FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Civil society action and heritage

By Christiane Dabdoub-Nasser, RMSU Team Leader

More than a year has passed, and an intimate acquaintance with the projects has revealed, and refreshingly so, that behind much of the politico-technical jargon of some of the projects, which was probably necessary to secure a win, lurks a sense of awareness of the value of cultural heritage preservation and its potential to build synergies with civil society agendas. We all agree that a strong civil society is a reflection of a functioning society but that Euromed Heritage 4 projects should be an arena of negotiation, argument, disagreement or agreement, and perhaps even struggle, on issues related to cultural heritage preservation, takes us to a new level of the programme and directs its eventual impact on the region. But it also brings with it new expectations.

Most of the projects have put civil society at the heart of their action, be it conservation, urban rehabilitation, capacity building and training, tourism development, or whatever activity they have set out to do. Educational kits will be produced and educators will be trained in their use; various public meetings will be held; exhibitions, both real and virtual, will be promoted; tourism manuals will be produced and guides will be trained; training in local crafts will be organised; and all sorts of publications, targeting a wide range of the population within the region, will be disseminated. The list is impressive, and it cannot be otherwise if the programme aims to achieve public awareness and appropriation. However, economic regeneration as an outcome of cultural heritage development, and a gauge of real success in this enterprise, is sadly missing. Projects propose actions that could eventually lead to economic regeneration, but hardly any present a business plan that could be implemented within the programme and that would prove the certainty of this link and seal the process of appropriation within local communities.
EUROMED HERITAGE 4 NEWS

RMSU'S UP-COMING ACTIVITIES

EH 4 Regional Conference: Mobilising Civil Society around Cultural Heritage Action (Palermo, Italy, 24-25 February 2010)

This conference, organised by RMSU-EH 4 in collaboration with “CERISDI-Centro Ricerche e Studi Direzionali” of Palermo, will provide a platform to introduce state-of-the-art theories, methodologies and good practice in mobilising civil society around cultural heritage, and their impact on its healthy development within the EuroMed region. It will gather EH 4 projects partners, representatives of civil society entities involved in heritage, and officials from public authorities and international institutions. The main objective of the conference is to highlight the role civil society as main stakeholder, can have in the promotion and development of cultural heritage. It will highlight the value of cultural heritage as a factor for converging public and community interest for the common good, and as an increasingly important lever for economic development for local communities, particularly in the tourism sector and through the development of women enterprise in Mediterranean Partner countries. As Christiane Dabdoub Nasser, RMSU Team Leader, states “It is RMSU’s belief that a fruitful collaboration between public authorities and civil society components is paramount for the implementation of good policies for the safeguard of cultural heritage and the carrying out of related activities for human and economic development. Activities such as sustainable tourism, development of traditional arts and crafts, etc., could help develop small and medium enterprises as well as market and labour opportunities with positive effects on the democratic process and the emergence of a stronger, richer and more involved civil society. At the same time, to operate in a suitable way civil society needs an appropriate framework that only the public sector can provide: protection laws, urbanisation regulations, recognition of intangible heritage value, awareness and education, etc.”. The conference will formulate recommendations addressed to the wider Euromed Heritage network and to the public authorities in Mediterranean Partner countries.

For more information: http://www.unesco.org/en/beirut/
http://www.euromedheritage.net/intern.cfm?menuID=8&submenuID=26&subsubmenuID=12
http://www.euromedheritage.net/intern.cfm?menuID=8&submenuID=26&subsubmenuID=21

Most recent publications concerning strengthening institutional and legislative frameworks in the Mediterranean

Inventories: a fundamental tool for safeguarding Mediterranean cultural heritage

The Proceedings and Recommendations for the workshop on Inventories, held in Paris in December 2008, identify up-dating requirements of the methodology of data gathering and processing made necessary with the use of new technologies of information and communication. The document integrates a modern, global concept of heritage: culture and nature, movable and immovable, tangible and intangible.

