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Experiences in Public Archaeology in Italy: a disciplinary field in the process of being defined

Doświadczenia archeologii publicznej we Włoszech: dziedzina dyscypliny w trakcie definiowania

Abstract

As part of shared research programmes of the Universities of Florence and Krakow between archaeology and medieval architecture, this essay aims to offer an illustrated overview of themes and methodological procedures in the field of public archaeology, derived from activities carried out by the Chair of Medieval Archaeology of the University of Florence in Italy and in the Near East over the last two decades. These same activities are also examples of the first (2006) activities in Italy (and among the first in continental Europe) of the scientific and academic foundation of this specific field given by the British School of the UCL. The Italian-Polish collaboration particularly includes projects the University is working on with the PAN (in Warsaw/IAEO, Wroclaw, Gdansk), the Jagiellonian University of Krakow and the CNR-ITABC in Rome.

Keywords: public archaeology, Italy, Middle Ages, history, light archaeology, Florence, Jordan

Streszczenie

Artykuł powstał jako rezultat wspólnych programów badawczych Uniwersytetu we Florencji i Politechniki Krakowskiej z pogranicza archeologii i architektury średniowiecznej. Tekst ma na celu przedstawienie ilustrowanego przeglądu tematów i procedur metodologicznych z zakresu archeologii publicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: archeologia publiczna, Włochy, średniowiecze, historia, archeologia światła, Florencja, Jordania

1. This paper includes some observations filtered through field experiences conducted by the Chair I occupy in Florence. The speech given at the 2017 seminar (see n*) can also be understood as an operation of 'public archaeology'. This, despite appearances, is already a problem: how do we define an approach that, before being archaeological, represents a cultural (and also civil) choice? Especially since it is true that, after all, the constitution of this disciplinary field is recent[1] and of course has had a scientific and more widely cultural 'incubation' almost exclusively in the – glorious, as well as perhaps questionable in some cases – range of Anglo-Saxon empiricism[2]; but above all, this field has had an intense, complex and even 'magmatic' diffusion in many parts of Europe[3], which only occurred in the last decade, composing a dynamic, disorderly, and promising picture[4]. This is therefore an 'element' as articulated as it is in rapid and diverse evolution; indeed, it represents a peculiar new scientific dimension of archaeology, which is dynamically changing its objectives, methods and approaches, precisely due to contributions coming from outside its place of origin[5]. This is a 'movement' and practice that involves not only cultural environments but also, for example, the world of associationism, of administration and of Heritage policy itself.

In other words, the basic definitions of public archaeology remain valid, but they are enriched with new content derived from subsequent experiences (some of which may lead to the creation of new, experimental parameters). As always, cultural and even methodological praxis precedes the normalisation/systematization of a new disciplinary sector. However, the fact remains that Public Archeology is basically the updating of a constitutive connotation of archaeological science. We could start from the extremely concise definition written on the back cover of the first issue of the series dedicated to this field, published in Florence in 2011: "Public Archaeology as the actualization of the original vocation of the Discipline to expend in its own times and as a national interpretation of recent experiences among Anglo-Saxons, between economics, governance, communication, identity of archaeological Cultural Heritage and social communities. Applications of archaeological research as a share of 'sustainable' projects with different actors, public and private, of civil society and as support to pure research. Public Archaeology as a contribution to the repositioning of academic research in this sector in today's troubled society and making proposals to overcome it with a view to recomposition of all scientific knowledge"[6].

As previously mentioned – but this is a point often underestimated in favour of indiscriminating 'innovation' – this sector represents an update of an 'originary feature' of the discipline: it is an archaeological approach (of a scientific nature) which involves different areas of society; in short:

- an original and yet still 'new' field of archaeological science[7], which consists of, if not just a simple update, certainly a reinterpretation and cultural recontextualization in these difficult times (difficult for the archaeological Heritage as well) – e.g. with a specific attention to the socio-economic environment – especially with regard to the founding of

Archeology in between neoclassicism and revolution[8]; but it is enough to visit Wilanow and its collections;

- to direct social (or more simply civil) activities towards specific, well-established areas of interest: social 'governance', widespread and targeted communication, identity of communities, but also target audience; in fact, recent experience – including our own experience – indicates that the key is the interaction between these fields, even if operations need to take into account a variety of factors and parameters, based on the characteristics of actual cases we have dealt with;
- implementing strategies to share with society players a sustainable way of project creation (i.e. combining socio-cultural and economic impact), based on the selection of scientific research 'products', in terms of 'applied research';
- to focus pursued activities on the identification and interactive analysis of the 'publics'[9], going beyond the simple management of cultural heritage and opening up to all the problems relating to the bond between 'archaeology' and 'public'[10], intended both as State[11] and society[12].

Archaeology, therefore, as a growth factor[13], which produces – through both product innovation and process innovation – profitability or services for the communities of reference, creating a strong connective tissue between archaeological research and society[14]; a relationship between preservation and management, which contributes to redefine the role of the archaeologist himself. There is, however, another series of considerations to be made, from a different point of view:

- to develop, at the same time, new professional skills in the field, focused on a different and original interpretation of interdisciplinarity in which, for example, the specific features of economic, social and territorial areas integrate and give depth to the archaeological programme, aligning it with the different expressions and cultures of the environmental and regional context in which it operates;
- to contribute to supporting research itself, according to a so-to-speak 'circular' logic; in short, it is a projectuality for civil services based on selected 'products' of research, able to produce income which, in turn, can be invested in research itself, both directly (to bear the costs) and indirectly (supporting the researchers themselves);
- proactively and specifically responding to the current crisis: giving a practical contribution towards restoring growth by activating a field (archaeological heritage) with a high potential; this potentialis mostly still unexpressed due to the lack of an organic plan. This is precisely the field public archaeology intends to enhance[15];
- to contribute to a repositioning of the role of Academia itself and of research in the Humanities (with the archaeological peculiarity of this new frontier in scientific fields[16]); this with the object ofreuniting knowledge and overcoming specialization, which is reinterpreted in a holistic way in order to be innovatively and cohesively repurposed towards the current changing society.

I would like to conclude these scattered notes on the PA theme by stressing that all of this should be understood as the development of a historicist approach to Archeology in particular (or at least in strict logical and cultural coherence).

I would like to do so in the words of two great 20th century historians. Benedetto Croce: "The practical need, which is at the bottom of every historical judgement, gives every history the character of 'contemporary history', because, as chronologically remote or extremely remote as the facts that enter it may seem, history is, in fact, always referred to the need and to the present situation, in which those facts propagate their vibrations (...) every true history is contemporary history"[17]; and Karol Modzelewski[18]: "Historians study past eras, but they are sons of their time. This antinomy cannot be escaped, it is inherent to our profession (...). The work of the historian, like that of any other researcher, begins when questions are asked. (...) The results of the research depend to a large extent on the questions to be answered. And the way questions about the past are formulated depends on how the historian judges and understands his era".

2. With regard to what has just been noted, I would like to make a brief premise, in order to justify the choice to present here two examples, albeit briefly, of the application of the principles of public archaeology to field research. These are examples of seeking a relation between different forms of social utility, in the interest of the communities that own the archaeological Heritage that is the object of research. The first European experiences outside the Anglo-Saxon world that explicitly referred to this disciplinary field were probably carried out in Italy (1997–2005), particularly by our Florentine Chair of Medieval Archaeology[19] (it is interesting to note that the Medieval field, even at a national level, was the main responsible for the launch of this new approach: Bonacchi[20], Vannini et al.[21]). An effective picture of the conditions and methods through which a conscious public use of archaeology was created and developed in Italy can be gathered from the works – with both theoretical and practical contributions to specific cases, which outline a situation in rapid evolution – presented at two events in Florence: a workshop held in 2010 marking the first collective reflection on the subject (albeit limited to the Tuscan context[22]), based on new experiences starting at the time and carried on subsequently, which I will discuss later; and especially the first national Congress dedicated to this field in 2012, which saw a large participation of operators (not only academics) and people interested in the sector[23] (Ill. 1).

Activities have particularly intensified in the course of subsequent years; there have been theoretical activities, or exchanges of experiences[24], as well as different kind of practices: from the radical reinterpretation of traditional tools such as museums[25], to forms of storytelling through 'philological' reconstructions in the field, shared – in codified and non-traditional forms – with local communities[26] (Ill. 2).

