



ICOMOS TheoPhilos ISC Conference

The Protection of Archaeological Heritage: Theory Meets Practice

Florence (Italy), 12–13 March 2026

Conference Abstracts

SESSION I, Thursday, 12 March 2026

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Inhabited Archaeological Remains: the Example of the West Front of Bury St Edmunds Abbey

For 180 years, the distinction between living and dead monuments has been present within conservation discourse. Living monuments are buildings still in use for their original or adapted purposes; dead monuments are uninhabited archaeological remains, valued primarily for their historical and evidential significance. Although ignored by the Venice Charter, the distinction reemerged in 2003 through the work of ICCROM. In England, the protection of historic monuments implicitly follows this distinction, operating through separate regulatory systems: listed building control (administered through the planning system) for occupied structures, and scheduled monument consent (managed by Historic England) for archaeological remains.

Inhabited archaeological sites, however, challenge this binary distinction. Bury St Edmunds Abbey was once one of England's most important medieval monasteries; its ruined Norman West Front—a scheduled ancient monument and Grade I listed building—exemplifies this complexity. Five houses inserted into the structure in the 18th century lay derelict, requiring a major conservation and conversion project completed in the early 2000s. The project was celebrated by English Heritage in their landmark 2008 publication *Constructive Conservation in Practice* as an example of creative cooperation between developers and heritage bodies.

This paper argues that rather than undermining the distinction between living and dead monuments, examples such as the West Front instead validate it. The project succeeded precisely because it acknowledged both the archaeological significance of the medieval remains and the living heritage represented by continuous habitation. This points toward a richer, more traditional understanding of the historic environment—one that challenges modern notions of purity and authenticity by embracing the layered complexity of inhabited ruins as legitimate expressions of cultural continuity.

David Garrard – UK

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Intending the Monument: Notes Towards an Archaeology of the Future

Alois Riegl, in his famous essay of 1903, observed that the ‘modern cult of monuments’ had entailed the de-centring of forward-looking intention – of the ‘intentional-commemorative monument’, dedicated in the present in order to project meanings into a more or less remote future – and its replacement with ‘historical’ values whose primary reference was to the past, and whose effect was to decouple monumentality from its formally commemorative function. More than a hundred years after Riegl’s essay, what can now be said about the temporal and intentional orientation of the 21st-century monument? This paper – a brief précis of an ongoing collaborative research project – brings together recent discussions of monumentality by Françoise Choay and Thordis Arrhenius with accounts of temporality and intentionality (in the broader philosophical sense of that term) drawn from the phenomenological tradition of Edmund Husserl, to ask what part these sites play within our contemporary operations with time. What light is shed on this question by the current pre-eminence of archaeology (the ‘theory of origins’) among the monumental sciences; or, conversely, by the processes of formal ‘consecration’ and managerial oversight that now supply our global paradigm for the care of monuments? How do the now-familiar critiques of positivist archaeology and ‘authorised’ heritage complicate the picture? The paper concludes with a reflection on Fredric Jameson’s idea of ‘prophetic archaeology’ as a model for understanding these issues.

Franca Malservisi – France

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The Restoration of Roman Monuments in French Theory and Practice: from Exemplary Projects to the Decline of the Archaeological Exception

At the beginning of the Nineteenth century, the restorations of incomplete Roman buildings, like the Titus arch in Rome or its French counterpart the antique arch in Orange, were seminal moments in the development of a shared theory. The crystallization of a method for completing monuments that architects had been surveying and completing graphically since the Renaissance resulted in principles clearly stated by Quatremère de Quincy in his *Dictionnaire historique d’architecture* (1832). Until the beginning of the Twentieth century, these principles remained the theoretical benchmark for archaeological remains, implemented, for example, by Viollet-le-Duc to complete the Saint-André gate in Autun. Unsurprisingly, the complexity of certain large-scale monuments, like theatres and arenas, required significant adaptations, including the damaged ones, and the recognizability of additions.

The interwar period marked a turning point: in the reconstruction of the trophy of Augustus in la Turbie and the presentation of the ancient ruins at the archaeological site of Vaison-la-Romaine, the quantity of materials added far exceeded that of the ancient stones. The decline of specific theoretical foundations marked a new stage during the 1950s, when the objective of overall harmony, a principle often evoked in France about projects involving medieval and later monuments, was applied in the de-restoration of the aforementioned Orange roman arch.

This contribution offers an analysis of the effect of several phenomena on the gradual dissolution of a particular practice and theory for ancient monument conservation, such as the decline of the role of ancient ruins as models of timeless beauty and the impact of tourism promotion on archaeological sites. Recent projects, such as the restoration of the Maison Carrée in Nîmes, will enable us to examine the arguments that justify current practice, a practice that no longer retains the specificity of the early 19th century.

