

The Ephemeral Re-Use of Cultural Heritage: The Incorporation of the Festival Phenomenon Within Monuments and Archaeological Sites in Lebanon

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Abstract : It is now widely accepted that the preservation of cultural heritage must go beyond simple restoration and renovation actions. While some historic monuments have been preserved for millennia, many of them, less important or simply neglected because of lack of money, have disappeared. As a result, the adaptation of monuments and archaeological sites to new functions allow them to 'survive'. Temporary activities or 'ephemeral' re-use, are increasingly recognized as a means of vitalization of deprived areas and enhancement of historic sites that became obsolete. They have the potential to increase economic and cultural value while making the best use of existing resources. However, there are often conservation and preservation issues related to the implementation of this type of re-use, which can also threaten the integrity and authenticity of archaeological sites and monuments if they have not been properly managed. This paper aims to get a better knowledge of the ephemeral re-use of heritage, and more specifically the subject of the incorporation of the festival phenomenon within the monuments and archaeological sites in Lebanon, a topic that is not yet studied enough. This paper tried to determine the elements that compose it, in order to analyze this phenomenon and to trace its good practices, by comparing international study cases to important national cases: the International Festival of Baalbek, the International Festival of Byblos and the International Festival of Beiteddine. Various factors have been studied and analyzed in order to best respond to the main problematic of this paper: 'How can we preserve the integrity of sites and monuments after the integration of an ephemeral function? And what are the preventive conservation measures to be taken when holding festivals in archaeological sites with fragile structures?' The impacts of the technical problems were first analyzed using various data and more particularly the effects of mass tourism, the integration of temporary installations, sound vibrations, the effects of unstudied lighting, until the mystification of heritage. Unfortunately, the DGA (General Direction of Antiquities in Lebanon) does not specify any frequency limit for the sound vibrations emitted by the speakers during musical festivals. In addition, there is no requirement from its part regarding the installations of the lighting systems in the historic monuments and no monitoring is done in situ, due to the lack of awareness of the impact that could be generated by such interventions, and due to the lack of materials and tools needed for the monitoring process. The study and analysis of the various data mentioned above led us to the elaboration of the main objective of this paper, which is the establishment of a list of recommendations. This list enables to define various preventive conservation measures to be taken during the holding of the festivals within the cultural heritage sites in Lebanon. We strongly hope that this paper will be an awareness document to start taking into consideration several factors previously neglected, in order to improve the conservation practices in the archaeological sites and monuments during the incorporation of the festival phenomenon.

Keywords : archaeology, authenticity, conservation, cultural heritage, festival, historic sites, integrity, monuments, tourism

Conference Title : ICCTMHS 2020 : International Conference on Cultural Tourism, Museum and Heritage Studies

Conference Location : London, United Kingdom

Conference Dates : January 20-21, 2020