An important step in the ongoing process of structuring AP in Italy[27] was therefore the approval (2016) of the first project dedicated entirely to AP (ministerial funding PRIN):

'*Archeologia al Futuro*. Theory and Practice of Public Archaeology for Knowledge, Presevation and Valorisation, Participation, Social Cohesion and Sustainable Development', which brings together nine academic sites distributed throughout Italy, coordinated by Giuliano Volpe (Un. di Foggia)[28].

From this context I propose here, briefly, two operational examples (not models yet) of PA project actions contained within scientific research programs that have a historical perspective. They are intentionally very different in terms of objectives, procedures and results, but they share the same territorial approach both in terms of archaeological research as well as regarding the resulting 'public' aspect: a path, therefore, which, on a methodological level, can be described as 'from light archaeology[29] to public archaeology' (Ill. 3); in other words, the theoretical basis of the overall programme should not admit any disruption between the two dedicated approaches and will have its focus on a targeted selection of archaeological results, which will represent the source of public sharing operations, both *in progress* and *ex post*.

The two cases briefly presented here respectively refer to: the first one to the 'building' an instrument, to aid the governance of a territory in Tuscany, which derives from a project dedicated to the study of the material structures of a feudal territorial *Signoria* (the Aldobrandeschi counts): the *Building Atlas of medieval Amiata* (Ill. 4); the second to an action aimed at contributing to the growth (not only under an economic point of view) of an area of southern Jordan: the European project *Liaisons for Growth* (Italy, Jordan, Armenia), CIUDAD--ENPI of the Archaeological Mission of the Florentine University '*Petra medievale*' (Ill. 5).

a) Atlas for medieval building (southern inland Tuscany)

This tool can be programmed within complex territorial research that has an interdisciplinary approach, with a generally diachronic perspective; this is done within the view of 'global archaeology', using the tools of 'light' archaeology (Ill. 6).

An appropriately targeted selection of the results of stratigraphic surveys on buildings is the starting point to build an instrument, equipped with technical, data recording devices, to manage the Heritage of the historical landscape; this management needs to be specifically calibrated on the needs of architectural, urban and territorial protection, starting from understanding the cultural specificity of the land as research has been able to define it (Ill. 7). To summarize, the objectives and key steps are the following:

- systematic documentation of all medieval arising buildings present in the investigated area, revealed by research based on the land and essentially through 'light' procedures, such as stratigraphic analysis of buildings, which aims to study the long-term logic behind settlement and maintenance structures (residential, productive, military) of feudal aristocracies; particularly the study focused on the Aldobrandeschi counts, whose *Signoria* (Lordship) was extended to most of southern Tuscany, between Amiata and Maremma[30];

- creation of a specific filing system that can be used for land-use plans, providing technical offices, project managers and restorers of the area (Amiata mountain) with synthetic, specific and clear indications suited for non-archaeologists as well, on building technologies and the medieval building materials of the territory; this includes in-depth studies on restoration practices and materials that guarantee durability and reversibility of the works, together with the possibility of clearly reading the material 'biography' of buildings;

- development of an 'open source' and multi-platform GIS system for the management and integrated analysis of technical cartography (cadastral, CTR, structural plans, etc.) and thematic maps of archaeological contents.

The overall result therefore consists in increasing the ability of local administration to govern territorial Cultural Heritage (in this case, postclassical archaeological structures); this is achieved through the creation of a 'tool' capable of providing in real time (archaeomatic update with research) essential informations in order to not only make technical, legal choices (building permits, for example) but also create cultural policy (what to preserve, when and how to preserve it, along with guidelines and limits of use).

b) Territorial development EU project (*'Liaisons for Growth'* Shawbak-Petra)

For the archaeological history of a 'Mediterranean' region. During the 30 years of investigations conducted by the Mission of the University of Florence ('*Medieval' Petra. Archaeology of the settlements of the Crusader-Ayyubid Transjordan*), it was possible to suggest new models of interpretation based on archaeological documentation, which led to the historical re-reading of a crucial area of the eastern Mediterranean[31]. The material *caractères originaux* of the occupation of the first Crusade in Transjordan can be captured through archaeological research (where a good stratigraphic analysis is possible): the new settlement situation which arose after the day of Hattin (1187), when the entire Transjordan was abandoned. Through a strategic use of light archaeology conducted on a territorial basis, the excavation can have objectives on a different territorial scale and with variable intensity[32], which can be classified as 'stratigraphic observatories': the castle of Wu'ayra, in relation to Petra; the monumental site of Shawbak, for the poleogenetic function triggered by the reactivation of the border in the region (see *infra*).

To summarize, the medieval story of southern Transjordan that has emerged from the research to which the public archaeology programme (2005) was dedicated, can be schematically presented as follows (Ill. 8):

- the discovery of the incredible, 'classical' *incastellamento* of the Petra valley built by the Baldwin's Crusaders, and already planned a few months after the capture of Jerusalem (1100–1118);

- a key element towards the understanding of a historical territorial 'structure' re--emerged after five centuries: the frontier rooted in the region between Petra and Aqaba,

in accord with new local relations between Crusaders, Ayyubids and the first Mameluks. More widely, the *Signoria* of Transjordan and its material structures as an 'observatory' on the Crusader-Muslim frontier of the Holy Land;

• the unsuspected role of one of the most extraordinary 'medieval' archaeological areas in the eastern Mediterranean, the *incastellato* site of Shawbak, the true backbone of a medieval tradition that started in that region (Ill. 9);

• the origins of a true piece of identity, well documented by material sources; the entire region belonging to a common Mediterranean culture, between the 12–14th centuries and beyond.

The political, institutional, military and economic features of the 'new' frontier are, in fact, deeply different from those of the ancient *limes arabicus*, a military frontier that depended on far urban centres. In the aristocratic system imported from Europe in the 12th century, due to the structural weakness of the central power, some castles can become real 'rural capitals', at the centre of territorial systems[33] essentially maintained through on local, human and material resources: this causes the inception of long-term processes, creating in dependence, and perhaps sub-regional, identity determination processes.

After the discovery of a Petra *incastellata* by the Crusaders (Ill. 10), the archaeological--monumental area of Shawbak, 'capital' castle – Royal at first, and later on of the *Signoria* of Transjordan – has therefore become a focal point of research. Surprisingly, Shawbak is revealing itself more and more as the true fulcrum of the new 'imperial' Islamic system in the region after the Crusade season (Ill. 11).

In fact, one of the main results of the Mission is having been able to document the Ayyubid foundation (probably started by Saladin himself) of a capital city of the region, transforming the entire site and in particular the old Crusader castle; a city equipped with all the infrastructures (political, economic, residential, military) in terms of absolute monumentality[34] (Ill. 12).

Shawbak – in a strategically dominant and tactically impregnable position – ensured the control of the springs and fertile pre-desert soils over a narrow strip about thirty kilometres wide and bordered by two deserts: a border that saw the alternation of 'full periods' (late Antiquity[35] and late Middle Ages) and 'empty periods' (the 7–11th centuries). The region of Shawbak and Petra, for a long time almost a 'no-man's land' between Egypt and Syria, regains a role as 'medieval frontier' and its identity is no longer lost (Ill. 13).

For centuries, the stratigraphies of Shawbak bring to light the very destiny of an entire region between Kerak and the Red Sea, sometimes, it seems, forgotten by history[36]. In this region Shawbak, between the 12th and 14th centuries, under a long-term, 'structural' perspective, can be considered the medieval heir of Petra after centuries. Subsequently, all memory of this city was lost: a possible paradigm of a wider crisis of Arabic Islam, still present today. And yet, the story of Southern Transjordan and the Crusader's *Mons Regalis* (Ill. 14), later the Islamic 'city' of Shawbak, can be recognized as one of the roots of the current regional identity.

The public archaeology program. Picking up the thread of this rediscovered medieval tradition, which precisely begins in what can be defined as the 'Crusader-Ayyubid' period, a program of public archaeology has been established in order to include the site – radically reinterpreted – in the management of its full contemporaneity (Ill. 15).