Find these documents at:
http://www.unesco.org/en/beirut/

Trafficking of cultural objects, a serious issue for the Mediterranean region

A Summary Report and Recommendations resulting from the workshop on illicit traffic, which was held in Beirut last November, sum up the current situation of trafficking of cultural properties in the region and formulate a series of measures that need to be taken - strengthening of legal frameworks and norms, practical measures concerning the management of museums and private collections, and the necessity for cooperation between police and customs services at the national and international level – for tackling and pre-empting this serious issue.

Documents are available at:
http://www.unesco.org/en/beirut/
http://www.euromedheritage.net/intern.cfm?menuID=8&submenuID=26&subsubmenuID=8

EH 4 PROJECTS ACTIVITIES

Since EH 4 projects started their action almost one year ago, a lot of work has been done in the Mediterranean region in order to help safeguard and valorise Mediterranean heritage, in particular facilitating appropriation of cultural heritage by local communities through activities of education, awareness and participation. Here summarised the main results of this intense effort:

Youth in Lebanon and Jordan promoting cultural heritage – Foundations for a strong future

The aim of this project is to make national museums and heritage sites in Lebanon and Jordan hubs for education, celebration of cultural heritage, and knowledge dissemination. A series of training activities took place since the launch of the project last May: 60 youths representing all regions of Lebanon visited the National Museum and participated in interactive games to explore parts of the collections that represent a particular area of interest for them, or linked to their home region; 72 youths from six regions in Lebanon participated in a trip to discover important
of the project. The second phase, which will be implemented in the second year, will involve developing national projects conceived on the basis of the needs of each partner country, while the third phase will be devoted to implementing national projects, and to preparing candidatures for inscription on the UNESCO Convention lists.

For more information about the project:
http://www.euromedheritage.net/intern.cfm?menuID=12&submenuID=13&idproject=45

Safeguarding MEDiterranean Living HERItage – MedLiHer

This project aims at enhancing the institutional capacity building of four Mediterranean countries – Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria – and facilitate their effective participation in the international mechanisms established by the “UNESCO Convention 2003 for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage” through the involvement of communities and relevant groups. An opening workshop was organised at the UNESCO Headquarters in Paris on 25-26 May in order to enable the projects’ partners to set up and coordinate the national assessments to be used for drawing up the surveys as foreseen for the first phase.

For more information about the project:
http://www.euromedheritage.net/intern.cfm?menuID=12&submenuID=13&idproject=44

Rediscovering together the water heritage in the Mediterranean region – REMEE

Remée project tries to highlight the relationship between humans and water memories and management through actions that involve local populations. The overall goal is to help increase public awareness of issues related to water heritage, which reflects the ways Mediterranean populations in rural and urban areas dealt with water penury and organised their local communities around its management, and environment fragility in the Mediterranean, mostly due to recent social and economic developments – mechanised methods in agriculture, rural depopulation, unsystematic urban development, etc. During July and August REMEE organised in Hammamet study camps and restoration worksites especially targeting youth from Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia and Europe, which helped to formulate proposals for the definition of an eco-museum and a future educational garden in the orange orchard of Hammamet. A participatory workshop held in Marrakech involved the restoration of the Bab Doukkala fountain located in the heart of the Medina; the intervention focused on the cleaning of the fountain and its vicinity, and restoration of the plastering and the pond. The work camp held in the Algerian region of Tipaza focused on the restoration and preservation of a Roman villa in the archaeological park of Cherchell. The villa will be one of the main stations in a future cultural route. During the second year of the project, further participation activities involving local populations will be implemented.

For more information about the project:
http://www.euromedheritage.net/intern.cfm?menuID=12&submenuID=13&idproject=43

Sharing our Mediterranean audio-visual heritage – MedMem

The Mediterranean audiovisual heritage represents an exceptional testimony of social customs, traditions and events that have animated the societies in the region since the beginning of the 20th century. Today this resource is mostly inaccessible and is at risk to deteriorate rapidly and therefore be lost forever. MedMem brings together number of television networks and audiovisual professional bodies in order to safeguard this memory by the digitalization of Mediterranean audiovisual archives. An open e-platform will offer the general public the opportunity to access some 4000 videos from all around the Mediterranean, which will be showcased within their historical and cultural contexts and with a commentary in three languages (EN, FR and AR). To this end, the project provides technicians and archive managers of involved televisions with specialised training: a first workshop on digitisation was held at RAI (Italian State Television) in Italy on July; a second workshop on indexation at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina on October, in order to establish the selection and classification procedures. A meeting gathering all project partners was organised at Jordanian TV (JRTV) in Amman on November, to undertake the selection process in
coordinating with teams of researchers and specialists of the Mediterranean region in charge of documenting the future e-platform. Activities for the next year include completing the selection process and implementing the e-platform.

