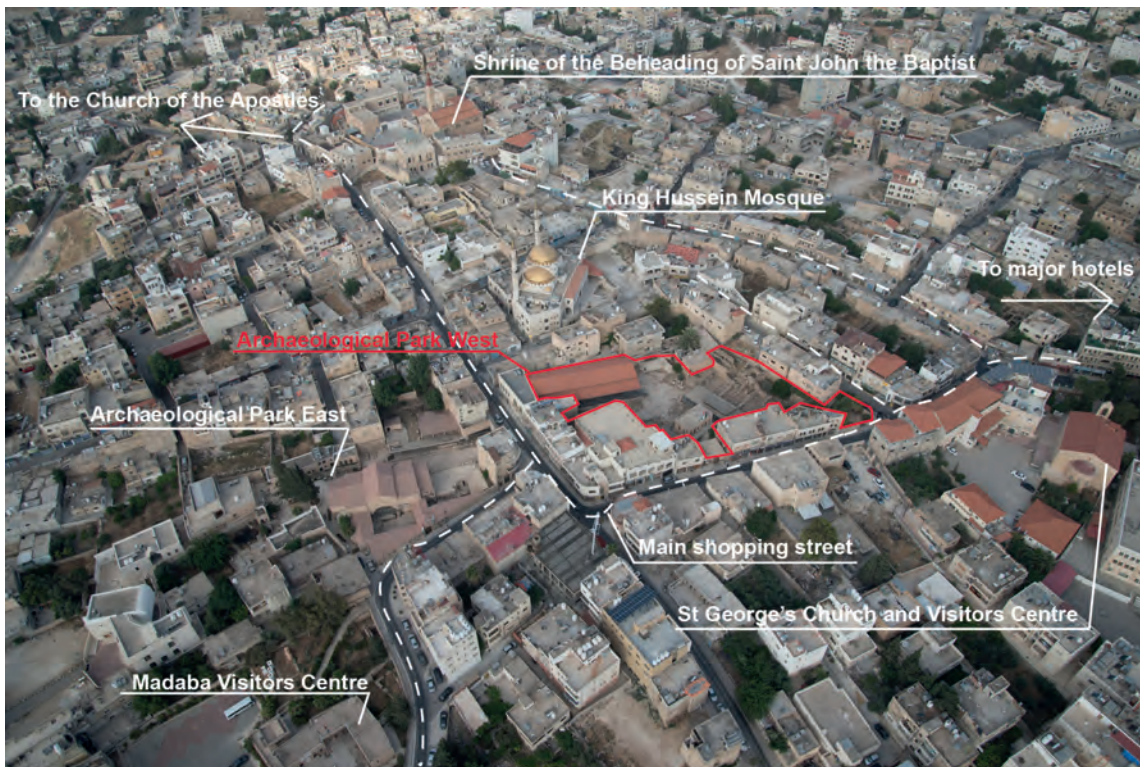


Fig. 4. The Madaba Archaeological Park West and its location within the main touristic pathways in downtown Madaba (Photographer: Andrea Zerbini. Courtesy of APAAME. Adapted for this article by MRAMP).

among which is the famous Madaba Mosaic Map, a 6th century AD mosaic representing a map of the Middle East, in the Church of Saint George (Piccirillo & Alliata 1998). On the other hand, archaeological research by the University of Toronto on the ancient *tell* (Arabic word for artificial mound) revealed an occupational history from the 4th millennium BC to modern times, with important stages in the Early Bronze and Iron Ages and in the Late Ottoman Period (Foran & Klassen 2013; Harrison 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 2011; Harrison, Foran, & Graham 2007, p. 146; Harrison 2011). However, as the town has witnessed increased urban growth during recent years, archaeological assets located within the perimeter of the modern town are at risk of damage and destruction (Banks & Zerbini 2015; Bewley et al. 2016, p. 921).

The archaeological materials from past excavations at Madaba and its region as well as those from the numerous projects still working in the region regularly flow into the storeroom of the current archaeological museum. This is annexed to the offices of the Madaba Directorate of the DoA in a dedicated section of the compound, which also hosts a recently

renovated Folklore Museum. Although the museum is located in a beautiful traditional building overlying a previous Byzantine structure with fine mosaics, there are two major weak points in the current location:

1. The exhibits, lacking information and didactic support, present only a limited selection of the incredible collection of artefacts in the Madaba Directorate's warehouse (14,000 artefacts);
2. The museum is located at some distance from the main touristic pathways in Madaba and, therefore, it is hardly visible to either local or non-local tourists and is difficult to locate due to the absence of appropriate directional maps and arrows.

