

AN INTERACTIVE MODEL FOR VALUING THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND ETHNOGRAPHICAL HERITAGE OF A HISTORIC SITE

Monica BÎRĂ, Corina BORȘ, Irina ENE, Aurelia TUDOR

The idea which generated the „*Orașul de Floci – Redescoperirea unui meșteșug într-un oraș medieval dispărut*”[„*Orașul de Floci – Rediscovering a craft in a forgotten medieval city*”] was based on the belief of its authors that the members of the local communities are the first ones who have to know and participate to the heritage's protection throughout an active involvement in initiatives meant to set on value the cultural properties of the area where they inhabit, thus aiming to build a sort of local cohesion and to contribute to the sustainable development of that region and not only. The area considered in the framework of the project was the one of the archaeological site from Orașul de Floci and its surroundings, namely the communes of Giurgeni, Gura Ialomiței, Vlădeni and the cities of Țândărei and Slobozia.

The project was elaborated based on two distinct components, by taking into consideration the evolution on this zone during various historical periods, namely the development of the important medieval urban settlement (nowadays known only by the archaeological vestiges and the documentary sources) situated and the confluence of the Danube with Ialomița river, as well as the long local tradition related to transhumance and the crafts associated with the wool's processing and trade, along with a series of modern concepts and practices regarding the management and promotion of the cultural heritage.

Thus the first component was the one related to the presence of the archaeological site in the vicinity of the above mentioned communities. Starting from this premise was aimed to —throughout an education

kit comprising both theoretical and practical section— create, develop and set up specific knowledge by the children from the participant localities, being outlined a series of key elements for the archaeological researches at Orașul de Floci, but also the manner in which the neighbouring communities are able to involve themselves in protecting and promoting this resource.

The second project's component was focused on identifying traditional practices and occupations, less known and used by the young ones, customs which —by less than half a century ago — played a very important role in the economy of the area and on it's social life, by so being considered an attempt to make conscious the local stakeholders about the fact that these (intangible) heritage elements have the capacity to contribute to the sustainable development of the area by articulating a specific cultural offer.

The archaeological site of Orașul de Floci is located on an extinct medieval town, which had its glory period between the 15th and the mid 18th centuries. It was mainly a trade place, at the border between the Romanian principalities and the Ottoman Empire, very close to the Danube. At the end of the 18th century, when the inhabitants of the town were forced —by geographical changes and endless wars— to abandon their place, new settlements were created, and a new economy emerged. This time weaving, knitting were the main activities and a new tradition was established. Today, both the rich medieval past and the pre-modern handcrafts are almost forgotten by the local communities.

Our project was designed especially for the local communities, and therefore, all the activities were thought in order to answer to their needs. Children were the target public of this project, as they are the next generation, who has to keep traditions alive and to prevent the loss of cultural heritage. Briefly, the educational objective of the project was to raise the awareness of the heritage preservation problem among the local communities. Five schools and three high schools from villages and towns located in the surrounding area of the archaeological site were involved in this cultural project. The activities were focused on two major subjects: the remote past (the medieval period, with history and archaeology issues) and the recent past, with its almost gone traditions and local handcrafts. Children and teachers, but also archaeologists and museologists have begun their documentation work long before the summer activities. Their research efforts were materialized in a number of cultural products (exhibition, web-site, virtual re-construction of some buildings, documentary film) presented and used during the summer workshops.

