

Preface II

Awareness of the importance of preserving and transmitting cultural heritage to future generations has been growing enormously over the last two decades. An indicator of this is the continuous growth in the number of cultural heritage sites and monuments inscribed in the UNESCO World Heritage list, which passed from 551 in 1987 to 1054 in 2016. Furthermore, the gap that once divided Europe and Northern America from other countries in terms of protection policies, development of practices and procedures for the restoration has been reduced. However, in the last two decades the number of World Heritage sites in danger strongly increased, passing from 10 in 1987 to 37 in 2016.

Growing attention to heritage and cultural identity and the increasing risk factors (from natural to anthropic (including archaeological looting and vandalism), require the development of a global strategy aimed at bringing together all the 'energies', best practices and knowledge, with the support of science and technologies, in order to preserve and manage cultural heritage in danger, ensuring a long life for the benefit of future generations.

To this end, a strong alliance between Research and Conservation needs to be made in order to improve the operational effectiveness of science, technologies and practical experience for preserving and restoring works of art, monuments, historical cities, archaeological sites and cultural landscapes.

This volume is the result of an effort aimed at creating a bridge between Research and the Conservation of cultural heritage, according to the mission of YOCOCU community.

Most of the crucial issues that characterize the debate of scientists and conservators for two decades has been discussed in this special issue, among which: i) the effectiveness and compatibility of remedial treatments, including those based on nanocomposites; ii) the best way to use and integrate in situ investigations and laboratory tests to study and evaluate the decay processes of heritage material; iii) the most reliable strategies and methods of safeguarding, maintenance and preservation of cultural heritage sites, including the protection of archaeological areas by shelters.

Finally, this special volume collects some overviews related to issues linked to sustainable management, fruition and valorization of cultural heritage, and case studies on cultural tourism, local perception of heritage values, and the use of urban and architectural heritage for contemporary art production and exhibition.

In conclusion, this volume is an innovative example of effective synergy and integration between research and conservation that we need more and more if we want to secure a future for our past.

Nicola Masini

Chair of YOCOCU 2018, Matera, Italy, 22-26 May 2018

Institute for Archaeological and Monumental Heritage IBAM

Italian Research Council (CNR)