For more information about the project:
http://www.euromedheritage.net/intern.cfm?menuID=12&submenuID=13&idproject=42

From historical integration to contemporary active participation – Mutual Heritage

A substantial late 19th and early 20th century heritage, which is the product of inter-cultural exchanges and the sharing of technical know-how during that period, still exists within the Mediterranean region. Mutual Heritage aims at implementing activities that would help train various cultural heritage professionals in this heritage and heighten awareness among the populations. It will be responsible for the preparation of technical documents for the authorities of Casablanca which would be used in their application to UNESCO for the title of “Deco” for the city centre. Training constitutes an important aspect of these activities: a first training course “Architectural and urban heritage, sustainable development, social awareness” was organised in Fez in June; a second on “Connecting heritage sites” was held in Ramallah to the end of creating a virtual library and implementing the e-platform.

For more information about the project:
http://www.euromedheritage.net/intern.cfm?menuID=12&submenuID=13&idproject=43

Manuscripts and men – Manumed II

Manuscripts reflect the linguistic diversity and ancestral know-how of a rich Mediterranean culture and its multiple interactions throughout the centuries, and the interaction of tangible and intangible dimensions. In spite of the million specimens preserved in Mediterranean libraries and archives, this heritage is at risk, and the threat to the survival of traditional craftsmen and techniques of production and conservation, will entail its loss. Manumed II aims at safeguarding and valorising this unique heritage making it available to the general public through an open digital platform/virtual library, and providing professionals from libraries, archives and information managers with training modules on library science and technology issues. During its first year various activities were organised: two international conferences on “Modern issues on traffic of cultural heritage” and on “Heritage publishing” were held at the Bibliotheca Alexandrina, and an international symposium on written heritage laws was held in Annaba. Two training courses on the implementation of the e-platform were held in Arles and in Beirut and a training on preventive conservation of manuscripts was organised in Annaba.

The second year will be dedicated to the implementation of the virtual library and other training activities.

For more information about the project:
http://www.euromedheritage.net/intern.cfm?menuID=12&submenuID=13&idproject=48

Raising awareness for the hammam as a cultural heritage for the Mediterranean area and beyond - Hammamed

Notwithstanding social and political changes that have sometimes profoundly affected its significance and function, the hammam has preserved its vitality and may prove to be a formidable tool of social integration and requalification of the Medinas and historical centres of Mediterranean cities where, for a long time, it represented an essential social and architectural element. Hammamed focuses its action on the awareness of hammam as common heritage in the Mediterranean region through awareness activities, conferences and workshops, and specific actions for the two hammams: Ammuna in Damascus, and Saffarin in Fez. A technical meeting and workshop was held in Fez on November, which brought together project partners and associated experts in the field of sociology, town-planning, rehabilitation, and business and water management in order to work out the best practices for safeguarding and revitalizing the hammam in the region.

For more information about the project:
http://www.euromedheritage.net/intern.cfm?menuID=12&submenuID=13&idproject=45

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Guest of the month, Questions & Answers to C. Dabdoub Nasser – Eurojar Website

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The historical heart of Kairouan regains its luster – Eurojar Website

Guest of the month, Questions & answers to C. Dabdoub Nasser - Eurojar Website

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Engaging the participation of the Elders: a rewarding experience

BY DR. MARGARET HART ROBERTSON, DIRECTOR OF POSTGRADUATE COURSES IN RESPONSIBLE TOURISM, UNIVERSITY OF LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA