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The Theory and the Cultural Criteria of Archeological Conservation

What we can understand as archaeology? The word archaeology comes from the Greek *archaiologia*, composed by two words: *archaios*, “old”; and *logos*, “study”. In the Oxford Dictionary we can find that archaeology is the study of human history and prehistory through the excavation of sites and the analysis of artefacts and other physical remains.

In this sense, we can retrace some very important points: the knowledge and the interpretation of the remains, in function of its situation, in urban context or in landscape. Sometimes the remains are part of the stratifications of a monument (as San Clemente in Rome). Or are at the interior of other preexistences (as Crypta Balbi, Palazzo Altemps, in Rome). Or in a different quote compared to a nowadays pedestrian level (Horti Sallustiani, Rome).

The physical problems like water protection, the top of the walls – capping –, the conservation of the construction system, the green, the roots of trees, etc. (for example Largo Argentina, Fori Imperiali, Clunia, Acropolis) make think in design and materials, compatible or incompatible. A new architecture, can be designed, for protection: only useful; for example, Saint Roman in Gal, Perigeux; and with didactic essays; for example, Piazza Armerina; conservation of the ambiance. Problem of “Disneyland effect” (Xanten, Carnutum). How to enter in the archaeological sites (for example the historic entrance in Ercolano; Selinunte), the route inside (with runways to not walk over the old pavements) and the accessibility for all are another important subjects.

In this work we will like to give examples of good and bad solutions for conservation of archaeology.

Helka Dzsacsovszki – Hungary/Germany

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Theoretical Frameworks for the Protection of Medieval Ruins in Hungary, c. 1964

Medieval and Renaissance monuments, rather than ancient monuments, catalysed the development and systematisation of restoration principles in Hungary during the twentieth century. Because of centuries of wars and invasions, these monuments mostly remained in ruins, often in a largely fragmented form. This circumstance brought the methodology of archaeological restoration to the forefront when considering these medieval and Renaissance monuments. Led by architect Miklós Horler, a group of architects from the Design Department of the National Monument Inspectorate studied their own restoration tasks alongside earlier examples and synthesised them into a guideline. The results were first published in *Műemlékvédelem*, the Hungarian journal of monument protection, in early 1964. The principles were then presented to an international audience at the conference on ruin conservation held in Budapest in October 1964, by which time some points had been slightly amended for clarification. These changes already reflect consideration of the Venice Charter, adopted in May 1964, but the relationship between the principles and the Charter was further discussed at a national workshop a year later.

This paper focuses on the theoretical position and immediate evolution of the guidelines for the protection of ruins in 1964–1965. After introducing its points under the three main categories of conservation, additions that facilitate interpretation and practical use, it analyses how the Venice Charter affected the principles originally laid down by the architects at the National Monument Inspectorate. This case study shows the close interconnectedness and mutual impact of theory and practice in 1960s Hungary. More broadly, it demonstrates how national contexts shaped the reception and application of international conservation theory, offering insights relevant to contemporary debates about implementing global heritage frameworks locally.

SESSION II, Thursday, 12 March 2026

Rosa Anna Genovese – Italy

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Examples of Best Practices in Conservation, Restoration and Protection of Archaeological Heritage

The relation between Archaeology and Information Technology falls within the broad scope of a sector of studies defined as Digital Humanities, usually structured and provided with the vastest bibliographical production. The dialogue and collaboration between scientific disciplines and Archaeology led to the broadening of the research focus on Antiquity and a positive impact on the work method of epistemological character.

The experimentation of these new methods is attested also in the Archaeological Area of Pompeii, where throughout the '80s there was the passage from a mechanographic-computational system to actual Information Technology. The 'Progetto Neapolis' was started in March 1987, entrusted to a Consortium established between IBM-Italy and Fiat Engineering.

Information Technology, previously considered a technical aid, is now so rooted that it influences research methodology, with epistemological consequences. The following examples will be examined: the restoration of the Villa 'Augustea' in Somma Vesuviana (Naples, Italy); the restoration of the Mosaic of Alexander, from the 'House of the Faun' in Pompeii, now conserved at MANN Museum of Naples, representing one of the most extraordinary testimonies of ancient mosaic art; and the establishment of a possible Mediterranean Cultural Route in the Regions of Southern Italy within the context of tangible and intangible Cultural Heritage. The objective is to build a programmatic tool to enhance the territory that was crossed, in ancient times, by the Via ab Regio ad Capuam (132 BC).