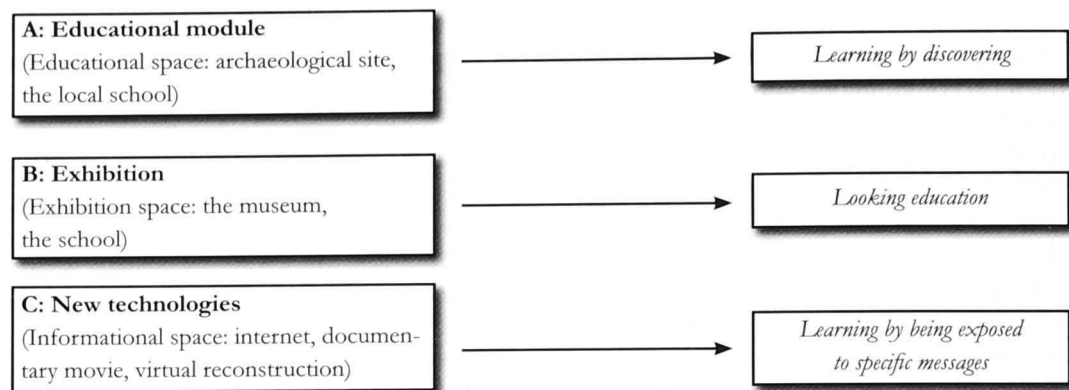
Each cultural product was created in order to generate a feeling of belonging to a specific cultural area¹ and also to enforce the idea that it is everyone's duty to protect its heritage. The virtual re-construction of some buildings from the archaeological site had the role to help the children in their effort to better understand the importance of the traces remained from the medieval lost city. The purpose of the documentary film (15 minutes) was to create a bond between modern times habits and local traditions, showing how interesting and exciting those could be. The web site was designed to gather information about the past, regarding that area, in order to facilitate the access to knowledge for the children,

as they have the possibility to browse the Internet at school.

The workshops were the most dynamic part of the project. Children were involved in educational activities both on the archaeological site and at a local school (the one which was closest to the site).

Because of high temperatures, the activities on the site were conducted early in the morning (from 8 to 10 a.m.). Children could observe the ongoing archaeological researches, the way that every piece of material was collected and registered and they were familiarized with archaeological tools. They could also get a larger picture about the importance of such a research and we hope they've understand that an archaeologist is the only one entitled to develop this kind of research, but in the same time the entire community is playing a great role in protecting the cultural heritage. After the two hours spent on the site, the educational activities took place at the school. In this second part, children acquired more knowledge about the differences between legal archaeological researches and the illegal treasure hunts, but also about the medieval culture and civilisation, through an educational kit designed for them. At the end of the day, they left home with their own educational kit and with a medieval character that they've made by themselves using different materials. The children-version included games and exercises meant to help them to retain new information. A map with the most important archaeological sites from our country, a time scale illustrating the history of their region, quotations from historic documents regarding the medieval past of the area, and a "to do list" in case that anyone makes by chance an archaeological find. Another version of the educational kit was designed for teachers, and it contained specific information that might be used by

¹ Bardavio, Gatell, Gonzalez-Marcen, 2004, p. 262



them during the class or eventually during some other extra-curricular activities.

Local handcrafts related to wool processing were brought to children attention by live demonstrations. Although the region used to be quite renowned for this type of handcrafts, many children have seen for the first time a manual machine used for weaving. They could listen to real stories told by old ladies, and they found out how important was for a young girl 50 years ago to know everything about wool processing using non-industrial methods. The boys have shown lot of interest when it came to actually try some traditional tools.

The scheme below presents under a more concise manner the main elements of the project and their role in the educational process.²

At the end of the educational activities most of the children received a survey form, in order to help us to evaluate the results of our work. In the same time, we wanted to get a hint about pupils' expectations, about their general involvement in extra-curricular activities and about their interest in culture. In this way we discovered that some of them didn't previously knew about the sites' existence, even they were not living more then 20 km away from it. We also found out that there is a huge lack of cultural activities in which they might be involved and that they had a better opinion about their level

of interest in culture than they were actually demonstrating.

Part of the exhibition was brought to Bucharest, at the National History Museum, than o a local museum near the site and from the next summer it will be a part of a new site-museum, which will be located right near the archaeological site.

After this summer experience we are persuade that a project-pattern is likely o be created, and to be adapted to other archaeological sites. A lot of them share —more or less— the same situation: local communities, though involved in researches in a certain manner, are not entirely aware of the value of their heritage neither of the fact that this might be a potential source for sustainable development. Besides, taking into consideration the European evolution on this matter, the archaeology becomes more and more a public concern issue. Moreover, the degree of financial participation of local authorities into research, restoration, preservation and promotion of archaeological heritage projects, will be more and more depending on the public perception about it.

