

HERITAGE-PRO – Interdisciplinary Training for Professionals of Different Disciplines Towards Sustainable Management and Preservation of Cultural Heritage

A focus on communicational and participatory aspects of the project

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Keywords: *Interdisciplinarity—Communication—Participation—Training*

CHNT Reference: Verdet, Isabel; Kolhey, Sascha. HERITAGE-PRO – Interdisciplinary Training for Professionals of Different Disciplines Towards Sustainable Management and Preservation of Cultural Heritage A focus on communicational and participatory aspects of the project. Conference on Cultural Heritage and New Technologies (CHNT). November 4-6, 2020, Vienna, Austria.

General issues

Cultural heritage management all over Europe is done in silos of knowledge as the disciplines are neither trained nor experienced to cooperate in a pre-defined and professional way. Formal education of art historians, restorers, conservators, craftsmen and cultural managers neglects skills that are essential in their professional life for successful and cost-efficient preservation activities. They are trained as specialists in their field but never learn how to organise interdisciplinary knowledge and base preservation decisions on that. The challenge is how to bring these different disciplines, expertise, expectations and visions cooperatively together in order to avoid future repairs or a restricted use of a heritage site.

An interdisciplinary capacity-building training scheme is the most important outcome of HERITAGE-PRO. It will train cultural heritage managers in understanding the different mind-sets and expectations of actors related to preservation of cultural heritage in Europe. The training scheme will be complemented by a practical guidelines and a training kit. These two outcomes are currently being developed and will be available in a first pre-final version in October 2020. The training scheme consists of five modules. These are the five training modules which are currently in final editing:

Training Module 1: Global Challenges and Opportunities in Cultural Heritage Field

Training Module 2: Efficient team working and effective interdisciplinary conflict resolution

Training Module 3: Valorisation of Cultural Heritage

Training Module 4: Participation

Training Module 5: Communication

Especially Module 4 on Participation and Module 5 on Communication deal with important subjects such as on how to organize participatory processes, sensitive communication on cultural heritage, social media skills for cultural heritage and further more. Both modules want to give cultural heritage managers new instructions and ideas on how to include citizens and further stakeholders into their projects. Overall, the whole approach of the HERITAGE-PRO training scheme is focused on social as well as professional factors.

Module 4 on Participation consists of 6 Units. They deal with participatory approaches, tools to identify target groups, the involvement of volunteers, methods for organizing participation and

assessment of the success and tips on providing targeted information. It focuses amongst others on active inclusion of volunteers, citizens and different stakeholders. Volunteers are considered a significant source of knowledge and responsibility in the field of cultural heritage. Irrespective of age and professional background, citizens get very active if identity- building landmarks like churches or castles that are in danger. Heritage sites usually have their organized “friends’ groups” and interested stakeholders. Including these groups into heritage preservation tasks and further activities is on one hand a strategic “must”, but can be a constant challenge in bringing different opinions together. This module deals with participatory approaches and processes and working with stakeholders, volunteers and citizens. It collects best practices and case studies on participation in the cultural heritage sector. It addresses questions like: How to address citizens/stakeholders when doing a cultural heritage project? Why is participation important? What basic approaches of participation do exist? How to identify stakeholders? How to build up and maintain a network of stakeholders? A special focus when dealing with the subject of participation needs to be put on communication skills: How to decide what kind of participation and communication is appropriate? How to organise strategic communication with stakeholders?

HERITAGE-PRO Module 5 builds on these questions and focuses on the communication competences, soft skills and tools required for professionals across disciplines to be able to effectively communicate internally and externally in the preservation and valorisation of cultural heritage. At the internal level, sensitive communication is a key issue when working with different disciplines and is therefore treated as a priority issue in the HERITAGE-PRO training scheme. Furthermore, with regard to communication beyond the organization and/or team, moving from the traditional supply-driven approach to rather demand-driven preservation management approaches (or adding to the first) requires getting to know the target expert and non-expert audience(s) and being able to convey key messages according to their expectations and needs.

In this Module, we adhere to an understanding this term that aligns with the notion of interdisciplinary communication explained by J. Britt Holbrook “according to the Bataille-Lyotard thesis” (2013, p. 1.875). Under this thesis, interdisciplinary communication has its origin in a breakdown of communication, when interdisciplinary disagreements cannot be settled “on disciplinary terms, that is, on terms acceptable to the adherents of each discipline”. After this first moment – and more important for the purposes of this Module – , “[t]he second moment of strong interdisciplinary communication (...) is the invention of a new genre of discourse, one that is not merely an integration of the previously existing genres, but a novel co-creation of those who have risked and relinquished their previous disciplinary identities. (Holbrook, 2013, p. 1.876). This idea of co-creation – that goes beyond integration, or sacrifice of one’s disciplinary identity in favour of other’s – underlies the notion of interdisciplinary communication articulating this Module.

Module 5 is illustrated with strategic examples – one of them is the German “Burgenblogger”, which links heritage management, heritage preservation, regional planning and social activities. Burgenblogger is a project developed by the General Directorate for Cultural Heritage Rhineland Palatinate (GDKE), the Rhein-Zeitung, a regional newspaper from Koblenz, and the Entwicklungsagentur Rheinland-Pfalz (EA), a state-owned non-profit organisation responsible for regional development. The aims are to examine the opportunities and problems of the UNESCO World Heritage “Upper Middle Rhine Valley” and to tell the story of its citizens and their culture. The different Burgenbloggers – so far 5 different persons – get organisational and financial support by the three project partners, GDKE, Rhein-Zeitung and EA. The first Burgenblogger started its first term from May till October 2015. For half a year, she lived in the tower room of the Sooneck Castle, built in the 11th century, by Niederheimbach, a municipality on the Western side of the valley. There she reported about the people and the culture along the Middle Rhine valley. While

travelling around the UNESCO World Heritage, and looking for its people and its history, the blogger casted a different view on the region and looked for special features in ordinary places. Her and her successors' assignments were to let themselves drift, to travel across the valley and its land with open eyes and open mind, to find out what it means to live, to love, to be at odds and to grow in the Middle Rhine. One thing the bloggers did most notably was to listen. What he/she had heard, was transmitted through different channels of social media; even beyond the borders of the valley.



Picture: Sooneck Castle (CR: Entwicklungsagentur Rheinland-Pfalz e.V.)

References (max 2-3)

Holbrook, J. B. (2013). What is interdisciplinary communication? Reflections on the very idea of disciplinary integration. *Synthese*, 190, 1.865-1.879. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-012-0179-7>

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