The EU has done much to promote projects which involve civil society in an attempt to trigger community cohesion and “self-help” or empowerment structures toward governance. One of said projects was Mediterranean Voices. Coordinated by a team at London Metropolitan University, a “family” of thirteen members of various ‘Mediterranean’ communities (with “Mediterranean” understood in the Braudelian sense of the word, therefore including the Canary Archipelago) set out to retrace the roots and routes of the region by listening to the voices of our Elders, something which, since the project, has become somewhat of a vogue, with National Geographic also setting up the same kind of institution. Often overlooked as an essential part of the society, since they have overrun their “economic” lifetime, if there were one sole lesson to be learnt from this EU project, it would be that without active communication with our past, our elders, there can be no way forward in Europe.

From the beginning, and in the best sense of the word, I represented the ‘black sheep’ in the family. Responsible for the Canary Islands, in particular Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, “beyond the Pillars of Hercules”, I was faced with a double task: of situating the Canary Islands on the map of the Mediterranean and of contextualising information with respect to the past of a place which was not my own: a Herculean task, indeed. I enlisted the help of the “Elders” of our University, the students aged 55+ who had signed up for further education. Without their help, mediation and enthusiasm, the work would have been near impossible. Their permanent availability to extend bridges toward greater communication, and use their know-how, wisdom and patience to bring the project into a safe port was utterly invaluable, only commensurate to their gratitude for having been allowed the possibility to make their voices heard.

To contextualise, Mediterranean Voices was set up to chart the Intangible Heritage of the Mediterranean as made manifest through the oral histories of ordinary people. Previous to the interviews, the partners had worked on an elaborate matrix of themes and sub-themes which would allow for the information to be transported onto the database for use in many applications, ranging from primary education through to university research projects, and covering many cultural manifestations, such as theatre, film, and music, with a whole new slant on “musealization” for community cohesion and inclusion, incorporating new technologies.

Working on a community level is not easy, as all people who work at grassroots levels know. Listening respectfully to people’s own stories and analysing the same for pan-consumption on the web is complicated. We know from experience that the image of a place is built around its attractions, its infrastructure and its people, and we always run the risk of trivialising or, worse still, reifying the people who are privileging us with their stories of the past in our attempt to re-float economies dependent on tourism: the whole subject of “staged authenticity” and “Disneyfication”. The project for all who were concerned, but above all for myself as a coordinator, was an eye-opener in that “Theirstories”, once contrasted and compared for overlapping, offered a much more objective picture of the Past than History books usually do, thereby eradicating the myth that oral history is a more subjective or tendentious picture of events than our textbooks. But there were other lessons learnt:

- Working with elderly people is a privilege and listening to what they have to tell is vital for their health and ours as a community. Their motivation was a pleasant surprise.
- Inter-generational dialogue is vital for an “independent” culture to survive the pressures of globalisation, above all, in the case of places such as the Canary Islands where the past is often re-written according to the political interests of the times.
- Everyone is capable of telling his/her own story. Writing and reading are not totally democratic uses of the language whereas spoken language is negotiable by all. Our Elders may not have received formal schooling or an education as such, but not for that reason are they lacking in wisdom.
- Making people part of the story takes effort, enthusiasm and follow-through. The rewards are immense with improved self-esteem, cohesion and interest in protecting the environment on the part of the community.
- The possibilities of innovation and creativity of a community are great but can only be used to full potential if there is a full appreciation of sharing and shared information, above all in the area of identity and historical memory.
- People feel less inhibited when telling their story at a global level than if such is to be used merely for local consumption.
- People understood that although they belonged to the Atlantic geographically, their culture had much to do with the Mediterranean. More importantly, they had no difficulty in establishing their links with Europe since the Islands have always housed large foreign communities of Germans, British and French, among others. They also had a very clear idea with respect to the fact that globalisation and immigration were not new phenomena in the Canary Islands but were part of the community history. The islanders proved in their accounts of their lives to be true global citizens, with a broad outlook on life and to use Europe, Africa and America as their contextual framework.