Simay Cansu Ekici Üner, Güliz Bilgin Altınöz – Turkey

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Beyond Isolated Ruins: Connectivity, Borders, and the Conservation Challenges of Tao-Klarjeti Medieval Monasteries in Turkey

This paper examines medieval monastery complexes in the Tao-Klarjeti region as archaeological heritage shaped by historical, social, and political connections that extend across national borders. Active between the 9th and 13th centuries as major centers of Orthodox Christendom, most of these complexes are now located in Turkey. Built on high mountain peaks in the interior regions, they are scattered along the Çoruh valley formed by water sources cutting through mountainous terrain. While the main churches survive, many associated buildings remain in varying states of ruin, forming dispersed archaeological assemblages within living villages.

The paper explores the potential of connectivity ontologies for understanding the plurality of these archaeological monuments at multiple scales: the building, the settlement, the region, and the transnational context. It focuses on the ongoing relationships among monuments, locals, non-human actors, and state institutions rather than treating conservation solely as a technical act concerned with material authenticity. These relationships shape how conservation decisions are negotiated or justified, often impacted by diplomatic sensitivity and uneven political visibility.

Conservation practices reveal significant tensions at these sites. Restoration and structural reinforcement projects are selectively implemented depending on location, accessibility, and symbolic alignment with dominant heritage narratives. Treating these monasteries only as isolated

and singular objects risks severing both their historical networks and contemporary social entanglements. This paper argues for a holistic and dialogical approach that recognizes archaeological monuments as relational assemblages. This method provides a way to understand the complexities of borderland heritage, showing how archaeological preservation is closely linked to issues of identity, authority, and ongoing community presence.

Evrin Ulsan – Türkiye

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What Defines Visitor Paths? A Values-Based Approach to Heritage Visitation in Archaeological Site of Ani (Türkiye)

Visitor path choices in archaeological sites are affected by a variety of environmental, spatial, cultural and individual factors. Design and management of visits in archaeological sites needs meticulous consideration and management of these factors to enhance visitor experiences while ensuring safe visits for visitors and artefacts. A satisfactory visit should enable visitors to interpret the site's diverse values within its wider historical and geographical context. Yet, many multi-layered archaeological sites privilege one or a few values in their presentation, overshadowing diversity of values and misinterpreting sites' significance against their long-durée and multi-layered accumulation.

This paper aims to present a policy-based methodology for route planning in archaeological sites. The selected case for the analysis is the World Heritage Site of Ani. Situated on Türkiye's northeastern national border with Armenia, this medieval relict walled-city features prominent aboveground monumental structures, a still-excavated archaeological site with subterranean archaeological deposits, and a cultural landscape that offers natural attributes, rock-cut formations, and a scenery view across the surrounding vast terrain formed by valley topography. The site is open to site visits, though limited to the walled area, honouring mostly the site's architectural value and monumentality.

The paper first delineates the essential factors for delineating visitor routes at archaeological sites. Then, it introduces the key features, values and attributes of Ani from various perspectives, followed by a presentation and analysis of current visiting circulation. Finally, a proposal for a more balanced and comprehensive visitation framework is formulated for Ani from a values-based perspective, considering the environmental and spatial constraints.

Divina Abou Jaoude – Lebanon

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Ethics and Practices of Urban Archaeological Integration

The presentation examines archaeological case studies embedded within Beirut's dense historical fabric, where post-civil war reconstruction revealed significant archaeological layers, compelling planners, architects, and conservators to make complex decisions regarding the preservation, relocation, and interpretation of the fragile remains.

The selected case studies illustrate contrasting conservation strategies. The first concerns the remains of Beirut's medieval maritime castle, preserved in situ within a dense pedestrian urban zone. This case highlights the challenges of conserving a stratified archaeological site that evolved through multiple historical phases, while ensuring its protection, legibility, and sustainable management within an active urban environment. The other case studies address parts of the Roman hippodrome, whose remains were carefully documented, dismantled, and reinstalled within the basements of new constructions, transforming these spaces into urban museums integrated into contemporary buildings.

Together, these interventions demonstrate how authenticity, accessibility, and urban functionality were negotiated under intense development pressure. They also raise critical questions regarding the definition of in situ preservation when controlled displacement becomes unavoidable. A comparative perspective between urban and rural archaeological contexts is introduced, emphasizing that urban sites often require innovative, reversible, and site-specific solutions, while rural settings generally allow more conventional conservation approaches.

Ultimately, the presentation aims to stimulate discussion on the evolving ethics and practices of urban archaeological conservation and on strategies for embedding archaeological heritage into the rhythm of contemporary urban life without compromising its cultural and historical integrity.