The proposal of a new museum

The project of a new Archaeological Museum for Madaba was conceived in the mid-2000s by dig directors of the American archaeological expeditions working in the Madaba region and the DoA, following the request of then Director General Dr Fawwaz al-Kraysheh to Douglas Clark to renovate the Madaba Archaeological

Museum, digitize its archives and train local staff for the museum management. In 2012, Clark and Huda Kilani submitted a proposal to use the property owned by the DoA in the Madaba Archaeological Park West (Figures 2 & 3) for a new Museum, moving many of the archaeological artefacts from the current museum to organize the new displays chronologically and show the richness and variety of cultural assets in the region of Madaba. In 2015, this project has come to fruition thanks to a new Italian-American-Jordanian collaboration. The former Director-General, Dr Monther Jamhawi, suggested again the Archaeological Park West as the location for the new Museum; therefore, a reconceptualization of a proposal for that urban area was presented to the DoA by Marta D'Andrea (Sapienza University of Rome), Andrea Polcaro (University of Perugia), Douglas R. Clark (La Sierra University), and Suzanne Richard (Gannon University). In 2016, MRAMP began as an Italian-American-Jordanian commitment, with the four archaeologists as co-directors and DoA District Director, Basem Mahamid, as the on-site coordinator.

This choice of the Archaeological Park West was dictated by its favourable position near the Church of Saint George, along the main shopping street in Madaba and Madaba's Heritage Trail, on the way to the Madaba Visitors Centre of Saint George's Church and the new Visitor Centre attached to the Archaeological Park East (Figure 4). Therefore, a new Museum complex here could become the centerpiece of downtown Madaba.

This area has been excavated in the past by F. Michele Piccirillo on behalf of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum (Piccirillo 1985; 1986a; 1986b; 1989, pp. 119-128; 1994) and by Cherie Lenzen (1992-93), administered by the former Director of ACOR, Pierre Bikai, on behalf of USAID, and Ghazi Bisheh (1993-94) on behalf of the DoA and ACOR (Bisheh 1994; Schick forthcoming). The area features remains from the major occupational phases (Figures 2-3): the Roman-Byzantine road; the Martyrs Church; the "Burnt Palace", an elite residence with beautiful mosaics used in the Byzantine-Umayyad periods; and a group of traditional houses. The latter date from the 1880s, when a group of Christian families from Karak, led by two Italian monks, resettled Madaba, and include the first medical clinic in Madaba, which, has been used by the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities until offices

were completed in the new building adjacent to the main Visitors Center and is currently used by the DoA as office space.

Therefore, MRAMP focuses on archaeologically preparing this urban area for the construction of the new regional museum to display archaeological materials from the Madaba region. As is reported below, the first stages of MRAMP have been devoted to the requalification of this urban area after a lengthy abandonment and lack of maintenance, mapping and surveying and a methodological inquiry on best practices for transforming urban archaeological areas into museums according to principles of sustainability, which is a challenging task. Our architects looked at existing examples in Europe (for example the Domus of the Ortaglia, in Italy: Morandini, Rossi & Tortelli 2012; Tortelli & Frassoni 2016; and the Vesunna Museum, in France: Cardani 2004; Futagawa 2004) suggestive of the open design over restored antiquities that respects the existing spatial layout of the complex and intends only to consolidate and restore existing walls, in order to elaborate a draft proposal for the community and the stakeholders. The new museum plan will draw on creatively integrating open and closed spaces for the new flow of attendees, pivoting around the re-adaptation of the offices of the DoA to introductory halls to provide the visitors with the historical-archaeological timeline of the region (Richard et al. 2017; D'Andrea et al. in press). The planning operations are still in progress thanks to the work of architects Laura Romagnoli and Guido Batocchioni of the Studio Strati of Rome with the collaboration of architect Valeria Gaspari; therefore, the following sections will not deal with the plan of the museum. It will focus on the results of MRAMP 2015-17 activities, discussing the project's inspiring principles connected with cultural heritage preservation and protection, community engagement and raising awareness of sustainable development.

Preservation of cultural heritage, awareness raising and community engagement within MRAMP 2015-17

MRAMP is driven by the following objectives (Richard et al. 2017):

1. To protect, restore, and preserve cultural heritage;
2. To valorize a country's heritage and local

traditions through linkages to memory and a community's histories;

3. To develop the link between heritage and the economy through sustainable tourism;
4. To ensure the project is culturally, socially, and economically sustainable into the future, conceiving it, from its inception, as a community-based project. We believe that community engagement (training, capacity building, stakeholders, employment) is the ultimate key to successful cultural heritage management and sustainability.

