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Concept Paper

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Reconstruction on Archaeological Sites

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1. Introduction

The Danube Limes contains a large number of archaeological sites, composing a transnational Cultural Route and vast open air Museum. Nevertheless, it is unknown to the large public, as structural part of the European history and geo strategic conformation. Many historical sites are inaccessible, unknown and even invisible, completely hidden underneath the ground. Transforming an ancient frontier and conflict areas into a museum is an idea already developed by the French philosopher Paul Virilio who was considering the war and the battlefields a museum (Virilio 1994, 27).

Through new non-invasive technologies and intervention concepts, such sites can be discovered and revealed to the public. Also, based on sustainable tourism concepts, the remote locations can become accessible and attractive.

One of the Living Danube Limes Project components focuses on making those sites visible. A workshop on *Visibility Measures and Physical Reconstruction* can have several approaches, based on a common structure and goal, depending on the particularities of each single archaeological site. As common ground for all types of interventions, a series of main directions should be taken in consideration:

- The preservation of the **local identity**
- The preservation of the **authenticity** (as basis of the *living history* concept)
- **Sustainability** (sustainable tourism concepts & building options)
- **Reversibility** (the possibility to bring the site to its original state)

From these primary conditions, each partner can develop the own scenario and identify the best type of intervention. In the end, the ancient frontier of the Roman Empire, could become a *living history* spine of Europe, connecting various local identities, through a common historical root.

2. Aim

The final goal of implementing Visibility Measures and Physical Reconstruction would be to disclose all historical remains, into a large scale Cultural Route, without altering the existing environmental, historical, cultural and traditional values. Tourism and accessibility should be adapted to the limits imposed by the preservation of the few contextual elements that could bring history to present. Any physical intervention on the archaeological sites should be guided by the conservation and restoration of the surrounding elements and original atmosphere, as part of the *living history* concept.

The French architect Viollet-le-Duc, introduced the idea of restoring the natural elements in the same way the buildings have been restored (Viollet-le-Duc apud. Favre 1875). His concept opens the possibility in reconstructing and preserving not only the monuments or ruins, but the entire landscape and territory. His considerations became an opportunity to transform the territorial analysis and comprehension into active tools for preserving the authentic identity of archaeological sites.

Starting from the “complete landscapes” of the architect Peter Zumthor, where the building belongs to a place and that place cannot be imagined without (Zumthor 1999, 17), the value of the landscape, of the natural features can be considered as integrated part of the historical patrimony.

Also based on Peter Zumthor’s architectural theory (Zumthor 2006), any environment has its own atmosphere, induces sensorial reactions, feelings, emotions. The unique atmosphere of every single site is part of the *living history* authenticity. Participants to the workshop could bring their personal knowledge, skills, experience of life, reactions to the first contact to the site, feelings, impressions, emotions etc. and define the atmosphere.

The workshop could follow two main directions: the identification of the most suitable intervention, or, in the case it has been already defined, the implementation of the specific intervention. Choosing a visibility measure could be based on valuable information that participants bring, through their own, personal experience and sensorial filter, beyond technical and pragmatic criteria. On the other hand, if the workshop is based on the implementation of the visibility measures, it should be designed to be suitable to the participants’ skills and different target groups.



Landscape authentic atmosphere from the Pilot Site Sacidava, Dragos Dordea 2021

3. Method

3.1. Archaeological presentation

The first step into organizing a workshop on an archaeological site is to provide material on the ongoing archaeological research and organize a short site visit to familiarize the participant with historical facts and current discoveries. All information should be adapted to the specific target groups, in order to make it comprehensible. Such presentation could provide surveys, maps, short historical descriptions, pictures, etc.

3.2. Territorial presentation

Besides this very precise goal of understanding the current situation in connection with history, another very important aspect is the understanding of the entire frontier system. The single sites, their positioning and configuration are the result of a complex territorial concept. Military strategies, geo-strategic configurations, historical evolution of the Roman Empire limits and very specific natural and territorial features are part of the creation of the Danube Limes. **Visibility** itself was the fundamental criteria of creating a defensive structure. Visibility enabled the surveillance and protection of the territory. Each single archeological site on the Danube Limes has a precise location based on the visibility towards the territory and in close connection to the Danube.