The problem with an EU project of this type is how to continue working with this important group within civil society after the dynamics of the structured funding as such run out. People in a project of this nature become friends who have confided their lives to you. They cannot be discarded for the next project that turns up. Four theses have been undertaken as the result of this project and another two are in the pipeline, the Gran Canaria database has been transferred into a (hopefully) interactive framework on the ULPGC library system (www.ulpgc.es) and I have moved on to other projects. Together with the elder students of the University, we have set up an oral history association to continue our good work, but keeping people enthusiastic without intense personal involvement is more than a little complicated. Getting people involved is difficult to start with, but once you have them involved, keeping them there is even more so.

The life beyond the project’s end is still something that has to be resolved if people are really to feel that they are of value to a community’s well-being.

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Engaging the youth in the safeguard and valorisation of cultural heritage in Lebanon and Jordan, a key process for the building of a stronger future civil society
Can cultural heritage help mobilise the civil society and to what effect? The answer of Foundations for a strong future project is clear and it passes mainly through the youth: “To increase the children and youths’ level of awareness about cultural heritage is the best way to assure its safeguard and valorisation”, says Dahlia El Khoury Sader, coordinator of this project, which develops strong actions of education and awareness-raising in Lebanon and Jordan.

Where do you place your project in terms of mobilising civil society?
Our project is very well placed since it targets a large cross-section of the population, and through our agenda we mean to tackle the issue strongly. Engaging youth, educators, school teachers, local authorities, communities, and museums in the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage means that we are operating at the heart of the matter; it is a challenging task and our goal to change the opinion that people, and particularly youth, have about cultural heritage as something unattractive, cold and distant from their life is ambitious. Youth constitute our main target group and are the investment this project makes for the future. We cannot conceive the implementation of an effective and lasting action for the safeguard and valorisation of cultural heritage without the involvement of the youth, which represent the future of our societies: involving youth means at the same time involving their parents, their teachers, their communities.

Another particularity in our project is that we are involving in our activities people from the rural areas, who are very often unaware of the value of cultural heritage and unconcerned about the need to conserve and enhance it, although it is there that a great deal of the tangible heritage is located. But it is just a matter of opportunities: in a cultural trip we organised for almost 70 Lebanese youths last summer, we saw that they went to clean the historical sites from garbage and spontaneously, because they have learned to feel this heritage as their own.

Finally, we will contribute to the area of education through training and through the preparation of educational kits as a means of raising awareness and among schoolchildren.

What are these educational kits and how will they be disseminated?
Foundations is particularly concerned about the implementation of education and training activities on cultural heritage addressed to youth from public schools, because neither in Lebanon nor in Jordan activities of this kind are carried out within the curriculum currently in force. An important factor is to make these activities
attractive enough. We want youths to be involved in interactive and enjoyable activities which stimulate their creativity rather than just be observers. For instance, we put youths in touch with artisans and artist who explained to them how to make weave fabric or a carpet, how to perform a traditional dance they afterwards could perform by themselves. The most attractive aspect for youths is to carry out a concrete action and experience the different forms of cultural heritage directly. Last summer, 149 youths from both Jordan and Lebanon were trained in the production of multimedia projects aiming at promoting cultural heritage throughout their communities. The response was enthusiastic. In October and November twelve communities – six in Lebanon and six in Jordan – hosted the exhibition of these projects. Each exhibition was launched within a community event involving parents, peers, schools, local authorities, cultural institutions and NGOs. Held at locations such as municipal buildings, schools, cultural heritage sites or local museums, libraries, etc., these exhibitions emphasised the value of cultural heritage diversity in each community through the words and creativity of their own youth; they also constituted a form of support to the public to promote recognition of the social and economic importance of their community’s cultural heritage.

Do you see any similarities or differences worth mentioning between the youth of Jordan and those of Lebanon?

To start with, we chose to work with the youth in these two countries because of perceived similarities between them. Culturally speaking, Lebanon and Jordan are very close and their cultural heritage presents lots of similar aspects that can be tackled together. Both countries belong to the same geographical area and we share a common history. There are also political and security reasons to be considered: in Lebanon and Jordan people are allowed to circulate without particular restrictions contrary, unfortunately, to other countries of the region.