Although MRAMP is at an early stage of development, it has already faced challenges and produced results in safeguarding cultural assets, raising awareness of the intrinsic civic values of cultural heritage and promoting community engagement.

As for the first aspect, the Pilot Season of MRAMP was held in May 2016 (Richard et al. 2016; D'Andrea et al. in press) and the Second Season took place in May 2017 (Clark et al. 2017; Richard et al. 2017). Given the state of abandonment of many buildings at the site, that, in 2015, were covered by vegetation, debris, and garbage, cleaning and clearing operations down to the surfaces reached by earlier expeditions were necessary for the rehabilitation and enhancement of the archaeological site for tourists (Figure 5), as well as for starting the planning process. We followed best practices of field archaeology for the collection and registration of pottery and small finds. Substantial support for the requalification of the area was given by a 15-months grant through USAID-SCHEP (Sustainable Cultural Heritage through Engagement of Local Communities Project, headquartered at ACOR) led by Douglas Clark. This allowed for continuous clearing and cleaning of the site, the stratigraphic excavation of a previously untouched balk, and a better understanding of the archaeological and architectural phasing of the area; first intervention on deteriorating mosaics and plaster and collapsing walls; geo-electrical surveys of the underground and beginning of 3D laser scanning of the park. These operations allowed for substantial progression in the planning process, resurveying and mapping of the Park, which eventually resulted in the elaboration of a 3D model of the future museum presented to stakeholders

(see below). Moreover, digital records for the 14,000 artefacts housed in the current museum were developed and the MRAMP website went live (MRAMP 2017), while the Madaba Regional Archaeological Museum (MRAM) website – www.madabamuseum.org - is under construction.

Already from 2016, MRAMP sponsored several community engagement activities: training sessions and workshops, education outreach to promote local heritage awareness, and development of stakeholders. The project's focus on inclusive activities is shown clearly in the choice of the welcoming sandals depicted on one of the mosaics floors of the Burnt Palace as the Museum project's logo (Figure 5).

Capacity building is one of our primary goals, with training of local specialists beginning now and continuing through the life of the museum. Starting from our 2016 Pilot Season in the Madaba Archaeological Park West, we have used our field activities as a training opportunity for graduate and undergraduate students from Italian, American and Jordanian universities (Figure 6a & 6b). Likewise, we work in close partnership with the DoA, whose Regional Director is our on-site coordinator. We have trained some DoA staff members in fieldwork and documentation systems (Figure 6c & 6d) as well as in conservation of mosaics with the support of specialists attached to MRAMP (Figure 7), who also trained local workers in first intervention on wall consolidation (Figure 8). Support from SCHEP and dig directors provided the equipment and materials to train DoA staff to inventory, describe, measure, weigh, and digitize the 14,000 artefacts from the regional projects stored in the Madaba District Office, utilizing the best practices cataloguing system developed in collaboration with the Getty Museum. This cooperation between MRAMP and the DoA is aimed at promoting local autonomy in the Cultural Heritage Management and local operation of the Museum in the future.

Moreover, through SCHEP and thanks to pre-existing agreements between Gannon University – one of the MRAMP sponsoring institutions – and the American University of Madaba (AUM), MRAMP engaged with university students in architecture and design. One entire course at AUM was focused on MRAMP and the proposal of a new museum in Madaba centring not only on museum design,



Fig. 5. The Madaba Archaeological Park West: before (above, 2015) and after (below, 2017). © MRAMP.



Fig. 6a & b: Training undergraduate and graduate students from different nationalities during MRAMP. Seasons 2016-17; c & d: training DoA staff in fieldwork and documentation systems during MRAMP, Season 2016. © MRAMP.

but also on the connection between the Museum and urban planning, development strategies, and sustainability (Figure 9). Following on this initiative, five SCHEP internships for AUM students to collaborate with MRAMP in spring 2018 were launched. Moreover, two undergraduate students from the University of Jordan focused their senior projects on the Madaba Museum and three graduate students from Hashemite University have become seriously engaged with the project.

Part of our activities for community engagement focus on engaging in dialogue and conversations with the local communities.