Francesca Brancaccio – Italy

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Towards Sustainable and Integrated Conservation and Management of Archaeological Heritage in Albania: The Archaeological Park of Bylis and Kos Through New International Strategies and Synergies

Albania has entered a crucial phase in the management of its cultural heritage through the implementation of the National Strategy for Culture 2026–2030: the evolution of protection and valorization models in the country focuses on the transition from fragmented management to a systemic and participatory approach. The paper examines the impact of a conservation plan which integrates conservation and local tourism development, recently adopted for Bylis and Klos Archaeological Park. Lack of management and exposure to atmospheric agents, rainwater action, deposition of biological materials and colonization by vegetation have contributed to the degradation, compromising both physical stability and historical readability. Conservation interventions are planned to be minimally invasive, compatible with original materials, reversible and supported by accurate scientific documentation and continuous monitoring. The Plan includes activities for understanding and safeguarding, including surveys, assessments of conservation status, and operational strategies over a five-year program. The objective is to develop a coherent and sustainable vision for the medium- to long-term management of the site, aligning preservation needs with enhancement and accessibility objectives.

The subsequent phase focuses on Detailed Conservation Projects based on representativeness and conservation urgency, translating the strategic vision of the Plan into concrete, measurable, and implementable actions, fully compliant with national regulations and international conservation standards. The fundamental role of international cooperation is explored, highlighting targets and recent agreements between Albanian institutions and Italian partners, facing the challenges from 2026, including the increase in the culture budget (+20%) for supporting sustainable tourism and balance of growing tourist pressure (12 million visitors in 2025) with the protection of UNESCO sites and contexts still under excavation.

SESSION III, Friday, 13 March 2026

Shirley Cefai, Joann Cassar and Reuben Grima – Malta

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A Century of Conservation Practice at the Tarxien Temples, Malta

The prehistoric temples of Malta have been inscribed as a serial UNESCO World Heritage property since 1992, and have received attention in international debates on the conservation of megalithic monuments. Among them, the Tarxien Temples are particularly significant for establishing the chronological framework of Maltese prehistory. This paper examines the history of their preservation, interpretation, and presentation over the past century, situating successive interventions within evolving theoretical, ethical, scientific, and philosophical approaches to conservation.

The primary focus is the unrealised shelter proposal of 1939, interpreted here as an early expression of preventive and reversible conservation principles later formalised in international doctrine. The paper analyses how successive interventions at Tarxien reflect changing attitudes towards conservation and public presentation. Excavated between 1915 and 1919, the site was partially reconstructed and opened to the public soon after. By the 1930s, however, the exposed megaliths—made of highly porous Globigerina Limestone—showed advanced deterioration. In response, several decorated blocks were removed to the National Museum in Valletta in the 1950s, while a bull-and-sow bas-relief was retained in situ beneath a temporary shelter. Similar challenges re-emerged in the early twenty-first century with the relocation indoors of graffiti-bearing megaliths. In 2014, the entire site was protected by a reversible shelter structure.

These interventions are critically assessed through contemporary and retrospective conservation frameworks, including the Venice Charter, the Nara Document on Authenticity, and later ICOMOS guidance on minimal intervention, reversibility, legibility, and in situ conservation. Scientific perspectives on stone decay, shelter microclimates, and climate change are integrated, alongside broader debates on authenticity, ethics, and the potential reintegration of displaced elements.

Franceen Galea – Malta

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From Destruction to Preservation: An Island's Journey to Protect Archaeological Monuments

The Maltese Islands provide a compelling case study in the long-term protection of archaeological heritage, illustrating how theoretical principles of conservation intersect with practical, legal, and political realities. Shaped by successive civilisations from prehistory to the early modern period, Malta's archaeological landscape comprises movable and immovable heritage of artistic, architectural, historical, archaeological, ethnographic, palaeontological, and geological significance, including above-ground, underground, underwater, and intangible heritage (Cultural Heritage Act, 2002).

This paper examines the theoretical foundations and methodological development of archaeological protection in Malta through its evolving legislative framework. It focuses on the emergence of formal measures in the early twentieth century, from the Protection of Antiquities Ordinance (1910) to the Protection of Antiquities Act (1925). These laws are analysed as pragmatic responses to pressing challenges, including urban and infrastructural development, antiquities trafficking, colonial and ecclesiastical priorities, and local resistance shaped by limited public awareness and entrenched institutional power structures.

