

Multilayered Historic Towns

18 to 20 May 2012 – Izmir, Turkey

Scientific Symposium Conclusions

Towns located around Mediterranean are often characterized by a singular long historical past that, sometimes, extends to several thousands of years. The remains of these diverse eras are found side by side and are even combined on the same level. They often form multiple layers. Accidental discoveries on the occasion of building construction or infrastructure implementation enable us to gradually improve our knowledge of the urban past of these towns.

The symposium in Izmir comprised thematic presentations, as well as specific case studies. It concluded with on-the-spot visits to Izmir, as well as its surroundings. Despite the context of increasing economic pressures, it affirmed the value of all historical layers and the interest in preserving and highlighting all of them. The participants also underlined the importance of a series of supplementary measures:

1. Elaboration of the knowledge about visible and invisible layers
2. On site preservation of the stratifications
3. Elaboration of appropriate town planning documents
4. Establishment of specific legal protection measures
5. Integrated management of sites
6. Information and mobilisation of the public.
7. Training of the persons involved

The participants were, in particular, aware of the increasing economic pressures exercised on the central districts and confirmed their interest in reinforced coordination between the CIVVIH and the International Scientific Committee Responsible for the Management of Archaeological Heritage (ICAHM), especially with regard to the subject of multilayered historic towns.

Explanation of the suggested measures:

1 - Elaboration of the knowledge about visible and invisible layers

The knowledge of the past, sometimes extinct, of a historic urban site may be based on ancient texts, preserved illustrations, archaeological findings, air photographs, epigraphy, geological interpretation etc.

The knowledge of each historic phase of the urban stratification, from those of the Antiquity to date, passing through those of the Middle Age and the recent centuries, is fundamental.

The use of maps or archaeological atlases would enable us to link, on the same scale and using the same coordinates, individual archaeological discoveries belonging to the same period which are, though, geographically separated. These atlases would constitute the foundations of a scientific and town-planning alert system.

An atlas of the historic towns in the Mediterranean elaborated using the same references would permit highly useful comparisons to be made.

2 – On site preservation of the stratifications

It is advisable to maintain the remains of all past eras on site and, if possible, to render them visible and accessible. The Venice Charter, the 2011 Valetta Principles, as well as the international scientific rules, can be used as reference.

Where the superposition of archaeological layers is too complex and the value of the excavated evidence is limited, detailed plans will be drafted, the excavations will be documented and the remains discovered will be studied.

3 - Elaboration of appropriate town planning documents

Appropriate town planning documents must protect and highlight any known ancient remains and integrate them into those of subsequent periods, as well as into the modern life. Particular attention must be paid to sectors where discoveries are possible. This applies to private and public construction projects or, even, infrastructure projects (networks, transports, etc.).

3 - Establishment of specific legal protection measures.

The existing historic buildings and any visible or invisible remains, as well as their surroundings, must be covered by specific and appropriate legal protection

measures, either for reasons of value, evidence, structure, functionality or aesthetics.

4 - Integrated management of sites

A multidisciplinary technical mechanism, comprising town planners, architects, archaeologists and engineers, must be able to manage, control, study and focus on the different projects that are rendered necessary by the evolution of the multilayered historic town or the discoveries. These must be based on a management plan elaborated in cooperation with the local authorities.

5 - Information and mobilisation of the public.

The understanding of multiple historic layers and their features must be communicated not only to tourists but also to local residents. Specific locations (onsite museums, etc.) and pedagogical processes (exhibitions, boards, reconstructions, simulations, brochures) can facilitate this pedagogical task. Good information is a prerequisite for motivation and participation of the citizens. Raising the awareness of young students is, at the same time, a way of forming the citizens of the future and affecting their parents.

6 - Training of the persons involved

Training must be provided to all persons involved in the multilayered historic town, whether these are town planners, architects, archaeologists, engineers, teachers or workers. The said training must enable them to enrich their initial education and to better cooperate with each other in the implementation of the projects.