The program, divided into several levels of activities, aimed at arranging its different areas of interest in a series. In short, the sectors that needed to interact were two: the 'external' one, entrusted to a choice in terms of 'communication', played on a stage of international relevance such as the European one of the Medici Royal Palace in Florence; the 'internal' one, focused on programs aimed at contributing to the growth of local communities and producing services for international tourism. In this way, the creation and (crucial) 'cultivation' of an integrated multi-level network of agreements with local and central, sectorial (administrative, cultural, NGO[37]) authorities has begun; the activity has therefore focused also on developing integrated and interconnected project tools: tourism master plans, on-field actions agreed upon by the regional authorities and the Unesco site of Petra, the inclusion of local structures and organizations, diversified communication programmes, etc. All this with two conditions in mind, which also represent the strategic goals: to give precedence to identity values, especially of the local communities, as highlighted by the research; and to focus only on creating the conditions for the development not only of activities but especially of independent initiatives (the opposite of the so-called 'cathedrals in the desert': once the funding is finished and the external 'experts' leave, everything stops). We have to say, this is what is happening.

The great international exhibition held in Florence in 2009 has certainly had a strategic function, from a communication point of view: it was the first exhibition in Italy to be drawn up according to the criteria of public archaeology (Ill. 16)[38].

The aim was to create an exhibition path that would introduce the historical--archaeological and, to some extent, methodological contents, in such a way as to have a strong impact on the visitor on a cognitive and emotional level; the visitor was thus encouraged to actively participate in his or her own process of creating meanings (through open questions, interactive experiences, possibility for the public to leave their feedback)[39]. Thus creating a space for social interaction – within a large and heterogeneous audience – that promotes, among other things, the awareness of the existence of a Mediterranean identity, alongside others, common to the West and the Near East (Ill. 17).

The results (to this day the outcomes are still completely unpredictable, but they testify to the vitality of such an approach[40]) are objectively consistent and encouraging. In short, on the two 'fronts': in Jordan, doubling and renewal of the old campsite; opening of 2 hotels (the first in Shawbak since the Middle Ages...); contracts in the cultural sector from 2 to 48; an increase in tourism, including local, of 24% (2010–2011, after the exhibition in Florence); the implementation of a master plan, not only for tourism (Ill. 18); in Italy, the results of the exhibition: over 200,000 visitors during the 3 months when the exhibition was open;

balance sheet: cost, € 650M – return, € 2.7M, with an approximation of 4%, with an input into the city's economic system 430% higher than the investment[41] (Ill. 19).

Other induced consequences must also be considered among the results, such as the fact that the area of the old Ayyubide palace was used as a venue for public ceremonies; or that, for the first time, local families and visiting schools appeared among tourists[42] (Ill. 20).

Also and at the same time, the elements of growth observed are involving local realities; for example, the new *Montréal* hotel, while respecting international standards, also offers local dishes cooked by many local families who, thus, have a small income. There are no doubts on the source of this (the 'castle') as well as on the motivations (the research of the archaeologists): in short, a Crusader-Saladin-Shawarma chain[43] (Ill. 21).

3. In conclusion, this result highlights three aspects: the productivity of a specific and not rhetorically declared juxtaposed relationship between research and growth; the specific and fundamental role of Human sciences (not only Archeology), like the so--called 'hard' sciences[44]; the strong ability to develop the best conditions for a new inter/multidisciplinarity[45], also intended in innovative, and above all flexible, terms. And yet, the entire structure of missions[46] and the related programs of public archaeology (in such contexts potentially extremely useful, from several points of view), will need to be reconsidered (a debate is currently underway). It will suffice here to observe how the three areas involved by the EU-CIUDAD Project (Inner Tuscany, Southern Transjordan and Armenian Armavir: see *supra*), for example, were characterized by radically different premises due to the different perception and condition of context, as is natural; it was immediately evident to us that, especially in order to achieve the same kind of result (enhancing archaeological cultural heritage by involving the communities 'owning' the site), the approach had to be quite peculiar. If, in fact, in the Tuscan case it was a matter of emphasizing the individuality of the territorial Heritage that needed to be enhanced in a rich and articulated context, the problem in Jordan was making a 'medieval' Heritage complex feel like their own, when often the widespread feeling substantially was indifference, colored by a prejudice (with a precise cultural source) of 'extraneousness' (further 'confirmed' by the interest shown by equally 'foreign' Missions...); the overcoming of this prejudice was instrumental to the success achieved also in terms of a actual material development[47] (Ill. 22).

On the other hand, there was no need, in the Armenian case, to 'explain' to the local communities that the archaeological-monumental areas (churches and monasteries, among other this) represented their precious heritage, given that throughout their history, up to very recent years, they have often defended it with their own lives.

In any case, the defence of cultural heritage is also entrusted to communication, because there is no conscience without knowledge; this is how the preservation and protection of a Heritage, widespread 'like air', increasingly depends on the degree of identification of local communities with the traces left to us by the past. In the most successful cases, it has been

possible to convert the archaeological heritage from a burden (or 'risk') to a 'resource' and the financing of enhancement actions from 'institutional philanthropy' to investment, to the benefit of a plurality of social subjects (such as occurred in the cases reported here). Hence the need, on the part of archaeology, to recognize and assume a new social responsibility; the planning and management of the territory cannot ignore an organic plurality of knowledge and skills, to which archaeologists (and architects) must contribute for their part[48].

Ill. 1. The first National Congress of Public Archaeology (Firenze, Palazzo della Signoria, Sala d'arme, 2012)

Ill. 2. Archeodrome of Poggibonsi ('Ermentrude's hut') (Photo by G. Signorini)
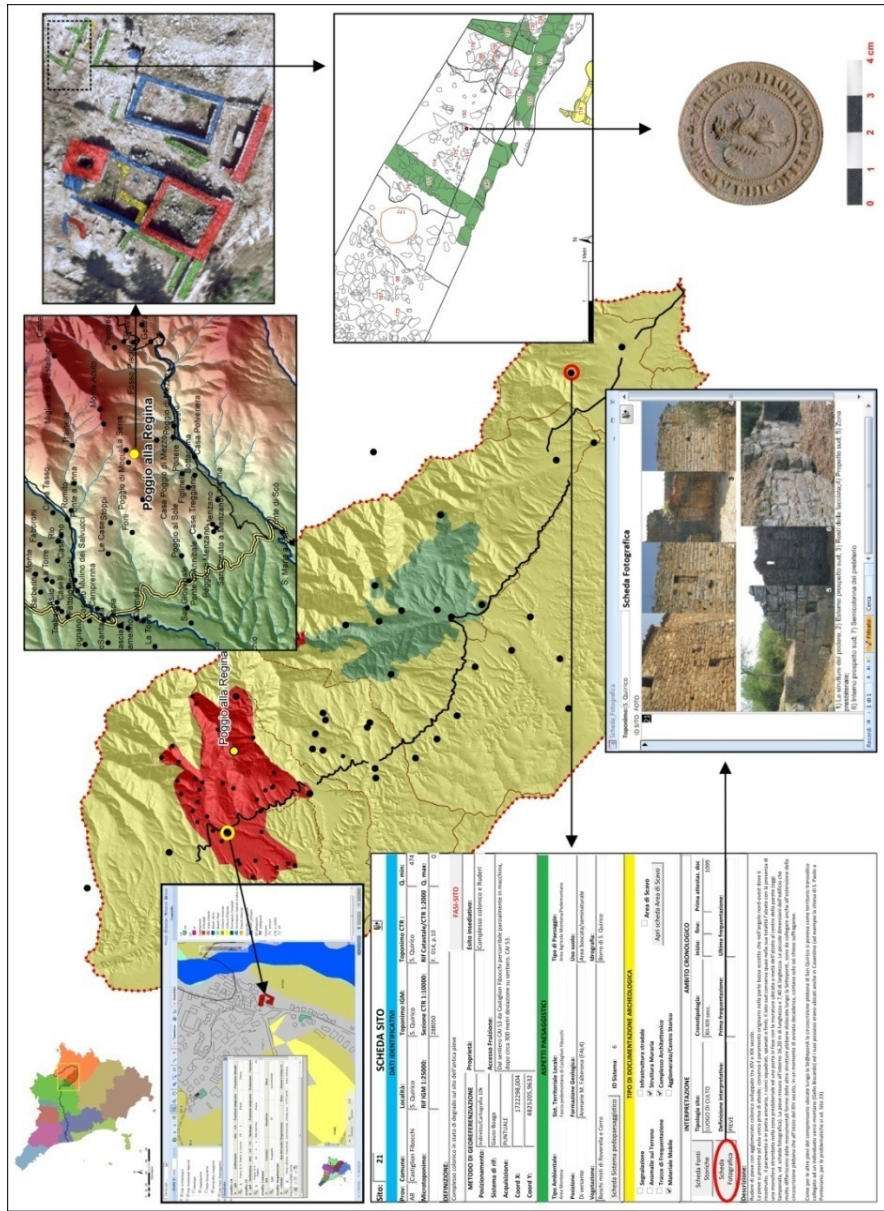
Ill. 3. Reading the territory with the methodological tools of 'light' archaeology: recomposing a diachronic syntax of the landscape context, excavations and survey with variable intensity, for a historical reading of the Pratomagno landscape and as a manageable tool within the municipal and provincial master plans, to mark/value the landscape and its components (see note)