The study explores tensions between British colonial governance, ecclesiastical authority, and emerging local heritage awareness, highlighting the role of the Committee of Management (1903) and Malta's first Curator of Antiquities, Dr Themistocles Żammit. Case studies—including the deliberate destruction of the prehistoric temple at KerĊem (Gozo) for a village church and the near-loss of the Phoenician site at Mtarfa—illustrate how monuments once considered expendable were lost or narrowly preserved. Marking the centenary of Malta's first legislative act formally recognising and protecting archaeological and historical heritage, this paper recounts the islands' journey from destruction to preservation.

Eleni-Eva Toumbakari – Greece

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Stabilized Earth-Based Mortars in the Conservation of Prehistoric Stone Remains: Durability, Sustainability, and the Safeguarding of the Image of the Ruin

The protection of Cultural Heritage structures requires the integrated study of construction materials and structural systems as a basis for informed conservation strategies. In prehistoric stone construction, joints were typically filled with earth-based materials, a practice that persisted in later periods until the Roman era. Until recently, however, repair interventions relied predominantly on lime-cement or, more recently, hydraulic lime mortars. Although such mortars may be designed to exhibit physico-mechanical compatibility to in situ materials, they remain inconsistent with the original material logic.

To address this issue, a research project was initiated by the Directorate for Restoration of Ancient Monuments of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture, aiming at the development of repair mortars based on earth materials stabilized with a small cement quantity. This paper discusses the theoretical and technical rationale behind this approach and summarizes the principal properties of the developed compositions.

Since 2010, these mortars have been successfully applied to prehistoric stone monuments across Greece, from Crete to the Northeastern Aegean. Locally sourced sands and earth materials, often derived directly from the archaeological sites, were used in their preparation. Selected case studies demonstrate that these interventions achieve visual integration with the surrounding environment, thereby safeguarding the image of the ruin. Long-term performance has shown that stabilized earth-based mortars offer remarkable durability, even in coastal environments. More than a decade after application, the mortars remain in excellent condition, while respecting the original construction technology. At the same time, the use of local materials and the recycling of excavation soils significantly reduce the environmental footprint of both the repair materials and the conservation works as a whole.

Gilly Carr – UK

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A Window into the Past? The Fight Against Holocaust Denial and Distortion in Poland

In the last decade, archaeologists working at Holocaust sites have utilised a method of preservation and heritage presentation: the 'windows of time', as Majdanek Memorial calls them. These features are glass boxes or sheets of glass on a concrete base which allow visitors to see important parts of the site revealed during archaeological excavation, preserved rather than backfilled. One of the key reasons for making parts of the site below the ground visible in this way is to provide proof of the past – a past that has been the subject of distortion and denial. While archaeologists cannot always predict what features of a site they will find when they dig, the choice of what feature to preserve

under glass is always deliberate: at Majdanek, a camp road made from tombstones from Jewish cemeteries in Lublin; at Sobibor, the gas chamber; at Płaszów, four separate features of the camp no evidence for which can be seen above the soil. All provide proof of the past.

At the Miła Street site in the former Warsaw Ghetto, a permanent solution has yet to be found, and the excavation is under temporary shelter in a large marquée. The two basements of houses revealed by this excavation allows a dual narrative of both the Warsaw Ghetto uprising, but also ordinary daily life in the Ghetto, thus providing a challenge to a dominant narrative of heroic resistance fighters.

This paper discusses the phenomenon of the 'archaeological window' and other modes of preservation of excavations at Holocaust sites in Poland, exploring their function, success and drawbacks, and asking whether they represent the future for archaeological excavations at sites of Holocaust heritage in Europe in an age of distortion and denial.

Rona Shani Evyasaf – Israel

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Reconstructing Ancient Gardens, Theory Meets Practice: Theoretical Research vs. Physical Conservation of Archaeological Monuments

In antiquity, gardens were integral to private space, especially royal gardens, which symbolized sovereign power. Presenting archaeological monuments without them results in an incomplete representation of ancient heritage.

The primary challenge in the reconstruction, protection, and presentation of archaeological gardens is that the core of them, the vegetation, rarely survives or leaves clear traces. In recent decades, awareness of "Garden archaeology" has grown. Many excavations now incorporate specialized techniques and research methods that yield extensive data.

This paper will demonstrate how interdisciplinary research that integrates garden excavations, archaeobotanical research, and the analysis of ancient historical and artistic descriptions can build a better base for understanding ancient gardens. And how, with the integration between that data and landscape architecture principles, we create a more scientifically accurate theoretical reconstruction of ancient gardens.

To date, few reconstructions of "archaeological gardens" have been executed globally. Many of these projects relied mainly on historical or artistic research alone and are subject to critical review. This paper will address the tension between theoretical reconstruction and physical restoration of archaeological gardens, particularly for public displays. Including issues like the authenticity of the reconstruction, as well as practical maintenance challenges, and the critical concern, as physical reconstruction can lead to the destruction of other archaeological remains.

