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JOURNAL *of* PUBLIC  
ARCHAEOLOGY

**VOLUME 4 / 2020**

*Topic of the Year: Connective (T)issue*

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# Editorial

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The topic of this year's issue of *Archeostorie. Journal of Public Archaeology* is entitled 'Connecting T(i)sue. Exploring current networking approaches in public archaeology' and seeks to explore how the spatial and temporal variables impact archaeological projects with strong community programs in the digital age, investigating how archaeologists manage to keep connected both with the stakeholders and among themselves, through physical relations and/or digital technologies.

It is a particularly current theme, since the Covid-19 pandemic has radically changed the ways we traditionally interact with each other and with the surrounding environment (Macneil-Kelly 2021), while the socio-economic and political events that marked the recent times have prompted new epistemological debates on cultural heritage and museum management and fruition (Borowiecki et al. 2016; Lo Turco and Giovannini 2020). The relevance of building formalized as well as bottom-up relations among scholars, cultural institutions, between the institutions and the stakeholders and citizens, has been often stressed as a crucial framework as well as an advisable outcome of any archaeological project. However, it was very far from being a common practice in projects dealing with cultural heritage, which should be also aligned with the global goals for sustainable development of the UN 2030 agenda (UN 2021).

Within a workflow in which the various researchers/research teams are structured as interconnected nodes, an effective chain of relationships facilitates communication, exchange of data, overcoming of challenges and risk's mitigation. What happens though if this network cannot be physically implemented and experienced? When the possibility of travelling, reaching the places where our excavations take place, of carrying on research in libraries and laboratories, of interacting with the citizens as we would have liked to do, are prevented to us?

Due to the application of the necessary social distancing measures in the pandemic years, online communication and digital interaction has become the new normal, accelerating the pace of the evolution of networking, reshaping the conception and the practices of relations. Therefore, many of the major organisations dealing with heritage reacted to the pandemic, aiming at providing guidance and proposals to fill the gaps left by the forced digital transformation. However, the wide adoption of digital technology in public archaeology projects raises ethical problems related with the use of platforms owned by large companies, the digital divide, and the economic sustainability of many digital initiatives.

A series of prerequisites to this structural transformation in the system of relations can be pointed out. First, networking – as the name says – requires a net. And in the global contemporary world, any network exists and is further developed by and in the web. Even if we understand that the web can by no means substitute the physical world, we also realize how much we truly owe to the web in improving relations and spreading of information. However, networking requires digitalization. If we want to collaborate with others, we must put our resources at their disposal: photographs, data, tools, research results. There is one step forward, and a crucial one: open access. If we want to build a truly global network, we need to share our resources within the scientific community and beyond it, letting making data reuse possible. However, we are very far from reaching this goal, especially in Italy, as testified for instance, by the debate around the liberalization of the commercial use of images of cultural heritage (Modolo 2021).

The recent adopting of crowdsourcing practices in the field of cultural heritage shows how the participatory forms have been reshaped by the structural change in networking organization although the related projects are

often dictated by a top-down policy of museums and cultural institutions (Bonacchi et al. 2019; see the survey of crowdsourcing initiatives in Davies 2020)

In the call for papers, we asked for contribution that present and discuss the interrelation between heritage, digital technologies, and networking practices in public archaeology. The publication of the issue was preceded by a webinar on the same subject held in Spring 2021 and hosted by the University of Milan (La Statale 2021). The workshop dealt more specifically with the Covid-19 pandemic's impact on various forms of collaboration between archaeologists, stakeholders, and citizens, and we also discussed the ways the museums and archaeological areas adapted their own communication strategies to address local and global contexts during the difficult time of the pandemic (Agostino et al. 2021). At the end of an intense day, masterfully moderated and led by Chiara Bonacchi, the participants and the students had the chance to grasp new ideas and new questions, stemming from the presentation of innovative case studies, approaches, and methodologies towards digital transformation and creative communication.