What made you look at museums as a focal point for your activities?

Museums are important as a symbol – they mean history, art, culture in general – and in real terms, as they can collect in a same place a wide range of cultural heritage objects – sculptures, paintings, etc. – from all around the country, whether in Jordan or Lebanon. They are places with enormous potentialities to be exploited in order to draw people to cultural heritage and encourage them to learn more about it. We decided to launch our project at the National Museum in Beirut to give the opportunity, in particular to youths from rural areas, to visit a museum for the first time and see and try to understand what it looks like. Our museums are not really attractive in terms of presentation and interpretation and they do not have interactive services such as you can find in other museums in the world. Through our project, we want to contribute to their transformation, aesthetically, but also in terms of what they can provide as centres of learning, and as dynamic venues where educational and cultural activities are performed and where people and youth are eager to go and visit”. Learning towers, interactive games and activities, and exhibitions of multimedia projects will populate the national museums by the end of the project. Besides all that, an educational toolkit will be developed and introduced to teachers in Lebanon and Jordan to help them prepare organising cultural heritage activities related to food, handicraft, performing arts and visits to natural and archaeological sites in the countries.

Our national museums could eventually play an important role in the success of the overall process of awareness, education and appropriation of cultural heritage by youth and populations put in place by the project. It will be a pilot for similar initiatives in the region, notably Bahrain, Egypt, Qatar, and Syria”.

Prepared by: Giuliano Salis

For more information about the project:
http://www.euromedheritage.net/contents/le/800906_en.pdf
Civil society as participant and actor: the Centre for Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP), located in Bethlehem, Palestine, is a non-profit organisation working in the field of cultural heritage development for the Bethlehem Governorate under the umbrella of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities. Founded in April 2001, the CCHP started a process of cultural heritage preservation based on scientific study; training and development of its team, architects and craftsmen; improved management of projects; research related to both tangible and intangible heritage; participation in regional and international conferences related to cultural heritage preservation and development; and increased community participation. It was a pioneer in developing a programme of public awareness for mobilising civil society in the region.

An interview with Christene Dabdoub Nasser, former Director of CCHP.

Were you engaged in activities related to mobilising civil society in Bethlehem?

Indeed I was. The CCHP, which I co-founded and of which I was Director before I came to Brussels, is involved in urban rehabilitation projects, conservation and adaptive reuse of buildings, research, and public awareness. I designed the strategy for a public awareness campaign, mostly targeting the local population of the Bethlehem Governorate, and more particularly decision makers, and women and children. We have developed a tradition of a strong civil society in Palestine, and given the difficult circumstances in which the population has been living for decades, this has been, in more than one way, a life-saving device. And yet, the public still needs guidance, a lot of it, because in parallel, we have witnessed remarkable erosion in civic sense. CCHP, which is one of the few organisations working in the field of cultural heritage preservation, was the first to develop and systematically implement a public awareness campaign related to cultural heritage development.

What did this campaign involve?

In fact it is still ongoing and evolving. Awareness activities have become an integral part of all urban rehabilitation and conservation projects undertaken by CCHP, and with time, it has developed experience in the field, savvy in prioritising activities, and credibility with both specialised actors and decision-makers, and the general public. However, I have to add here that awareness is a rather complex concept, and it involves a challenging process that needs a whole generation before one can start seeing concrete results, if any! It also needs a sort of tracking
process, with scientific surveys, and other monitoring tools that CCHP cannot afford. Still, one can do things, and achieve successes. One of the basic principles CCHP tried to apply was to use every opportunity, however small, to implement awareness activities and bring visibility of its projects to the public eye. Projects involved neighbourhood meetings before, during and after rehabilitation works were completed; guided school visits and awareness activities in schools; voluntary activities, such as planting a garden after a building has been restored; inaugural ceremonies... but we also organised drawing competitions for children of various ages, exhibitions, games, tourism trips, outdoor festivals, and these activities always appeared in the national newspapers and on local television. It is easier to engage media attention in a small place such as Bethlehem. One of the biggest attractions was an exhibition we organised through Mediterranean Voices, a Euromed Heritage 2 project, entitled Shared Spaces in Times of Crises. Among other things, it involved outputs based on interviews with local people, an artistic display of private family photos, and a short film. Designing and implementing this exhibition was quite an adventure, and the whole town came!