ICOMOS Florence Charter on Historic Gardens defines the structure and conservation of historic gardens. However, it does not fully address the status of gardens revealed through archaeological excavations. This paper discusses the differences between "historic gardens" and "archaeological gardens," highlighting the need for a new charter to address the specific challenges and protection of the latter.

SESSION IV, Friday, 13 March 2026

Stefano Gizzi – Italy

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Coverings For Archaeological Sites As A Matter Of Architecture

Faced with the serious problems caused by climate change and increased acid rain, it is now necessary to take ever greater care to protect and preserve archaeological sites, both those that have just been excavated and those that are already accessible and open to the public.

The report will examine some of the solutions developed in the Mediterranean area, and especially in Greece, regarding the problems of covering archaeological sites. The various proposals and types of roofing carried out by both the Greek Superintendence and the various foreign missions operating there (French, Italian, American, British, Austrian and German) will be examined, from complete reconstructions of buildings – the Stoa of Attalos in Athens – to temporary or permanent canopies, from the most traditional to the most innovative, from the simplest to the most complex and even provocative, from direct to indirect, highlighting their strengths and weaknesses, particularly with regard to the serious risk of alienation of structures completely hidden within enveloping shells from the landscape, as in the paradoxical situation, approved by UNESCO, of the marquee over the temple of Bassae. In addition to the archaeological sites of Attica and the Peloponnese, controversial solutions will be evaluated, such as those of the Italian Mission in Crete (concrete slabs covering some rooms of the Minoan palace of Festos).

Although it is impossible to make definitive assessments, it is clear that the main problems lie in the choice of materials, respect for the context, presentation to the public and understanding of the sites. The design of a protective structure therefore requires a well-thought-out architectural project and a design concept that integrates function, form and appropriate integration into the surrounding landscape.

Li Xie – China

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Petra Beyond the Nabatean Capital: From Archaeological Park to Living Nomadic Heritage

World Heritage often prioritises the more visible architectural and urban achievements of settled civilisations, overshadowing the less tangible legacies of nomadic cultures. Petra, celebrated as the Nabatean capital with its iconic architecture blending Greek, Egyptian and Assyrian influences, epitomises this imbalance. While Petra's urban grandeur is rightly recognised as the world famous "lost city", its roots in a broader nomadic trading civilisation and a pastoral nomadic landscape remain underappreciated.

The limited recognition reflects two broader issues in heritage conservation: 1) archaeological sites are often treated as relics of the remote past, disconnected from contemporary communities; 2) the spiritual and ecological wisdom of nomadic cultures is frequently overshadowed by the material remains of settled civilisations. In Petra's case, this disconnect coincides with the modern development mode led by urbanisation, causing the local pastoral nomadic communities to receive lower cultural and social recognition.

This paper attempts to challenge Petra's dominant heritage narrative by finding its deeper unbroken nomadic continuum manifested in shared landscapes, ecological knowledge, and spiritual ties to the land. This re-imagining of Petra as part of an enduring nomadic civilisation breaks the dichotomy between ancient and modern, culture and nature, tangible and intangible, settled and nomadic cultures. It opens the door to a more integrated and inclusive approach to archaeological heritage

conservation and development. By recognising the nomadic worldview with its unique ecological wisdom and adaptability, and recognising the active adaptive effort of the local Bedouin communities in a post-digital age, we may even uncover imaginative alternatives to the conventional urbanisation models, fostering a “nomadic” inspired sustainable urban future.

Lilas Mohammed Ali – France

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Major Projects for Major Archaeological Sites in Syria: How did the Story Begin?

Since the 1920s, restoration work has flourished in Syria, especially in historic city centers such as Aleppo, Damascus, and the historic city of Bosra. Restoration operations have accelerated in historic city centers, especially after their inscription on the World Heritage List since the 1970s. The wave of restoration projects has gradually spread to many important archaeological sites such as Palmyra, Saint-Simon, Ugarit, and others.

In the late 1950s in Syria, a new term emerged in archaeology: “major archaeological projects.” These referred to large-scale restoration projects for archaeological sites and historical buildings dating back to various periods. Later, in the early 1960s, another new term appeared in the same field: “exceptional archaeological projects.” This term was applied to major archaeological sites. Both major and exceptional projects had long-term restoration programs and allocated budgets from the government’s development budget. These projects were spread across diverse geographical areas in Syria and did not only restore monuments in situ but also included the option of relocating them in cases of danger, particularly during the 1970s with the construction of the Euphrates Dam.