La Ricerca
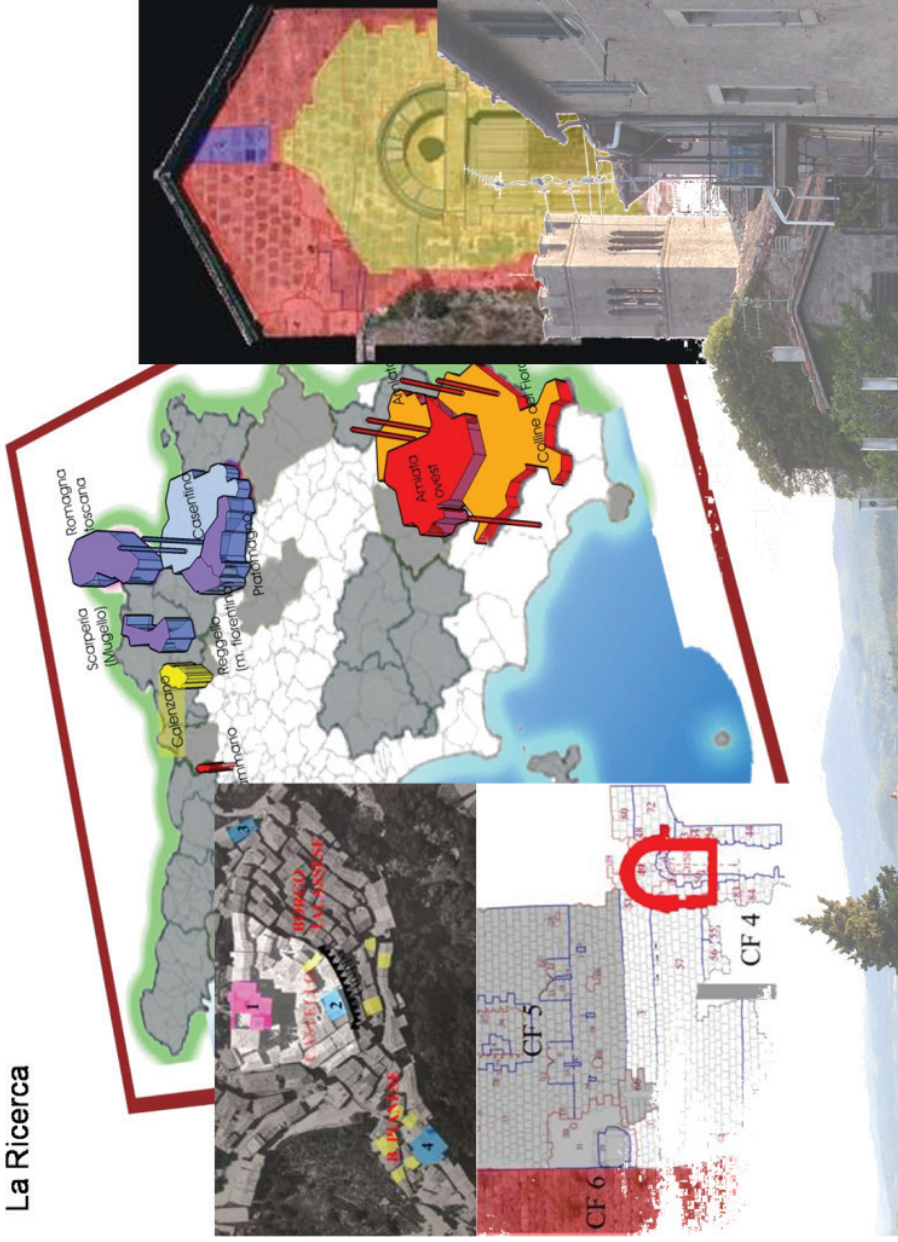
Ill. 4. The programme of 'light' archaeological investigations on settlement form and land management by the great feudal aristocracies in Tuscany, the basis for public archaeology projects for local communities (see note)

foto Anna Marx

Petra, the Mose's Valley (Wadi Musa) and the base of the Mission

Ill. 5. Wadi Musa, the *Li Vaux Moises* of the Frankish Sources: Bedouin village in 1986, now tourist 'heart' of Petra. A. exterior / B. interior of the base and car of the Mission of the University of Florence (Photo by A. Marx)

Shawbak
Data managing:
photogrammetrical 3D
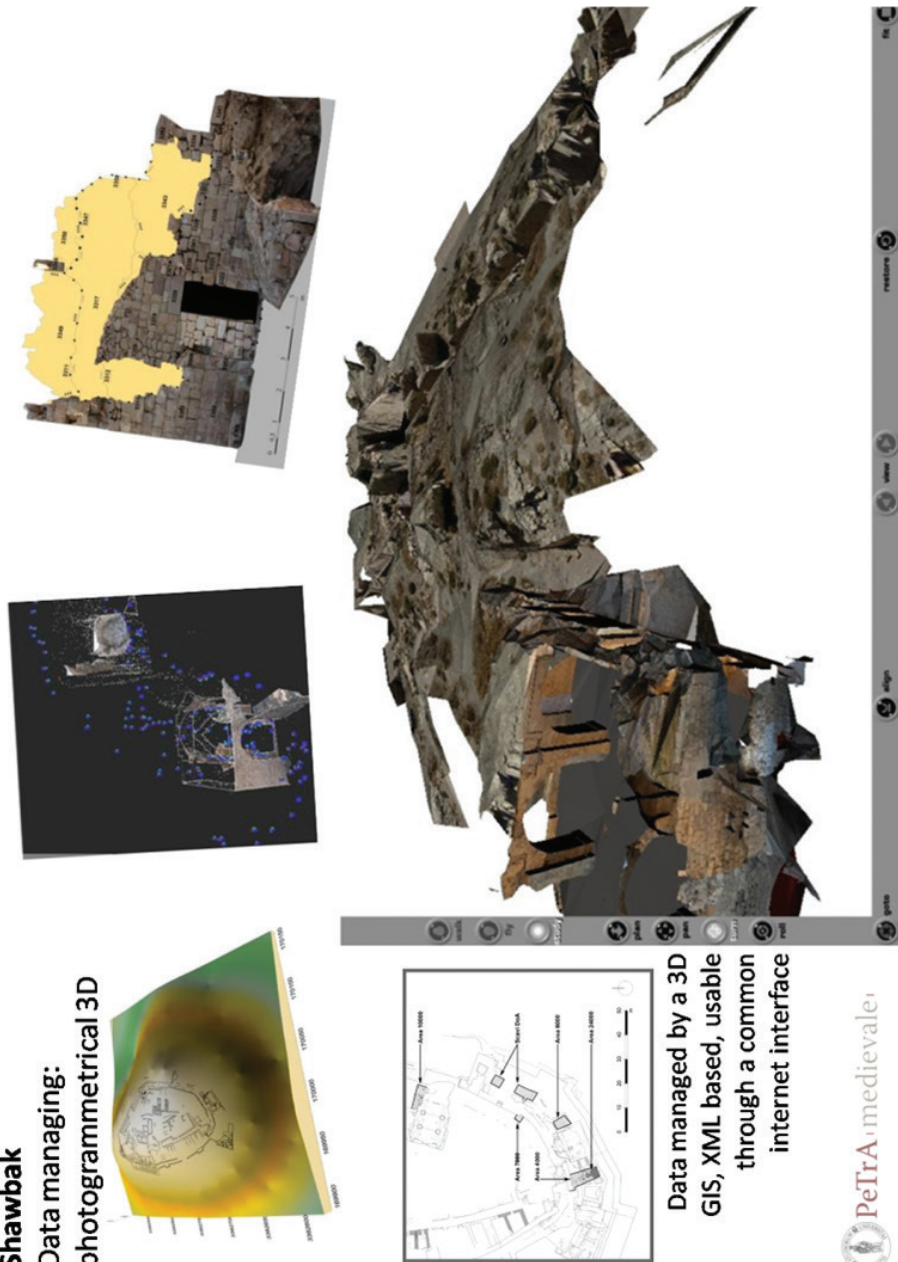
Data managed by a 3D
GIS, XML based, usable
through a common
internet interface

