



**3rd International Landscape Archaeology Conference
Rome, 09/19/2014
Session n. 4**

**"ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROTECTION AND LANDSCAPE PLANNING.
Legislation and new professional positions for European
Archaeologists"**

Presenting speech

Welcome to session number 4, titled "Archaeological PROTECTION AND LANDSCAPE PLANNING. Legislation and new professional positions for European Archaeologists".

I am Valentina Di Stefano, from Confederazione Italiana Archeologi.

At first, I would like to thank LAC 2014 scientific committee for having accepted this session proposal that attempts to provide useful insights on issues that are often difficult to be discussed among the archaeologists. The stimulating topic of the Conference includes the contribution of multiple approaches and visions, from those typically academic to the ones that are more oriented towards technological issues or application ambits. This session takes its roots from two significant previous experience that involved Confederazione Italiana Archeologi: the meeting that the association has organized in 2011 titled "Archaeology and Landscape between protection and Planning" and the more recent participation as partner to the European co-financed project named

"Discovering Archaeologists of Europe 2014".

Our session aims at offering a further perspective so to contribute to the Conference aim, by assuming that the meaning of "Landscape" is constantly shaped through the interpretation given by the generation and the professionals that are observing and experiencing it.

As European citizens, we live and interact with a territory whose history and Archaeology are key features, so without that interpretative key it would be not possible to achieve a comprehensive and shared concept of "Landscape".

To this extent, it is possible to recall the words of a great Italian intellectual of the last century, Carlo Giulio Argan that said that "in practice everything that in a urban context is assumed as an historical fact is interpretable, subjectable to value attribution and object of evaluation. Hence, we should not care whether these objects preserve the same value that the experts attributed to them (e.g., within the people' experience or thinking of the Coliseum, this object does not necessarily assume the meaning that Coliseum means for the archaeologists). Instead, we should care about the possibility that those objects could continuously acquire a new value and be re-interpreted by the urban community" (from Art history as history of the city, 1984).

At Landscape and Archaeology is to be added, then, a third element, which is essential because the relationship between the first two reaches an equilibrium that become a fertile basis for the development of a narrative that is aware of the stories that have contributed to the transformation of a territory or a landscape.

The third element is made by the archaeologists.

The critical thinking, the interpretation, the analysis of historical, cultural and social processes that have determined the characteristics of cities and territories are just some of the

fields of investigation in which Archaeology has been able to make a fundamental contribution, both in terms of methodological innovation and improved knowledge of our archaeological heritage. This guaranteed an indispensable contribution to those professionals that are typically the protagonists of the cities and territory' planning.

Nonetheless, the archaeologists themselves have often conceived their work as an element of its own, considering their professional contribution as a complement to the activity of planning.

Nowadays, the challenge we face is to transform that professional contribution into an active collaboration, and into a participation that is conceptually and culturally innovative.

Foremost we, as archaeologists, have to claim our role and its related responsibilities, by changing our perspective: no longer as skilled observer but as active participants that, according to our skills, take part to the process of project development and design of spaces, where to represent the synthesis of our understanding of the present time and imagination of the future.

The challenge is already open and it is up to all of us pick it up, write the rules, build the perspectives and broaden the boundaries of its implementation.

The discussion that we propose to start today is grounded on the need and desire to think and imagine our profession as part of a dynamic process, that is constantly evolving and that is able to be in relation with a society that continuously changes its requests to Archaeology.

According to any transformation of these requests, the role played by archaeologists should change consequently within the many facets of our profession. To this extent, it should also start a critical review of the tools that are currently available to us, both at educational and normative levels.

Hence there is the need, more and more urgent, to expand the

boundaries of archaeological knowledge, which surely does not imply to distort our educational path or to turn us into pseudo-architects or pseudo-computer scientists, and trivializing the content and practices of other disciplines.

We shall be able to find the proper keys and tools within our discipline. In particular, we shall rely on our ability of archaeologists to upgrade the research methods and the languages for communicate with the society in which we operate.

This process is already underway and, as it often happens, the practice of a profession is much more advanced than the legal framework that would regulate it, at least in Italy.

The report edited by Confederazione Italiana Archeologi tells us stories of professionals practicing in many different fields, with a versatility and mastery of the methods of investigation, which allow them to operate in several different contexts.

In the labour market of Archaeology, in face of a clear preponderance of the excavations sector related to the construction of major infrastructure and planning of new urbanization, it has not been created an appropriate body of laws and regulations to define practices, roles and quality standards of these professionals.

Despite the efforts made by some representatives of institutions and trade associations, the Italian archaeologists continue to operate in a normative *limbo*; just reminding that only a few months ago our profession of archaeologist has been formally recognized.

In addition, the chaos that rules the practice of this profession and the archaeological Italian market determine serious consequences in terms of capability of introducing professionals from other European countries and of creating opportunities to work abroad for Italian archaeologists, both as individuals or companies.

We believe that the common goal should become the building a European-style System of Archaeology. A system that, by

identifying a common denominator between the rules in force in the Member States, by making it a summary, and by highlighting the individual experiences, would lead to the development of common standards in education, training, planning process, and in the practice of protection.

European Archaeologists, with different degrees depending on the country of activity, are already in force by the regulations to provide their contribution to the planning of the areas in which they operate. The levels of responsibility and involvement that are assigned by the laws already in force in every Member State of the European Community to Archaeology to accomplish the operations of heritage protection and planning of the territory shall be compared and harmonized, and not just limited with a mere theoretical analysis.

Since the building boom of the late 90s that involved almost all over Europe up to the serious economic crisis of recent years, Archaeology has been experiencing important normative transformations, drawn in order to rationalize and modernize the system of protection and enhance the instruments for the use and the communication and promotion of Cultural Heritage.

The needs of the contemporary society led to a continuous evolution in the practice of our profession. However, yet our profession has not found an adequate recognition both referring to the concerned regulatory system and the educational tracks.

The mobility of students, researchers and professionals, along with the increasing number of infrastructures and projects that transcend the traditional national boundaries require that any measure that it is planned to be implemented shall base on a minimum degree of harmonization at European Community level.

We like to think that the considerations that we will provide today would generate curiosity and enhance the desire of building new opportunities and tools able to broaden the geographical and cultural perception of these issues approached.

Let's start together, as professionals, institutions and academies across Europe, a path that will lead us to build a

place, even if virtual, where to make the discussion, information, and ideas available to all operators. This place would provide the tool to allow the archaeologists to grow and be ready to take up those challenges and opportunities that belong to our contemporary society.

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