This paper provides an overview of the process of restoring major archaeological sites in Syria and examines the historical approach to this relatively new field of archaeology. It also addresses the ongoing debate surrounding the preservation of archaeological sites and the motivations behind their conservation. We seek to answer several questions regarding how these sites were chosen, and whether this was related to their geographical location, their condition, or their historical importance, or whether other factors may have influenced the selection criteria.

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Constructing Alternative Narratives for Archaeological Heritage Interpretation: Hi(stories) for Tell Tayinat in Antakya, Turkey

In addition to complications in documentation and conservation, the multi-layered structure and interwoven hi(stories) of archaeological heritage makes it difficult to interpret and present. The 2008 ICOMOS Charter for Interpretation and Presentation provides guidelines to overcome such dilemmas. Millennia of separation from today’s societies challenges cultural relationship, making stewardship incomprehensible for nearby communities. This paper proposes methods and themes to construct new interaction between communities and sites based on alternative narratives, focusing on Tell Tayinat on the Orontes in Amuq Valley. Early Bronze Age and Iron Age occupation is complemented with nearby Tell Atchana in between. Following the University of Chicago excavations in the 1930s, a new phase of research began in 1999 under the Amuq Valley Regional Project, developing into and continuing as the Tayinat Archaeological Project.

Following limitations on fieldwork due to land ownership issues, a new sustainable and temporary architecture initiative was developed and exhibited at the 2025 Venice Architecture Biennale, proposing shelters and functions based on intangible heritage for creating future narratives. The first track focuses on a socio-cultural association generated through the interaction of archaeological research. Photographs of the 1930s Oriental Institute expedition directed by Robert Braidwood

document people as well as finds. Made accessible by ISAC digital archive, they provide potential for co-creation and association through a social history of former and present workers from the surrounding villages. The individual and family hi(stories) produced could become a frame that enables the connection, inclusivity and stewardship of surrounding communities with architectural designs creating shelters for interaction. Further potential for intangible heritage connections may be based on continuing practices such as building, farming, cooking, clothing and children's games.

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Community Participation and Protection of Archaeological Sites in Uganda: Lessons from the Indigenous Knowledge Systems

The protection of archaeological sites in Uganda remains a complex challenge due to pressures from environmental degradation, infrastructure development, land-use change, and limited institutional capacity. While formal legal and technical frameworks for heritage protection exist, their effectiveness is often undermined by insufficient community involvement and the marginalization of local knowledge systems. This paper examines the role of community participation in the protection of archaeological sites in Uganda, with a particular focus on lessons drawn from indigenous knowledge systems.

Using selected examples from different archaeological landscapes in Uganda, the paper explores how indigenous belief systems, customary laws, oral traditions, and clan-based custodianship have historically contributed to safeguarding archaeological sites.

The paper further analyses the consequences of conservation approaches that exclude indigenous knowledge, often resulting in community disengagement, loss of local stewardship, and increased site vulnerability. In contrast, experiences where local communities and traditional authorities are meaningfully involved in site management demonstrate improved protection outcomes, social legitimacy, and long-term sustainability. The study highlights the strong alignment between indigenous knowledge systems and contemporary conservation theories that emphasize values-based, people-centered, and inclusive heritage management.

The paper concludes by advocating for an integrated management approach that bridges archaeological conservation theory with indigenous knowledge and community participation. It argues that recognizing traditional custodianship, strengthening participatory governance structures, and embedding cultural values into site interpretation are critical to the sustainable protection of archaeological heritage in Uganda.

SESSION V, Friday, 13 March 2026

Dimitrios Zygomas – Greece

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A Solid Theoretical Basis for a Delicate Issue? The Guidelines of International Doctrinal Documents for Works on Archaeological Monuments

Archaeological monuments constitute a special segment of the built heritage, primarily characterized by a ruinous state and a limited range of potential uses. Their specificity calls for an equally distinct treatment, a vital part of which are the works conducted on the monuments in order to secure their preservation and enhancement. The type and scale of these works have often generated considerable concern, particularly in cases of voluminous reconstructions. Solid theoretical guidance is therefore required, and to this end, international doctrinal documents stand out as a potential resource.

Among them, the Athens Charter (1931) was one of the first to lay down principles for action “in the case of ruins”, followed by a considerable number of texts, the most distinguished being the ICOMOS Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage (1990) and the revised European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (1992). A sound contribution to optimum action calls for a complete and thorough review of these texts, which is precisely the goal of this paper. Starting with their definition of the term “archaeological monument”, it proceeds with an analytical examination, categorization and appraisal of their guidelines for appropriate works, and culminates in original conclusions as to the adequacy of the overall framework and potential directions for its development. The material for this task will be gathered through bibliographical research, combined with the author’s experience from the longtime study and conservation of archaeological monuments in Greece.