Can you tell us of a specific example or examples of activities?

We have managed to apply a formula, which linked conservation work to social development in a most practical and effective way, and it became quite a successful programme. This programme involved the restoration of abandoned buildings of some architectural value, located in the cities or the villages, which were eventually put to the use of an organisation or institution that needed a place of operation. This of course involved negotiations with the owners, who, in return for the restoration work, were willing to relinquish the building to the beneficiary organisation for a period of seven to ten years without charging them rent. These negotiations were sealed with legal contracts. At the beginning we had to struggle to get this programme off the ground, because it was very daring, but we eventually had more demand than we could meet. We managed to reclaim many abandoned buildings that risked demolition while helping a number of civil society organisations operate in decent quarters. These buildings now house clinics, women's centres, children and youth centres, a children's library, schools... And for every building that was restored in the cities or villages, we organised a whole range of activities like the ones I have just mentioned; and for every inauguration we had a public event, and the Mayors came, and the press people and TV crews. It was a real feast. I cannot think of a better way to instil awareness!

Do you think that these measures had an impact, over and above the concrete development aspect?

Yes they had, and at many levels. We have managed to reclaim some twenty buildings, and we have managed to provide decent quarters for an equal number of civil society organisations while relieving them of the burden of paying rent. (And the work is ongoing.) We can also figure out concretely the large number of beneficiaries these organisations serve. Through the rehabilitation works, we have contributed substantially to job creation and to stimulating local production in terms of building materials, within each locality. These successes are also measurable and the CCHP has facts and figures to substantiate them. How much difference we have made in public perceptions of the value of cultural heritage, of the importance of respecting it, and the need to preserve it and maintain it, is more difficult to measure. And yet you can go to Battir, or Bet Fajjar or Bethlehem at any time, and you will see how the abandoned buildings we have restored have become hubs of all sorts of activities. But one thing remains to be said: this programme remains precarious because it is funded by foreign government agencies, and mostly by Sida, the Swedish Agency for Development, who has been the biggest supporter of cultural heritage development projects in Palestine since the early nineties. If this funding stops, I am not sure whether the private sector can step in as a contributor to this process. Given the present economic and political situation, I doubt that it can.

From your present perspective, what changes would you introduce to improve this experience?

There is always something to learn at many levels, it is a never-ending process. Looking at our EH 4 projects, and comparing them with what CCHP has been doing, I was pleasantly surprised to find out that, in comparison, CCHP is doing very well, in terms of technical training to local labourers but also in terms of awareness and mobilising public participation. Of course every country, every community even, has its own specificity, and in the case of Bethlehem, the conflict situation is not to be underestimated, but I also believe that CCHP’s experience can be a model for many communities in the region. Having said that, I also admit there is still room for CCHP to establish wider partnerships beyond the institutions that are directly involved in the projects. Of course this means more resources, both human and financial, more hard work, and sustained commitment. Also, and I have already mentioned it, and it is true for any public awareness programme, there is dire need to measure the impact of a public campaign scientifically through surveys and other monitoring tools over a long stretch. Had we had this luxury earlier on, we would have reduced our margins of “trial and error”.

For more about CCHP, please visit: www.cchp.ps

1. CCHP’s area of operation is the Bethlehem Governorate, which includes the three main cities of Bethlehem, Bet Jala and Bet Sahour, and the villages to the south.
2. Battir and Bet Fajjar are villages to the south of Bethlehem.
The management of heritage to the service of the community: how does the protection of heritage contribute to the local economy?

By George S. Zouain, RMSU Project Manager

Not long ago, cultural heritage was exclusively the concern of science, and the study of history and memory, and its protection and understanding were limited to specialists. It was visited by a very few well-informed and fortunate aficionados, and its protection was accomplished for the sake of science and the nation. Since then, the tide has turned and the role of civil society and populations is increasingly recognised as an integral part of conservation and heritage management.