Ill. 6. Data management: a 3D GIS based on photogrammetry (see note)

Pubblic Archaeology in practice

2005-2008
EU Leader Plus Project
ATLAS OF MEDIEVAL BUILDING

Ill. 7. Project for an Atlas for medieval building (southern inner Tuscany): from 'light' to 'public' archaeology (see note)

Ill. 8. Rebirth of a frontier: the role of Petra, the formation of the Royal Transjordan and the making of a Lordship (1100–1142). Al-Habis, with Wu'ayra, fulcrum of the 'Petra system' (Roman-Byzantine acropolis, crusader castle) (Photo by A. Marx)

Ill. 9. Sunrise on Shawbak, on the border of the Arabic desert: 1115–1142; the success of the royal phase at the origins of the Outrejordan Lordship, the final cause of the Kingdom's collapse (Photo by M. Foli)

The Wadi Arabah's ridge and his *rift,* near Shawbak
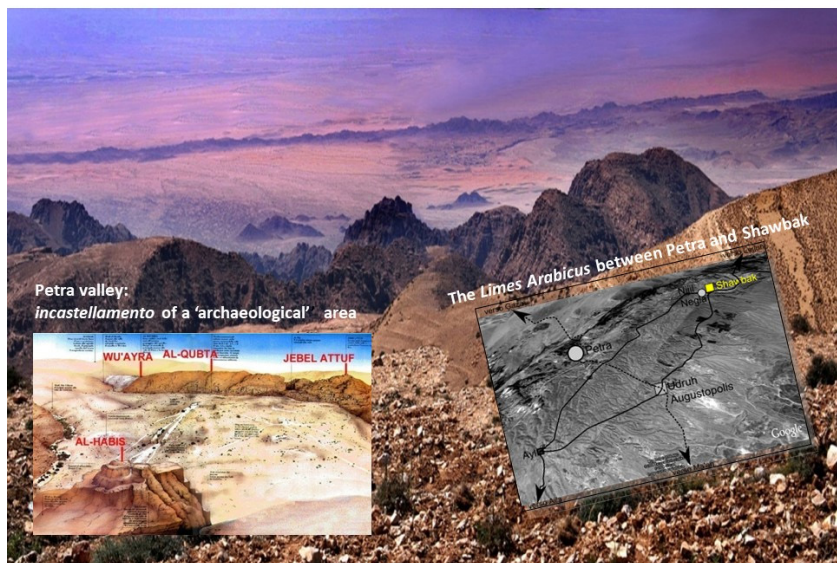
Ill. 10. The control of the pre-desert fertile belt (Photo by M. Foli). Petra: the *incastellamento* of a valley (1100–1189) (Arch. "Archeologia Viva")
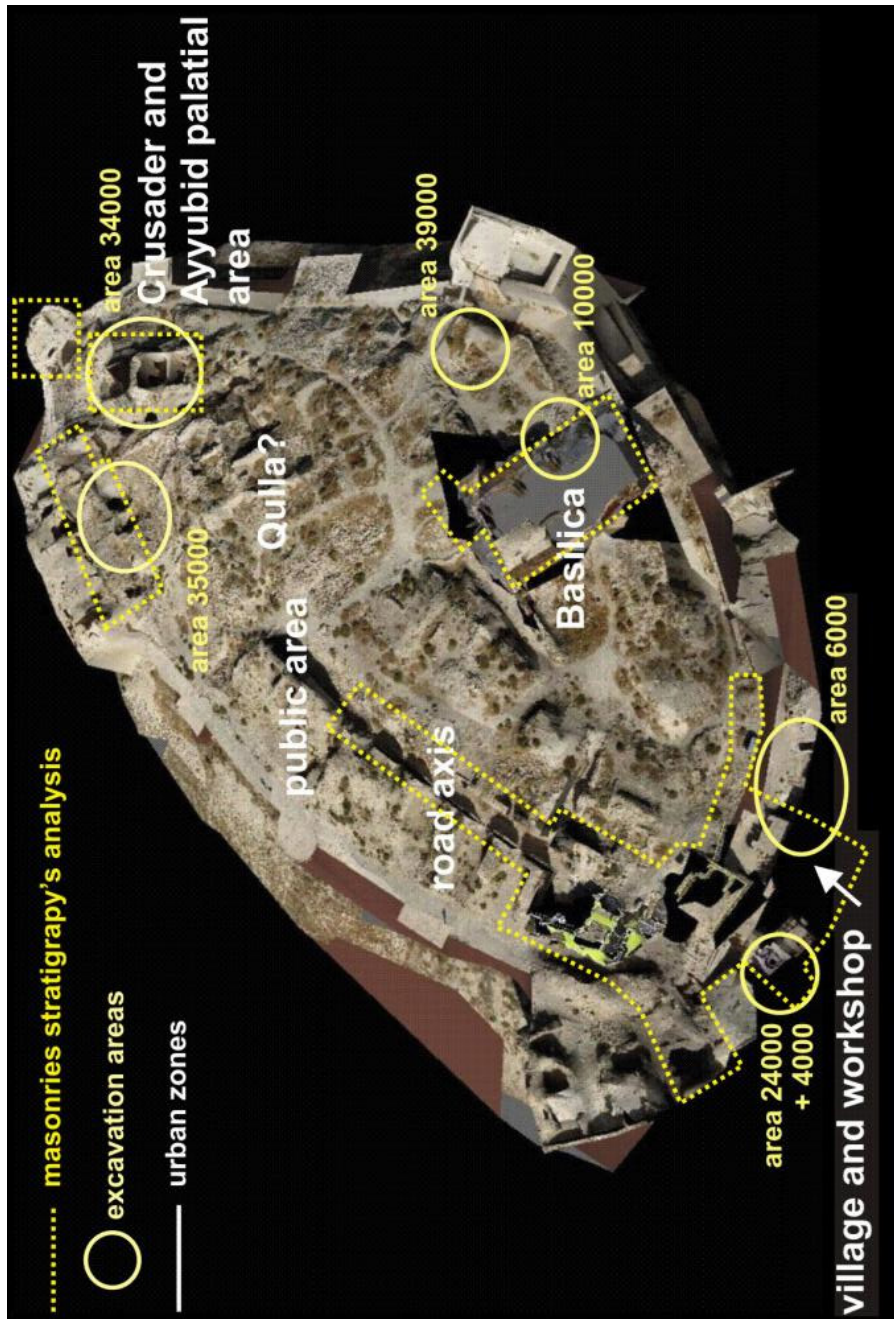
Ill. 11. Shawbak: stratigraphy of a site, reflecting a historical territory. Archaeological-monumental area and buildings with investigated areas ('light' analysis; 'open areas'); Ancient, Crusades, Ayyubids, Mamluks buildings; zoning (village/workshop, urbanistic axis, public area, Crusader-Ayyubid palatial area, basilica, *qulla* (?))