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Integrating Theory and Practice in Archaeological Conservation: Best Practices from the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) Conservation Department

In the landscape of Mediterranean archaeology, the transition from theoretical conservation principles to field execution presents significant challenges, particularly regarding material degradation, accessibility, and climate resilience. This presentation examines the comprehensive conservation methodology developed by the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) Conservation Department, serving as a model for “best practice” in the management of complex immovable heritage.

At the IAA, conservation is treated as a multidisciplinary process—integrating architects, engineers, chemists, and archaeologists—that begins with meticulous documentation and ends with long-term maintenance. Drawing on recent projects, this paper explores the IAA’s “values-based” approach, which balances the scientific preservation of fabric with the contemporary need for public accessibility and cultural interpretation.

Key examples will highlight the application of the Venice Charter and subsequent international standards in a local context, demonstrating how the IAA addresses the specific “Theory Meets Practice” dilemma: Preventive Conservation through advanced monitoring systems and reversible protective measures; Material Compatibility through the use of traditional lime-based mortars and stone-replacement techniques that respect the authenticity of the original structure; and Public

Integration through best practices in making “ruins” legible and safe for visitors without compromising their archaeological integrity.

By presenting these field-tested strategies, the IAA offers a framework for how national heritage bodies can effectively bridge the gap between abstract conservation theory and the practical realities of protecting archaeological monuments in a rapidly developing world.

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Conservation-Led Interpretation and Visitor Experience at the Roman Amphitheatre of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa, Romania

The Roman amphitheatre of Ulpia Traiana Sarmizegetusa underwent a long sequence of transformations, from post-antique decline and abandon, to reuse as a stone quarry, and several modern recovery stages. Early 20th-century brought excavation, clearing and limited consolidation, while late 20th century saw extensive excavations and structural consolidation, employing cement-based mortars and visually integrated but materially intrusive additions. The latest intervention, completed in August 2025, critically engages with this layered history and aims to restore both the monument’s material integrity and its spatial legibility, while contributing to the activation of the wider archaeological site.

The project addresses three main challenges: derestoration, through the removal or correction of incompatible materials and elements; conservation of architectural structures and sculptural fragments, supported by detailed archaeological and architectural research that revealed the amphitheatre’s original composition and subsequent transformations; and the recovery of the monument’s spatial identity. The process begins with the re-establishment of ancient walking levels and continues with clarification of circulation patterns and culminates in the addition of an independent and reversible metal structure that does not touch the archaeological fabric, reinterprets the geometry of the ancient cavea, and provides seating in areas of the superstructure that had been completely lost.

A key objective is thus achieved: the recovery of the amphitheatre’s architectural typology as an introverted building oriented toward the arena. The new structure is deliberately partial, preserving sectors that retain visible evidence of past transformations and maintaining a balanced relationship between ruin and new features. The theoretical framework extends beyond restoration principles to achieve conservation-led interpretation and activation through differentiated and reversible interventions.

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From Material Remains to Cultural Meaning: Place-Based Approaches to the Protection of Bahrain’s Burial Mounds

Archaeological heritage conservation has traditionally prioritized physical stabilization, often treating sites as isolated objects rather than culturally embedded places. Contemporary discourse emphasizes place-based approaches integrating spatial, experiential, and cultural dimensions. This paper examines the Bahrain Burial Mounds to illustrate how such approaches inform the protection of large-scale archaeological landscapes.

Building on earlier research framing the mounds as culturally meaningful places, the study situates the site within current debates on protection and management. Inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List, the mounds are among the largest prehistoric funerary landscapes globally and face challenges from rapid urbanization, requiring strategies beyond monument-level conservation.

The research adopts a qualitative, case-based methodology grounded in heritage management theory, value-based conservation, and the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach. An integrated analytical framework examines protection practices across three interrelated scales. At the landscape and governance scale, documentary analysis of UNESCO materials, national legislation, and planning instruments assesses how spatial continuity, setting, and visual integrity are safeguarded. At the experiential scale, site observations and photographic documentation examine accessibility, perception, and legibility of the funerary landscape. At the cultural and value-based scale, archival research and published sources explore how cultural meaning, collective memory, and identity inform conservation strategies.

Synthesizing these scales shows that place-based protection integrates tangible and intangible values. The Bahrain mounds demonstrate that archaeological heritage can be safeguarded not only as material evidence but as culturally significant places within contemporary urban contexts, offering lessons for similar landscapes worldwide.

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Closing Remarks, Conclusions