The new interpretation of heritage as a rich asset brings forth its most recognised function, which has to do with its direct use, especially where tourism is concerned. As guarantor of beauty and dreams, its presence contributes to increasing the number of tourists, but their use of it remains rather limited and rarely sufficient to stimulate the local economy. For a more effective impact of heritage tourism on the local economy, certain conditions must be met, and these have to do with the services, supply of goods, diverse offers in control of the resulting economic transactions: labour and supply of contractual services, supply of goods, diverse offers indigenous to the community – these are factors that bind the heritage and its good management to the local population, bringing them forth into a virtuous circle that is mutually beneficial to them. We can cite as an example, among others in Euromed Heritage 4, Athena project, whose objectives are to minimise the physical degradation of ancient theatres and the negative cultural and socio-economic impacts they could have, by endorsing proper management plans, and through the promotion and improvement of these sites to increase their importance for tourists. It also aims to support the revival of these old theatres as part of a wider archaeological site or urban context, and to establish an overall strategy for dealing with tangible and intangible heritage. Capacity-building activities and the mobilisation of local communities will also be considered in order to maximize the project’s impact.

In conclusion, to once again emphasize the importance of the economic relationship between heritage and the civilian population, we should recall that there are two levels of interaction:

- through its direct use, heritage creates jobs, consumes products, undertakes investments for its conservation and contributes to the wealth of contracted businesses.
- through its existence, heritage contributes to the local economy: it improves the value of surrounding land, it stimulates those services related to tourism, and induces better quality of local production while highlighting it for its value.

The consequence to these functions is that there may be perverse effects that reduce the value of this heritage or even destroy it; these include over-use due to high accessibility and availability or too high a visibility due to signage, audiovisual products and other such tools. The resulting loss of identity could bring in its wake a diminishing of the attractiveness of the heritage in question, which will affect the local economy and interfere with the virtuous circle of positive relationships, which could be disastrous. It is therefore essential that this relationship between heritage and the local population is managed in a way that would preserve the quality of both the heritage and tourism offers.
These pictures are an array of the best images collected within the Euromed Heritage programme to show the richness of the Mediterranean cultural heritage. In the coming months the RMSU will launch a Photography Award contributing to awareness-raising of cultural heritage in the region. The awarded photos will be published on this section as well as on the EH 4 website Photo Gallery: [http://www.euromedheritage.net/intern.cfm?lng=en&menuID=88](http://www.euromedheritage.net/intern.cfm?lng=en&menuID=88)
Our selected quotation

“I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but inform their discretion”.

Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), author of the Declaration of Independence and third President of the United States, was the country’s greatest champion of representative democracy and the rights of man.

What’s on

International Architectural Competition for the rehabilitation and urban development of Al Makina and Place Lalla Yeddouna – Fez 2010

The International Architectural Competition is part of the Artisan- Fez Medina project, which is implemented by the City of Fez, the Secretary of State in charge of Crafts, the APP, and ADER-Fès. The aim of the competition is to develop an urban plan with best solutions in terms of architecture, environment and rehabilitation techniques of the sites Al Makina and Lalla Yeddouna. It is open to architects and is scheduled as follows: January 2010: launch of the competition. Mid-May 2010: publication of a short-list of seven architects. October 2010: announcement of the winner and attribution of awards. For more information and registration: http://www.competitiondesign-fes.com/

Reader’s corner

Du calame à l’ordinateur – L’évolution graphique de l’écriture arabe, Stefan F. Moginet Atelier Perrousseaux, 2009

This book, conceived in the framework of Manumed II – of manuscripts and men –, is rich in illustrated examples and presents very clearly the evolution of Arabic handwriting styles. It focuses more particularly on materials used for support and on writing tools, and on the complex compatibility between the Arabic script and the printing press first, and IT technologies later. “Du calame à l’ordinateur” is addressed not only to those who are keen to discover the extraordinary history of writings, but also to graphic designers, calligraphers and plastic artists. It opens to them possibilities for a more judicious use of existing styles and for the creation of new logotypes and fonts.