



Università
Ca' Foscari
Venezia

**Dipartimento
di Scienze Ambientali,
Informatica e Statistica**

ADRION - Adriatic-Ionian Programme INTERREG V-B Transnational 2014-2020
"Approdi - From Ancient Maritime Routes to eco-touristic destinations", pr. 496
Partner 3 – UNIVE, UNIVERSITÀ CA' FOSCARI - VENEZIA



DT 2.2.1

Venice Early Medieval Harbor pilot case, Summary Report

Reporting Form/ Reporting Strategy for the Pilot Action, Approdi

1. Description of the Action

1.1 *Overall goal of the Action*

Ca' Foscari University of Venice and Veneto Region carried out during summer 2018 a Pilot Project in Torcello Island, in the north Venetian Lagoon. A second half of the pilot case has been organized and implemented in 2019 (summer) at Cavallino Treporti Municipality, with the realization of the exhibition "Vivere d'Acqua"

The action has the aim to evaluate the sustainability of an archaeological valorization of the area and improve the quality of cultural tourism's activities. The area corresponds with one crucial section of the late Antique and Early Medieval "delocalized" Harbor of Venice.

Torcello is one of the most important archaeological sites in the Adriatic area, with also a massive ecological value. Torcello is a crucial site for the knowledge of the history of Venice and its origins. The small island, in fact, well represents the transition period from Late Antique Roman settlements to a new Early Medieval phase, characterized with original emerging trade centers. Excavating Torcello and the lagoon area means studying the processes of the formation of the new European economy and trade.

The lagoon environment type of the findings, with fragile traces of huge timber buildings, does not allow traditional conservation and consolidation of the archaeological features. Everything is below the average water level (sea level). Every attempt to transform the archaeological trenches in an open Archaeological Park would be too expensive in term of maintenance, and impact. The project,

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nevertheless, tried to experiment a new way to interact with a broad public (students, residents, and visitors). We decided to communicate the results of the excavation during the research activity itself, through a series of guided tours, open lessons, "archaeological aperitifs" and open days. The archaeologists and the archaeometrists were the ones who were appointed to convey the "living" results of the archaeological researches, allowing the public, day by day, to get in touch with the finds and the archaeological/historical meaning of the island.

The Pilot is going adopted a participatory formula, called "Living Archaeology." The excavation has been opened to the public during the whole campaign, with guided tours in Italian, English, and French. The preliminary restoration processes and the activities linked with the first cataloging of the finds have been relocated on an equipped temporary laboratory alongside the trenches. The visitors have been the key players, starting with being involved in the fascination of the discovery, ending with the awareness of the scientific approach of the analysis on the finds.

The Pilot actions have been aimed to find new funds to sustain the archaeological research: crowdfunding and private funding modules have been designed to invest the income from this activities to finance the study and the public engagement as a cultural, touristic asset.

The communication system, the booking processes and also the publication activities have been managed through the web and the social networks, engaging a broad public that is typically not directly interested in archaeology

The archaeological excavation has been designed to be an "event," an exhibit of itself, and the visitors had the unique opportunity to "touch" the materiality of the origins of Venice and its harbor. All the communication activities have been designed in very close contact with the local business stakeholders, highlighting the idea of the archaeological heritage as a chance for the local people, for increasing "identity" and "low impact economic opportunities."



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At the end of the project, the excavation trenches have been refilled with the original soil, since is the only way to guarantee the conservation of the archaeological structures with a zero impact and sustainable budget. In the meantime a large set of scientific data have been acquired; a considerable number of finds have been studied and restored, and a noticeably large group of people (around 1.500) had the opportunities to be deeply involved in the knowledge processes. In that way they are fully aware of the importance and the uniqueness of the site, helping with their attitude in the conservation policies of the island and the lagoon.

In 2019, end of the summer, Unive organized an exhibiton with the archaeological material collected during the pilot action. The Exhibition "Vivere d'Acqua" has been organized with the stakeholders involved during the first phase of the project. In particular the Cavallino treporti Municipality contributed with 15.000 euros to let the exhibition open over 3 months and reach a larger public as possible.