Many of the above-mentioned aspects related to the networking development in archaeology were addressed in the Topic of the Year session's articles, with contributions ranging from the very local scale to the wider international context, several of which were developed from the workshop's talks.

J. Almansa-Sánchez starting from his personal experiences in carrying out the #pubarchMED project reflects on the reach of virtual (public) archaeology and, on the side of the museum management. C. Zuanni offers an overview of the changes and main trends in digital strategies at the time of the pandemic, focusing especially on the question of digital divide, difficulties in the evaluation of the impact of the initiatives, and reflecting on the main problem arising in the transformation of temporary solutions into long-term digital projects.

The methodologies adopted in a community archaeology project launched in Jordan at the site of Tell Ya'moun during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic are discussed in detail by M. Lorenzon and P. Miettunen. Jordan is a country where community archaeology has been strongly developed during the last two

decades, increasing citizen participation in cultural heritage preservation and valorisation. For this reason, only some activities have been re-organized adopting digital and social media tools, and the in-person interactions between local communities and archaeologists have been considered an indispensable aspect of project. Two different but comparable case-studies in Italy are presented by M. Sanna Montanelli, M. D'Asaro, and A. Giorri ('Vestigia UniCa' carried out in the framework of the cultural national event 'Monumenti Aperti' in Sardinia) and by R. Goffredo and V. Volpe (public archaeological project 'Open Salapia' in Puglia), highlighting the challenges and opportunities offered in the digital re-adaptation of projects that were conducted involving citizens on the field since for many years, and reflecting on the use of digital tools and social media applications.

The social media strategies are also the focus of C. Boracchi's short article, included in the Satura Lanx section and dealing with the results of Instagram's streaming sessions about the excavations of the prehistoric site of Colombare in Negrar di Valpolicella (Varese). In the same section, the up-to-now poorly discussed topic of recruitment strategies in surveys on museum and heritage projects is addressed by S. Bakogianni and J. Otterbacher, who presented a detailed study on the use of social media targeted advertisements to investigate the experiences of the museum's followers.

Two short texts from the series '#raccontidalmuseo al tempo del Coronavirus' (stories from the museum in the time of the Coronavirus), launched by the Archeostorie Magazine during the long months of the spring lockdown, were selected and translated into English (by M. Campeggi) for the session 'Archeotales'. Thus, the creative writing of C. Dal Maso and G. Cappelletti brings to life the bronze statuettes of the suicide Ajax, kept in the Etruscan Museum of Populonia, and of a sleeping Eros from the MET Museum of New York.

The Archeonews section is mainly devoted to the short review of some events, discoveries, and projects from Italy, chosen among the many that have been chronicled online on the Archeostorie Magazine throughout the year (in Italian, here translated and revised by M. Campeggi), accompanying them with a

further reading-corner, curated by F. Riso. In this issue, the meaningful discoveries in the Etruscan-Roman thermal sanctuary of Apollo at San Casciano dei Bagni and the 9th century AD frescos from Forcello in Venice, brought to light immediately before the lock-down, are described by C. Dal Maso, who also review the podcast project of the Pile-dwelling Museum of Lake Ledro.

The final section of the journal - as usual devoted to review recent books and film - has been extended also to include videogames and other media products. Two important volumes on public archaeology in Italy are reviewed (by R. Menegazzi and L. Peyronel): the Proceedings of the First (and the only one)

Italian Congress of Public Archaeology, that after many years from the Conference hold in Florence (2012) is eventually out, and the first Italian handbook of public archaeology, written by G. Volpe. Both volumes represent in our opinion a crucial turning point, testifying to the growing awareness by the academic sectors of the fundamental role of the discipline and for new welcomed trends in the university study programs and courses.

While all the scientific articles have been published online as soon as they were ready, the final edition of the complete journal's issue, which also included the other sections, has been delayed by the pandemic situation, and the editorial work was slowed down by the overlapping with the following issue.

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