Due to this fact, an efficient communication, a pro-active education and a direct involvement into cultural programs and projects must be the result of the museum activities as a public institution, which is activating in the interest of the

² Hooper-Greenhill 2007, p. 190

community and which is financed by public funds. But in the same time the museum role should also be that of a specialized research institution, creating informational resources and patrimony products that are continuously enriching the cultural heritage of a state. To conclude, the idea

of bringing together central and local institutions, of cooperation between local schools, museologists, archaeologists and local, administration may create a pattern that could to be used in more than an archaeological site.

References

- Cojocaru, Barabaș, Mitocaru 1998
V. Cojocaru, N. Barabaș, V. Mitocaru, *Pedagogie muzeală (schită a unei posibile întemeieri a pedagogiei muzeale ca știință)*, Ministerul Culturii – Centrul de pregătire și formare a personalului din instituțiile de cultură, 1998
- Curriculum pedagogic
Centrul de pregătire și formare a personalului din instituțiile de cultură, 1998
S. Cristea (coord.), *Curriculum pedagogic*, I, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, București, 2008
- Georgescu 2008
E. Georgescu, Noile educații, în *Curriculum pedagogic*, 2008, p. 171–184
- Hooper-Greenhill 2007
E. Hooper-Greenhill, *Museum and Education – purpose, pedagogy, performance*, London and New York, Routledge, 2007
- Nicola 2003
I. Nicola, *Tratat de pedagogie școlară*, București, Editura Aramis, 2003
- Oprea 2008
C. Oprea, *Formele generale ale educației, în Curriculum pedagogic*, 2008, p. 185–206
- Opriș 2006
I. Opriș, *Muzeosofia*, București, Editura Oscar Print, 2006
- Opriș 2008a
I. Opriș, *Provocarea noilor muzeografii*, Brăila, Editura Istros a Muzeului Brăilei, 2008
- Opriș 2008b
I. Opriș, *Managementul muzeal*, București, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2008
- Păunescu 2005
A. Păunescu, *Orașul de Floci – un oraș medieval dispărut, din Muntenia medievală*, Târgoviște, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2005
- A. Bardavio, C. Gatell, P. Gonzalez-Marcen, Is Archaeology What Matters? Creating a Sense of Local Identity among Teenagers in Catalonia, în *World Archaeology*, vol. 36, nr. 2, “Archaeological Pedagogies” (iunie 2004), p. 261–274 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/4128329>, accesat în 19/09/2008 05:35)
- S.A. Crane, Memory, Distortion and History in the Museum, în *History and Theory*, vol. 36, nr. 4, “Producing the Past: Making History Inside and Outside the Academy (decembrie 1997), p. 44–63 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2505574>, accesat on 19/09/2008 05:33)

S.R. Crew, Who Owns History?: History in the Museum, în *The History Teacher*, vol. 30, nr. 1 (noiembrie 1996), p. 83–88 (<http://www.jstor.org/stable/494222>, accesat la 18/09/2008 12:30)

• C. Hooper-Burton, C. Scott, Museums: Challenges for the 21st Century, în *International Journal of Arts Management*, Montréal, 2003, vol. 5, nr. 2, p. 56–68

• N. Merriman (ed.), *Public Archaeology*, Routledge, London and New York, 2004

• H. Swain, *An Introduction to Museum Archaeology*, Cambridge University Press, 2007

• V. Cojocaru, N. Barabaș, V. Mitocaru, *Pedagogie muzeală (schiță a unei posibile întemeieri a pedagogiei muzeale ca știință) / Ministerul Culturii – Centrul de pregătire și formare a personalului din instituțiile de cultură (fără an de apariție)*

Web sites

- www.cdep.ro (for the legislation)
- www.cultura.ro – the website of the Ministry of Cultures and Religious Affairs
- www.mnir.ro/firintors/index.htm the official website of the cultural project „Orașul de Floci – redescoving a craft on a lost medieval city”
- www.cicnet.ro – the website of the Ialomița County Council
- www.culturamet.ro
- <http://www.curriculum2008.edu.ro>