During 2016-17 seasons, we had the chance to interview the third generation of descendants of the original owners of traditional Late Ottoman-period houses in the Park West who resettled Madaba in the 1880s. The third generation descendants of the Oweimrin family still own their property at the edge of the Park and compiled an oral history that documents the very founding and development of late 19th-century AD Madaba to the present,

tracing an uninterrupted historical, cultural, and residential line back to the very Ottoman-period buildings that MRAMP is restoring. This historical link to the modern founding of Madaba extends to numerous tribes of Muslims and Christians who settled in Madaba, embracing diverse living population groups in the city today, forging the connection between the living community and ancient heritage. This is a unique chance for MRAMP to raise awareness of the need to preserve and safeguard cultural heritage and to promote sustainability capitalizing on these direct ancestral connections (Richard et al. 2017).

Moreover, on International Museum Day, 18 May 2017, we received 42 secondary school girls at the site to see on-site mosaic conservation and interact with our conservator in a question-and-answer session (Figure 8), as part of a series of initiatives to valorize ancient heritage with the local modern community, starting from the youngest generations.

Another very important step toward community engagement was a stakeholder



Fig.7. Training workshop on conservation of mosaics during MRAMP, Season 2017. © MRAMP.

meeting held in December 2017 at the Madaba Institute for Mosaic Art & Restoration to present the proposed architectural vision for the Museum to an extended group of DoA representatives, officers from the Municipality and the Ministry of Tourism, archaeologists, university students, local residents, owners of shops and hotels in Madaba. It was followed by a question-and-answer session during which MRAMP co-directors and on-site coordinator and their architectural team received feedback, comments, critiques and suggestions from the attendees in an engaging and fruitful debate. The discussion showed that the proposal of a new museum as the centrepiece of tourism in downtown Madaba has been very well received by local residents. However, above all, it provided the MRAMP team with the opportunity to listen to their ideas on how the Museum should represent the connection

between the composite, multi-layered modern community of Madaba and its past ancestry and cultural legacy. This will provide the core of meaning-making processes of cultural heritage in the Madaba region lying at the very foundation of MRAMP.

Given the urban setting of the MRAMP project, this meeting was also the chance to discuss issues regarding sustainable urban development connected with the future Museum District. From the beginning of the project in 2015, this has been the subject of multiple meetings of the MRAMP team, the DoA, the Ministry of Tourism and the Municipality of Greater Madaba to discuss how to coordinate land development strategies and protection of cultural heritage. The latter aspect is connected also with the extensive cultural heritage landscape to manage within the proposed project, including, together with an urban complex, the surrounding region. As said before, the Madaba district encompasses a dozen or more sites of historical and cultural value, many of which are not currently included in safeguarding and protection strategies, tourism development projects and heritage trails. In our vision, the Museum will not only showcase the history, archaeology, and traditions of Madaba, but also connect closely with the surrounding territory. The new set-up and display organized around Madaba will include all related sites in the region and will use directional maps and heritage trails as a springboard for local and foreign tourists to “travel to them as a series



Fig.8. Training workshop on wall consolidation in fall 2017 within MRAMP/SCHEP. © MRAMP.



*Fig. 9. MRAMP workshop with architecture students at American University of Madaba.
© American University of Madaba.*

of related museums without walls” (D’Andrea et al. in press). This is not only aimed at providing visitors with the opportunity to see the best of the cultural heritage of Madaba and its region, but also at enhancing valorisation and protection of those sites that are often threatened by land development pressure and uncontrolled agricultural intensification.

Concluding remarks

As a conclusion, it will be worth re-emphasising some major points. Jordan is developing brand new strategies for the safeguarding, protection and valorisation of cultural heritage, which centre on the connection between archaeology, sustainable development and tourism and between cultural heritage sites and museums, territory and local populations.

Community engagement is key in promoting sustainable development. Forging a connection

between living communities and their cultural legacy, recognizing themselves as actors in making the cultural landscape, and assigning to the remains of the past a significance in the present should be the principle driving initiatives for cultural heritage protection and management. Promoting local stewardship



Fig. 10. Secondary school students visiting MRAMP’s site on International Museum Day 2017 (© MRAMP).

of cultural heritage by means of collaborative endeavours encompassing awareness raising and education, training and capacity building, and engagement with stakeholders is the foundation of any sustainable initiative of protection and development of sites of cultural and historical significance and of cultural landscapes. From

the insights presented in the article, it emerges clearly that MRAMP, although at an initial stage of an ambitious enterprise, is aligned with these principles and is taking the first promising steps in positively building community for the near future and in the longer-term.

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