The event (as is possible to check through the attached materials) involved a large group of people, local visitors, scientists and local authorities.

The event had a dedicated web site: <https://www.unive.it/vivered'acqua> where is possible to follow all the scientific contents.

1.2 Description of the supporting methodological approach

The Pilot at Torcello consisted of an extensive archaeological excavation with a high scientific profile, considering the value of the archaeological questions (the origin of Venice) and the archaeological method applied.

The scientific aims have been direct to answer the starting events that entailed the origins of the Venice harbor, excavating port infrastructures and warehouses in Torcello between the 6th and 9th centuries.

A key point of the 2018 Pilot was acknowledging that the archaeological structures present in the lagoon area could not be preserved traditionally and transformed



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into a fixed archaeological park. Archaeological excavation entails levels made by soil, clay, earthen walking pavements, extremely rich in archaeological finds. Those levels are preserved under the average sea level. This data implies that to preserve these heritages open to the public, we would have to invest large sums to keep the levels dry and visible. The methodological approach applied, so was the idea to transform the archaeological scientific excavation into an "open live museum". Sharing the excavation experience with the public means letting the community be involved in the dissemination/communication and design from the very moment of the dig.

In the 2019 organization of the exhibition "Vivere d'Acqua" the Pilot had the aim to present the community in a museum setting the archaeological finds that describe the landscape settlement of the early Venice around Altino, Torcello, and Lio Piccolo. The exhibition had an official catalog and website (attached). The storytelling started with the archaeological pioneer activities of Ernesto Canal and its researches. Then, following a chronological order, the artifacts were presented in 4 rooms covering a period from the 1st century AD to the 7th century AD. Few important reconstructions helped the public recognize the finds' role in the historical perspective: a harbor warehouse, a Roman villa, a barrier/pier, a water cistern. The exhibition narrated the settlement story of a waterscape that was very dynamic before Venice. The people who lived there learned how to cope with this landscape very peculiarly, entangling their technologies with the very peculiar lagoon setting. The exhibition path was built in a very communicative way, using plain text and examples. The public had the opportunity to learn how fisher farms, salt pans, piers, and ports worked in the area.

During the exhibition visits, we learned how many visitors and stakeholders contributed with original insight in the interpretation of the archaeological evidence. More, many community members could enrich the academic knowledge with data about other sites and other unknown discoveries.

We are now drafting a new project, "Storie di Lagune" (2021-2022), a crowdsourced activity by which collecting and "capitalize" the pilot results.



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1.3 *Outcomes of the pilot, Impact*

The Pilot allowed the collaboration between many different bodies (local authorities, Superintendents, Museums, Municipalities, Universities, regional authorities.

The Pilots had huge media coverage, and the community seems to have very appreciated the effort, changing the traditional approach to local archaeology.

Indicators/Outputs

Torcello Abitata, 2018

Number of visitors: 2018: 3.500

Number of organized public events: 32

Number of guided visits: 75

Number of accesses to the web page: 23.000 average

Social pages: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter

Number of media coverage products (press): 56

Number of media coverage products (TV): 15

Number of community organized events: 24

Vivere d'acqua, 2019

Number of visitors: 2019: 2.000

Number of archaeological artefacts catalogued and exhibited: 300

1 Catalogue of the exhibition

Number of organized public events: 32

Number of guided visits: 25

Number of accesses to the web page: 15.000 average

Social pages: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter

Number of media coverage products (press): 56

Number of media coverage products (TV): 8

Number of community organized events: 12



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APPRODI



1.4 *Role of the UNIVE Partner in the organization/Implementation*

Unive organized and implemented the following activities:

- Design of the Pilot;
- Scientific design of the excavation activities;
- Implementation of the excavation;
- Public archaeology activities (2018)
- Communication and promotional activities;
- Design of the "Vivere d'Acqua" exhibition
- Preparation of the Catalogue
- Organization of the exhibitions
- Guided visit implementation