The Ayyubid Shawbak
The road axis of the urbanistic planning

Epigraphic plaque by Sultan Husam al-Din Ladjin on the public palatial building on the road axis between the fortified gate and the political centre of the citadel

Shawbak, palazzo mamelucco (fine XIII sec)

via recta from the fortified gate CF3

© aerial photographic archive for archaeology in the Middle East

Ill. 12. The topostratigraphic analysis has made possible to identify the axis of urbanistic creation by documenting the construction site of the new Islamic city in the early Ayyubid post-crusader period (with absolute archaeoseismic dating) (see note)
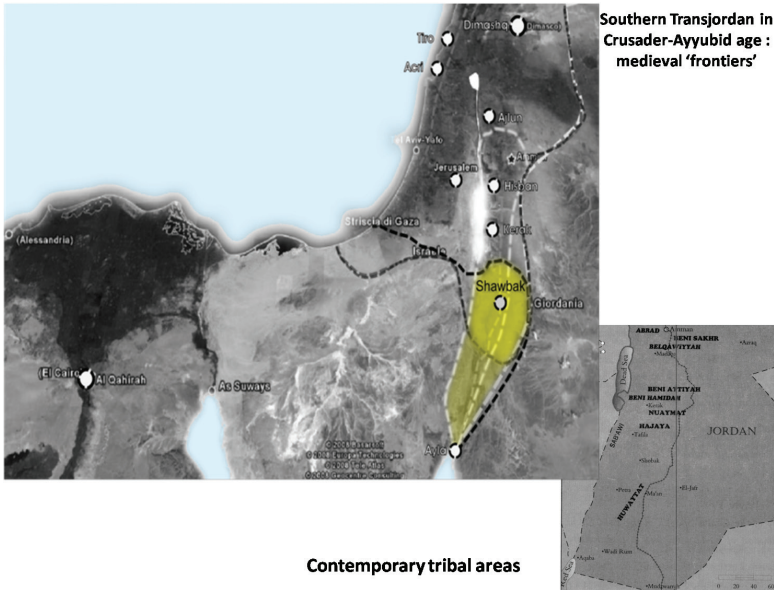
Ill. 13. The southern Transjordan in Crusader-Ayyubid age… and its 'frontiers' (see note)

Ill. 14. The Crusader castle of *Crac de Montrèal* (Shawbak) as capital of royal Transjordan: St. Mary's church, Princely palace, Chapel of the Hospital of St. John (founded in excavation, 2007) (Photo by M. Foli)

Ill. 15. European project of public archaeology *Liaisons for Growth* (Italy, Jordan, Armenia), CIUDAD-ENPI of the Archaeological Mission of the Florentine University *Petra medievale*

Communicate with families : *interactives*

Ill. 16. Exhibition *'From Petra to Shawbak. Archaeology of a frontier'* (Firenze, Pitti Palace, 2009). The first exhibition in Italy (2006–2009) drafted according to the criteria of Public Archaeology (with the High Patronage of Queen Rania Al-Abdullah of Jordan, the President of the Italian Republic and the President of the European Parliament). Creating an exhibition path that invites visitors to actively participate in their own process of constructing meanings alongside the curator (open questions, interactive experiences, possibility to leave their feedback); in this case, not a path for children but a path for families (Photos by A. Marx)

Ill. 17. *Murales* in Shawbak: Baudouin, Saladin and Crac de Montréal are back! (see note)

Ill. 18. Results of a Public Archaeology programme launched by the Mission of the University of Florence *Petra Medievale*, with the 2006 campaign which included a tourism master plan funded by the EU (ENPI)

'Da Petra a Shawbak' exhibition
Economic IMPACT on the economic system of the city

1. Visitors who came to Florence for the only purpose of visiting the exhibition **15%**

2. Visitors who have not came to Florence for the only purpose of visiting the exhibition **85%**

COSTS: € 650.000,00

Visitors studies

TOTAL VISITORS
Museum: 200000
Exhibition: 100000-130000

foreigners **47%**

Italians resident in Florence **25%**

Italians not resident in Florence **28%**

TICKETS

Tickets sold to visitors who came to Pitti to visit the exhibition (1+2)
€ 300.000

INPUT BY VISITORS

Average expenditure of visitors attracted to Florence by the exhibition (1)
€ 2.400.000

TOTAL
€ 2.700.000
(ca 4%)
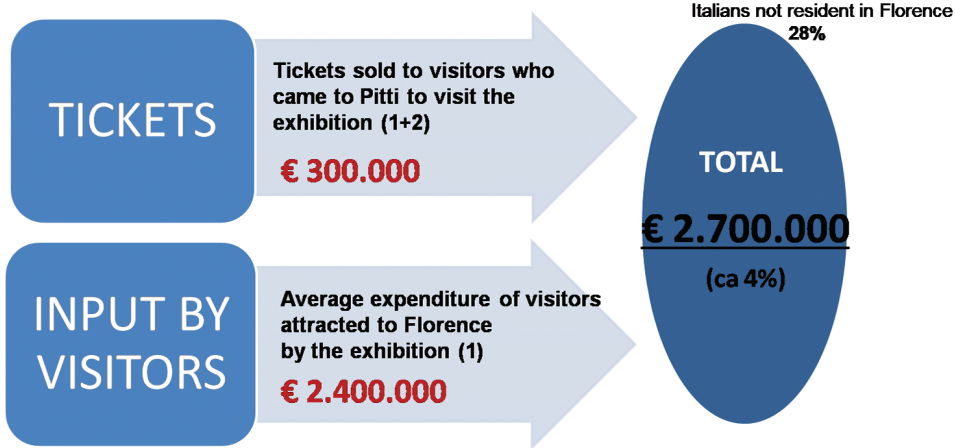
Ill. 19. Impact of the exhibition 'From Petra to Shawbak' (Firenze, Pitti Palace, 2009) on the economic system of the city

Ill. 20. The Ayyubid palace of Al-Mu'azzam'Isa. The Reception Hall (1208 ca): continuity and innovation of a territorial power (Elab. P. Drap). The Mamluk workshop: archaeological reconstruction (Dis. 'Ink Link')

Ill. 21. The new *Montréal* hotel, opened in Shawbak (2011) following the activities of the European Project *Liaisons for Growth* (Mission of the University of Florence *Petra Medievale*) (Photo by A. Marx). Shawbak, resident tourism appears for the first time: the campsite founded (2008) and expanded (2009) (Photo by A. Marx)

Ill. 22. Shawbak: beginnings of a tourist reception system... to be monitored (Photo by A. Marx)

FOOTNOTES

¹ The roots of this disciplinary field are to be found in Public Archaeology understood as the management of natural and cultural resources (Cultural Resource Management), established in the United States since the 1970s in response to the inadequacy of the legislation on the protection of Heritage. Similarly, the field has also developed rapidly in Great Britain, where, however, it will be redefined and interpreted differently, especially thanks to the contribution of research conducted at University College London (see: *Public Archaeology*, edited by N. Merriman, London 2004).

² The first volume specifically dedicated to Public Archaeology (C. Mc Gimsey, *Public Archaeology*, New York & London, Seminar Press 1972) dates back to 1972; a summary on the origins of PA in Great Britain and the relationship with US Public History is also in Bonacchi 2009; the incredible success of the 4th Conference of the International Federation for Public History, and of the 1st National Conference of the newborn Italian Association of P.H. held in Ravenna in June 2018 – where the presentation of experiences in Public Archaeology (almost a thousand proposals and more than 400 speeches from all over the world) was expected – are proof that a structural interest for a contemporary and professional use of the sciences of the past has emerged.

³ *Dossier – Public archaeology in Europe,* PCA, 2, 2012, pp. 269–360; an already dynamic European panorama emerged at the 19th EAA Congress, Pilsen, 2013, with the first session dedicated to Public Archaeology (among about fifteen contributions I would particularly mention the case of Kalisz brought by Tadeusz Baranowski (IAEPAN), which I believe is the first in Poland).

⁴ C. Bonacchi, *The development of Public Archaeology in Italy: a review of recent efforts*, "Public Archaeology", vol. 12/3, 2013, pp. 211–216.

⁵ I would say in particular for the contributions coming from some academic schools and civil environments and for its authentic social 'pervasiveness'.

⁶ *Archeologia Pubblica in Toscana. Un progetto e una proposta*, edited by G. Vannini, Firenze, FUP 2011.

⁷ T. Schadla-Hall, *Editorial: Public Archaeology*, "European Journal of Archaeology", 2, 1999, pp. 147–158.