3.3. *Living History* Concept

As one of the main objectives is the preservation of the authenticity as basis for developing the concept of *living history*, participants should receive inputs for a theoretical comprehension of the concept: examples of best practice living history events, sources of identifying the authentic historical atmosphere, e.g. description of the ancient life along the Danube Limes (agriculture, infrastructure, dwelling, clothing, weather, etc.), functioning and organization of the Roman army, etc.

3.4. Workshop Approaches

The workshop dedicated to Visibility measures could follow two different approaches. The first approach could be the identification of the visibility measures that should be implemented or, the second theme, the implementation itself, depending on the moment chosen for the workshop.

3.4.1. Theoretical approach: identification of the most suitable visibility measure

Participants of the workshop could be guided to make analysis on different criteria. This type of approach can benefit from the professional expertise of the participants in different fields (especially if it is in connection with the Local Focus Group Meeting).

Independently from the different types of target groups that could be involved, the personal experience is very valuable, as people have different ways to relate to the environment and to understand the context. The first impact with the site, the emotions, feelings, questions, behaviors, are a source of information for the identification of the most suitable type of visibility measure. The participants could identify the elements of local identity and authenticity and also the weak parts of the site that disturb the visit: what should be preserved and what is missing or what is disrupting the visit.

The analysis could be made at different scales: from regional to local and *in situ*. Impressions from the trip to the archaeological site could provide information on the level of accessibility: orientation, fluidity, duration, public transportation options, other touristic areas in the surrounding, quality of the roads, hotels, restaurants, info points, museums, etc. Such survey could provide information on missing elements, previously to the arrival, eventually suggesting the necessity of signs, info points, extra public transportation stops, hospitality, etc.

The trip to the site, at a territorial level, could also provide the information on local identity: traditional villages or urban structures, architecture, restaurants with traditional dishes, names of the streets, village or natural features, etc.

Elements of historical authenticity could also be identified at territorial level, in the surroundings of the site: natural features that correspond to the ancient geography (e.g. ancient woods, wild fields or shores, natural parks, etc.), agriculture similar to the Roman times (vineyards, wheat crops, etc.), the ancient Roman Road, ancient Roman harbors or other archaeological elements, etc.

The visit of the archaeological site should include also a walk through the surroundings. Following the same criteria from the territorial analysis, participants should provide information on their walk, from their impressions and feelings. They should identify missing or disturbing elements but also features of local identity and historical authenticity that should be preserved. At this point the concept of *living history* should be stressed: e.g. a hard walk to the Danube reminds of the effort of the Romans to build the fortress. Personal feelings and impressions are very valuable in order to design paths or visiting circuits, for different types of user.

The visit *in situ* should focus on the level of understanding the configuration of the archaeological site. Many pilot sites are completely hidden, so participants could indicate which should be the basic information they need for orientation: e.g. entrance, towers, visibility points, signs, etc.

At the end of the workshop, the collection of information should give a structured understanding on which type of visibility measure could be most suitable to the site. First, based on the trip, the visit of the surroundings and *in situ*, a collection of local identity and authentic elements to be preserved should be settled. This list would eliminate some possible visibility measures that interfere with the local valuable elements.

The missing elements or the elements that had disrupted the visit could be resolved through proposals of punctual, non-invasive and reversible interventions. Other interventions could be identified in order to answer the need of orientation on the site. The

solutions that manage to cover most of the issues pointed out by the participants should become the future visibility measures. These interventions could be inspired and adapted from the Catalogue for Visibility Measures & Physical Reconstruction, or new suggestions could be made.

As result of the workshop, some possible **visiting scenarios** could be designed, as development strategies for the Pilot Site, including further interventions that would enable the inclusion of the site into touristic circuits.

3.4.2. Practical approach: implementation of the visibility measures

Partners or Local Stakeholders could make the analysis on the local identity, authenticity and missing elements and decide the type of intervention, following also other criteria: e.g. budget, current local issues to be solved, other ongoing projects, etc. If the most suitable visibility measure has been already identified, the workshop could focus on its implementation.

Participant to the workshop should have the opportunity of getting directly involved in the construction of the visibility measure. There are also two possible approaches: either to provide proposals for the locations where the visibility measure should be implemented (e.g. the identification of the most sensitive points, the best view points, etc.) or to actively participate to the building process.

In order to have a creative component, the working process should be on visibility measures that are not limited to assembling elements, but where the personal input could have a positive impact: e.g. building 3D physical models with different techniques, crafts and personal skills, planting vegetation following a concept developed on site, organizing an exhibition with existing elements, following a project strategy developed during the workshop, etc.

4. Target groups

The Workshop could be designed to suit different types of target groups. The principle of collecting impressions, feelings and personal reactions in relation to the context can be applied to any type of target groups, as the visibility measure itself should be dedicated to a wide range of visitors. The general public could be involved in experiencing the site and the surroundings.

The theoretical approach, that identifies or creates a project for visibility measures could be addressed to higher education and research target groups. This target group could provide a substantial theoretical material to support the implementation of the visibility measures including best practice examples, case studies, methods of analysis and graphic interpretation, innovative technologies, new materials, sustainable concepts, exhibitions, etc.

Different types of public authorities (from local to national), NGOs, interest groups and international organizations could provide and develop strategic tools for the visiting scenario: specific information about legislation, tourism, culture, ongoing projects, economics, social policies, etc. This could be the case of organizing the workshop in connection with the Local Focus Group Meeting and develop visibility measures strategies with the support of the main stakeholders.

The practical approach could involve different public typologies: the large public, local communities, schools and training centers could participate to the implementation of certain visibility measures. Children could learn to rebuild ancient fortresses from the existing information into 3d models, using different techniques including local crafts. Local communities could be involved in organizing the vegetation on archaeological sites, create paths or signs with local materials, convert existing spaces into museums, info points, etc.

5. Level of Impact

For both the theoretical and practical approach, participants should make an estimation of the level of impact expected from the proposed visibility measures. There are interventions that focus directly on the site, with no influence on the local communities or region. There are also interventions that could induce development or beneficial changes at local urban or social level. Even at regional scale, through new touristic circuits, a single intervention could have economic, cultural and educational impact. A short description from the expected results, at different scales and domains, should be developed as result of the workshop

6. Sustainability, Reversibility, Authenticity & Local Identity

The connecting basis for all scenarios and interventions should take in consideration the principles of sustainability, reversibility, authenticity and local identity preservation.

All projects must be based on sustainability criteria that could include the choice of materials, involving local communities, reusing existing facilities or built structures, etc. Any intervention should be reversible, the archaeological site should have the possibility to return to its original state.

The proposals should also take in consideration the preservation of any authentic information, including natural features, urban structures, or any other type of elements that could support the principle of *living history*.

The local identity should also be carefully studied, the valuable elements could be included in the visiting scenario and preservation measures should be taken in consideration.

7. Outputs

The theoretical approach of the workshop should get materialized into a document that identifies the most suitable(s) visibility measure(s), based on arguments. The arguments could be developed on surveys, drawings, maps, best practice examples, case studies, personal descriptions, etc. If available and possible, depending on the target groups involved, important elements could be marked on maps or plans: e.g. map containing all accessibility types of infrastructure, map with natural features, map with other touristic objectives, map with restaurants & hotels, map of the visibility points, etc. All these information could also be collected into a catalogue. The overlapping of all results should lead the participants towards conclusions, ideas or suggestions, and finally into proposal(s) for interventions on the archaeological site.

All scenarios should be permanently based on the criteria of preservation of the local identity, authenticity, sustainability and reversibility. A list of preservation measures could be also developed, as support for any further developments.

The practical approach, the physical reconstruction or construction on site, depending on the measure applied, could also provide a document that explains the criteria of certain approach: e.g. description of the concept of organizing exhibited objects, of creating a garden, placing signs or furniture, etc. The main output remains the visibility measure itself that could be documented during the implementation through texts, drawings, pictures, schemes, films, interviews, etc.

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