⁸ From Winckelmann and the 'progressive' neoclassical movement (David, painter of the Revolution...), to Napoleon and his campaign in Egypt – with its consequences, as it is well known, also on fashion – to the archaeological 'grand tours' of the early '800 (the case of the temple of Jupiter Maximus of Agrigento 'discovered' by the 'new' archaeological science and its incredible – immediate! – repercussions at the very top of the greatest powers of the time: faithful model for the monument to Frederick the Great, the new urban center planned for Berlin itself; his telamons reproduced for the entrance to the library of St. Petersburg (M. Cometa, *Duplicità del classico: Il mito del tempio di Giove da Winck-*

elmann a Leo von Klenze, Palermo, Medina 1993); and beyond, in various forms (not at all always positive), even up to our time.

9 In other words, as in any scientific dimension, starting from the 'why', to be followed by the 'how'. "Any area of the archaeological activity that interacted or has the potential to interact with the public" (T. Schadla-Hall, *Editorial: Public Archaeology*, "European Journal of Archaeology", 2, 1999, pp. 147–158).

10 See: A. Matsuda, *The concept of "the Public" and the aims of Public Archaeology*, "Papers from the Institute of Archaeology", 15, 2004, pp. 66–76.

11 The public as a "collective body of citizenship, as opposed to the interests and spheres of the private sector" (see: J. Van Horn Melton, *The Rise of the Public in Enlightenment Europe*, Cambridge University Press 2001), a concept developed as early as the Roman times.

12 *Public Archaeology...*, *op. cit*. The public as "a group of individuals who debate issues and consume cultural products and whose reactions develop public opinion" (see: J. Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a category of Bourgeois Society*, Cambridge 1962), a concept developed by the Illuminist culture.

13 Which could also be in the Maritainian sense: development in an 'integral' humanistic key...

14 M. Nucciotti, *Il progetto PAPT: massa critica e sperimentazioni*, [in:] *Archeologia Pubblica in Toscana. Un progetto e una proposta*, edited by G. Vannini, 2011, pp. 35–42.

15 Ten years after the start of the courses of the first European Teaching of Public Archaeology at the UCL, M. Jeater, during a conference in Florence (2008), declared that the archaeologists who came out of those courses had the highest rate of employability in the UK.

16 As Sabatino Moscati observed: "I don't believe that there is a frontier science, at the convergence of humanism and technology, such as the archaeological science is at present", http://www.Mediamente.rai.it/biblioteca/biblio.asp?id= 2438&tab=int (access: 5/04/2018).

17 B. Croce, *La storia come pensiero e come azione*, Laterza, Bari 1938, p. 5.

18 K. Modzelewski, *L'Europa dei barbari. Le culture tribali di fronte alla cultura romano-cristiana*, Torino, Bollati Boringhieri 2008 (Introduction to the Italian edition).

19 C. Bonacchi, *Archeologia pubblica in Italia. Origini e prospettive di un "nuovo" settore disciplinare*, "Ricerche storiche", 2, 2009, pp. 329–345; C. Bonacchi, *Understanding the public experience of archaeology in the UK and Italy: a call for a sociological movement in Public Archaeology*, "European Journal of post-classical archaeologies", 4, 2014, pp. 333–356.

20 Cf. what Volpe also pointed out recently – see G. Volpe, *Public Archaeology. Methods, techniques, experiences*, Rome, Carocci 2020, pp. 34–39.

21 G. Vannini, M. Nucciotti, C. Bonacchi, *Archeologia Pubblica e Archeologia Medievale*, [in:] *Quarant'anni di Archeologia Medievale in Italia. La rivista, i temi, la teoria e i metodi*, edited by S. Gelichi, Firenze 2014, pp. 17–29.

22 G. Vannini, *A medieval archaeology experience in Jordan. The 'medieval' Petra Mission of University of Florence*, "ADAJ", LV, 2011, pp. 295–312.

[23] The Congress was organized by the University and the City of Florence (Palazzo Vecchio, October 2012; the programme was drawn up by a large national and international scientific committee, representing the different categories involved (researchers, public administrators, entrepreneurs, etc.), which met in various venues, at regular intervals, and created a first forum/observatory on Public Archaeology in Italy (see: *Atti del I Congresso Nazionale di Archeologia Pubblica (Firenze, 29 e 30 ottobre 2012, Palazzo Vecchio, sala d'Arme)*, edited by C. Bonacchi, C. Molducci, M. Nucciotti, Coll. 'Archeologia Pubblica', n. 3, Firenze, FUP 2020 ; C. Zuanni, *Review: Archeologia Pubblica in Italia (Florence, 2012)*, "AP: Online Journal in Public Archaeology", 3, 2013, pp. 134–138).

[24] E.g. the Conference organized by the Archaeological and Landscape Park of the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento (*Archeologia pubblica al tempo della cris*i, Atti delle Giornate gregoriane VII Edizione (29–30 November), edited by M. Parello, M. Rizzo, Bari 2014; see also G. Brogiolo, *Archeologia pubblica in Italia: quale futuro?*, "Post – Classical Archaeologies", 2, 2012, pp. 269–278).

[25] Truly exemplary is the setting up of the Sardinian museum in Biddas, which is a proposal for an original paradigm of interpretation of the research-musealization relationship, with a central role entrusted to original forms of interaction with 'the public' (see: Milanese M., *Dal progetto di ricerca alla valorizzazione. Biddas – Museo dei Villaggi Abbandonati della Sardegna (un museo open, un museo per tutti)*, "Archeologia Medievale", vol. XLI, 2014, pp. 115–126).

[26] Physical and narrative communication of research – such as e.g. the archeodrome of Poggibonsi ('created and lived' by Marco Valenti, of the University of Siena) – achieved through a plan that involves at the same time sophisticated research, the researchers themselves, the public (and, behind the scenes, a complex structure between administrators, financiers, civil authorities of different kinds); the success of the initiative is not only in the numbers (quantitative), but in the (qualitative) fact that it has been possible to demonstrate how this (unlike most cases in the field, now distributed throughout a large part of Europe) has been achieved without making any concession and losing accuracy in the relation between source and reconstruction (including aporie) (http://www.archeodromopoggibonsi.it/#r0, access: 2/07/2020). Or like the case – unique and potentially paradigmatic, particularly with regard to the involvement of a wide variety of local realities – of the extraordinary project *'Uomini e cose a Vignale'*, in Tuscany, directed by Enrico Zanini, a truly authentic case-study on a European scale (http://www.uominiecoseavignale.it/, access: 2/07/2020).

[27] Currently, the official Teachings of Public Archaeology at academic level, are present in Italy in Florence (2014, *Specializzazione*, Michele Nucciotti and Chiara Bonacchi), Sassari (2017, Marco Milanese) and Siena (2017, Marco Valenti).

[28] The volume edited by Volpe 2020 is one of the products of this wide national project.

[29] *Light archaeology* (understood as a reinterpretation of operational priorities on the territory and consequent modulation of archaeological procedures) as a useful and ethically updated method that combines the sustainability of research with the preservation of the

site. Keeping this perspective, it is possible to limit the surveys to exemplary cases. For example, on a methodological level, the integrated comparison of the distribution of types of masonry in the analysed sites makes it possible to create 'maps of territorial phases'. More generally, analysing the territory with the methodological tools of 'light' archaeology aims at recreating a diachronic syntax of the landscape context, with excavations and surveys of varied intensity; the object is a historical interpretation of the landscape, achieved also through essays intended as 'archaeological observatories' and as a tool for the evaluation of archaeological resources that are manageable within the municipal and provincial SIT, in order to mark/value the landscape and its structural components (G. Vannini, M. Nucciotti, *Light and Public! International projects and research by the Florence Chair of Medieval Archaeology*, [in:] '*Safeguard of cultural heritage: a challenge from the past for the Europe of tomorrow*', Cost strategic workshop (11–13 July), edited by M. Fioravanti, S. Mecca, Florence 2011, pp. 44–45; M. Nucciotti, G. Vannini, *Light archaeology and territorial analysis: perspectives and experiences of the italian medievalist school*, in *III Forum Architecturae Poloniae Medievalis*, "Archaeologia Polona", vol. 50, 2012, pp. 149–169; G. Vannini, V. Cimarri, A. Sahlin, *La lettura archeologica del territorio*, [in:] *Il parco culturale Pratomagno-Setteponti. Progetto pilota*, edited by L. Zangheri, Firenze, Pacini 2010, pp. 53–80).

[30] *Atlante dell'edilizia medievale*, edited by M. Nucciotti, Inventario, I.1, Arcidosso (Gr) 2008 [online], http://rm.univr.it/biblioteca/scaffale/volumi.htm#MicheleNucciotti (access: 2/07/2020). The archaeological cataloguing campaign involved 33 historical centres, 188 architectural complexes (+45% compared to the census by the Superintendence), 358 buildings, 569 particular prospects.

[31] G. Vannini, *A medieval archaeology experience in Jordan. The 'medieval' Petra Mission of University of Florence*, "ADAJ", LV, 2011, pp. 295–312.

[32] From large scale (the Moslem-Crusader frontier between Syria and Jordan), through medium scale (the region between the Dead Sea and the Red Sea), to small scale (the Petra valley, the Ash-Shawbak site).

[33] We could call these border areas, somewhat like 'road areas' (G. Sergi, *Luoghi di strada nel medioevo. Fra il Po, il mare e le Alpi occidentali*, Torino 1996). Regarding territorial power structures in the central centuries of the Middle Ages; see C. Wickham, *Framing the Early Middle Ages: Europe and the Mediterranean, 400–800*, Oxford 2006.

[34] *Archeologia dell'insediamento crociato in Transgiordania. Il Progetto Shawbak*, edited by G. Vannini, Collana di Archeologia Medievale, vol. 21, Firenze, All'Insegna del Giglio 2007.

[35] When Baldwin I built his *Crac de Montréal* in 1115-1118, with the haste imposed by the political contingencies of the time, he was in fact rebuilding an ancient abandoned monumental fortified site, also documented on the ground (*Negla*?) and which must have been part of the Roman-Byzantine *limes arabicus*, strategically referable to the great Severian and Diocletian entrenched camp of Udruh/Augustopoli (S. Parker, *The Roman Frontier in*

Central Jordan. Interim Report on the Limes Arabicus Project, 1980–1985, BAR International Series, 340, Oxford 1987).

[36] In fact, it is an actual historical phenomenon, documented here through archaeological means: the return of urbanism, after the fortunate Roman-Imperial season, to the region south of the Dead Sea, impressivly synchronized with what happened in the same decades (end of XII-mid XIII and beyond) also in the 'Christian' Mediterranean and in Europe.

[37] Proposing – even with that powerful cognitive and ethical tool represented by intellectual humility – to understand well the different realities in which we operate: for example, in this part of the world, NGOs are 'non-governmental' in the sense that they are, perhaps in fact, of superior emanation...).

[38] G. Vannini, M. Nucciotti, *Light and Public!*, *op. cit*. The exhibition *From Petra to Shawbak* tested the potential of such an approach and particularly demonstrated the usefulness of museological design and public studies in defining the socio-economic impact of temporary exhibitions on resident communities (see: C. Bonacchi, *Dalla Public Archaeology all'Archeologia Pubblica: la mostra "Da Petra a Shawbak"*, [in:] *Archeologia Pubblica in Toscana*, 2011, pp. 103–109).

[39] It was a surprise for us a couple of years ago when we arrived in the village of Shawbak to see two large coloured *murales* on the street front with the image of the castle (a Crusade castle!) dominating the landscape.

[40] In Italy „the first (exhibition) ever to be entirely inspired by the principles of public archae-ology" (see G. Volpe, *op. cit.*, p. 39).

[41] On the other hand, difficulties (for the time being...) must be recorded on the front of an effective implementation of preservation and restoration programs – particularly chal-lenging, as can be expected – of the impressive monumental area; there have been in-terventions aimed at simple maintenance and safety, although there has also been the implementation of high-level executive projects of some key monuments and a tour of the site (Ayyubid palace, workshop, church, door and sections of the defences): executive projects for which it has not yet been possible to find sufficient resources to start the work (see: P. Ruschi, E. Sodi, *Il progetto di restauro*, [in:] *Da Petra a Shawbak. Archeologia di una frontiera. Catalogo della Mostra*, (Firenze, Palazzo Pitti, Limonaia di Boboli, 13 luglio–11 ottobre 2009), edited by G. Vannini, M. Nucciotti 2009, pp. 178–183). While I was drafting this article (2020) I was notified of the approval of our Italian cooperation project in Jordan (AICS) for preservation, enhancement and training involving the Mission, with a funding of € 2,000,000 for the next three years.

[42] Regarding the role of monumental identity remains for communities living in peripheral urban areas, see the intense pages of A. Ricci, *Attorno alla nuda pietra. Archeologia e città tra identità e progetto*, Roma 2006.

[43] Vannini G., *Esperienze di Archeologia Pubblica in Giordania. Sulle tracce di una identità territoriale nel Mediterraneo medievale*, [in:] *Alla ricerca di un passato complesso. Contributi*

in onore di Gian Pietro Brogiolo per il suo settantesimo compleanno, edited by A. Chavarría Arnau, M. Jurko, Zagreb–Motovun, 2016, pp. 359–370.

[44] The *studia humanitatis* disseminate complex skills, teach us to consider the intrinsic goodness of the topics and give us a greater ability to control the progress of the techniques. The mind-machine interaction is too delicate to be left entirely in the hands of programmers and softwarists. In requiring 'quality', historical and social studies provide a valuable service to all disciplines, not just to themselves; and even 'hard' sciences are destined to suffer the consequences of their (looming) eclipse.

[45] Which are at the basis of a new form of collaboration, currently undergoing experimental start-up, between the University of Florence and the UN Development Agency (ONDP); see now the no. 25.

[46] One of the most typical products of a colonial period, now out of time, as I tried to argue at the last ICHAJ Congress in Amman in 2016: "In a way, it's time to conceive the approach of the archaeological mission itself as 'public' – or if, in this regard, we can better define 'civil' – in a more extensive, systematic way, conscious of a role that, being in fact original, involves all the responsibilities of a recognized form of intercultural communication (and practice). This is considering that archaeologists working in the Near East are in fact cultural mediators: mediators between the cultures of the past and those of the present and mediators between European culture (and Western), in our case, and that of their host countries. (…) The recent consolidation of a structural crisis that hit the Mediterranean societies of the Near East, poses also the question of how to perform more efficiently, but also in a cultural context of higher ethics, the proper role of international archaeological missions. (…) If the collaboration will come to be truly shared with local subjectivity, also for renewed goals that not only focus on problems but also on local scientific needs, we may arrive – maybe in the medium-long term – to initiatives on the ground, even in Italy, France, Poland, Spain, almost with reversed roles: initiatives on the impulse of Jordanian expertise integrated in the mission (also with interuniversity agreements and with DoA); the basis should be scientifically and culturally rational. In other terms, overcoming for good the classical structure of international archaeological missions, with its cumbersome legacy of a colonial origin" (G. Vannini, *Esperienze di Archeologia Pubblica in Giordania. Sulle tracce di una identità territoriale nel Mediterraneo medievale*, [in:] *Alla ricerca di un passato complesso. Contributi in onore di Gian Pietro Brogiolo per il suo settantesimo compleanno*, edited by A. Chavarría Arnau, M. Jurko, Zagreb–Motovun, 2016, pp. 359–370).

[47] After that, one can even, in these times and in an Arab country, study the Crusaders and be well received: "While the intellectual gains from this project will have academics thinking and rethinking their positions on the close, complex historical ties between Europe and the

Levant, I am delighted that it will also have tangible benefits for Jordanians, too. (...) The project is also training locals around Shawbak in archaeological research and conservation so they can better paint a picture for visitors of Crusader and Ayyubid times" (H.M. Queen Rania Al-Abdullah of Jordan, Presentation in the catalogue of the exhibition '*From Petra to Shawbak'*: G. Vannini, M. Nucciotti, C. Bonacchi, *op. cit.*).

[48] I have had the opportunity to express some thoughts on this subject in a volume recently offered to my illustrious friend Andrzej Buko (G. Vannini, *For a conservation of the archaeological documentation*, in *'Animos labor nutrit', Studia ofiarowane Profesorowi Andrzejowi Buko w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, edited by T. Nowakiewicz, M. Trzeciecki, D. Błaszczyk, IAEPAN, Warszawa 2018, pp. 53–58).

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