

CULTURAL HERITAGE, SOCIETY & ECONOMY

The promotion, management and regulation of cultural heritage is a complex process involving many different agents and stakeholders on local, national and international levels. This is a critical area of public policy involving a range of actors that includes international organisations, government ministries and agencies, political parties, businesses, museums and local communities. How cultural heritage is produced, interpreted and understood can have a profound impact on social and economic activity and decision-making. It influences the formation of social values and ideas as well as notions of common identity and history, and also affects management of the economy and infrastructure. The importance of cultural heritage management is increasingly recognised and acknowledged in Turkey, and the field is developing rapidly. New issues and problems have emerged, for which solutions that comply with and enhance the highest international standards have to be found within Turkey. This strategic research initiative sets out to examine the relationships between the many agents and actors in the field of cultural heritage in the Turkish context.

doi:10.18866/biaa2020.04

A happy ending: a brief look at the outcomes of the SARAT project

Işıl Gürsu, Gül Pulhan & Lutgarde Vandeput | British Institute at Ankara

The Safeguarding Archaeological Assets of Turkey (SARAT) project, led by the British Institute at Ankara in partnership with the Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations (ANAMED) at Koç University and the UK Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM UK), was conducted between June 2017 and March 2020 thanks to a large grant awarded by the Cultural Protection Fund. SARAT focused on knowledge and capacity building and on raising awareness, and the project has had considerable impact in terms of the protection and appreciation of Turkey's rich, diverse and, at times, threatened archaeological heritage. In less than three years, the project has produced significant results by reaching out to different communities, including heritage professionals, journalists and collectors, as well as the general public. The various aims and programmes of the project have been presented in previous contributions to *Heritage Turkey*. Here, we would like to summarise the outcomes of the project.

Outcomes in a nutshell

The main activities of SARAT concentrated around five interwoven programmes: (1) the first nationwide public opinion poll on attitudes towards archaeology in Turkey; (2) an online course on emergency preparedness entitled 'Safeguarding and Rescuing Archaeological Assets'; (3) workshops with journalists on informed and ethical

reporting of archaeological issues; (4) 'Archaeology in Local Contexts' workshops with heritage stakeholders and (5) systematic interviews with registered collectors of antiquities. These activities have resulted in a wide range of immediate and intermediate impacts.

The opinion poll on attitudes towards archaeological heritage in Turkey revealed the high value attributed to archaeological assets by the various economic, social and cultural groups within the population. This established a baseline for leveraging the poll's results when engaging local communities in heritage protection. The results have been disseminated through a series of public events which have raised awareness about this study and other elements of SARAT among both Turkish and international archaeological communities. The opinion-poll results have been discussed in the final session of the online course. They also provided the basis for the social- and economic-capital building workshops, 'Archaeology in Local Contexts'.

The programme that really made SARAT's name among heritage professionals and students in Turkey was the online course 'Safeguarding and Rescuing Archaeological Assets'. This five-module/20-session free-of-charge programme, delivered in Turkish, was developed by the SARAT team and credentialled and offered by Koç University. Following its launch in April 2019, 8,357 people applied to take the course over a period of eight months. This degree of interest

confirmed the need and appetite for training in cultural heritage risk management and first aid. The competitive selection process produced 3,809 graduates in four terms from all regions of Turkey and 17 other countries. An additional legacy of this programme is the generation of an anonymised dataset, based on information provided in the application process, which reveals the depth and breadth of the heritage community in Turkey and pulls together data that are unavailable elsewhere.

Since the completion of SARAT, the online course has been continued thanks to ANAMED, and is still offered free of charge. For further details about this remarkable programme, please visit ANAMED’s website: <https://bit.ly/3owNad7>.

The workshops for journalists were organised across Turkey with the aim of encouraging more accurate and informed reporting of archaeological issues. Journalists have a great impact in shaping the public’s view of archaeology and heritage, and they formed an important target group for the SARAT project. The workshop element of the programme aimed to form a bridge between the concerns and viewpoints of archaeologists and the needs and opinions of journalists. The SARAT team compiled a small handbook on archaeological terminology and chronology in Turkey for the use of journalists. This can be found on the SARAT website: <https://bit.ly/3jCZc0F>.

The workshops reached out to 102 media professionals who report on archaeology through various platforms. Preliminary evidence reveals that the principles of ethical reporting are now applied to new articles published by this group. Interestingly, some of them later enrolled in the online course.

The fourth element of SARAT was the series of ‘Archaeology in Local Contexts’ workshops. These were designed to inspire regional influencers working with local communities to develop sustainable social and economic benefits through leveraging heritage assets. The workshops



The impact of SARAT in a nutshell.



The SARAT project team in Şanlıurfa, October 2019.

aimed to provide options for engaging local communities with archaeological heritage and built on the results of the public opinion poll. Reaching out to 311 people in six provinces, they created a platform for establishing local networks of heritage-related organisations and associations.

Last, but not least, the interviews with collectors of antiquities aimed to build critical awareness within this key group, particularly regarding the scientific value of archaeological assets, the importance of context and the necessity of preserving the integrity of archaeological deposits. The collectors willingly engaged in the interviews and provided important preliminary insights into their ethics of acquisition, their motivations and practices, and the future of private collections.

One of the requirements of the funding provided for SARAT was the need for an impact assessment to be conducted upon completion of the project’s activities. To this end, feedback from all participants was collected throughout the project, including pre- and post-assessments, in order to measure the impact of programmes, and comments from social media were archived so that the the story of the project could be narrated. The evaluation, conducted by independent assessor Carol Ann Scott, provides a systematic overview of the outcomes, successes, failures and overall legacy of the project. Some of the outcomes listed here are retrieved from the evaluation report.

After SARAT: continued impact

One of the most significant outcomes of the SARAT project is the recognition that valuing Turkey’s archaeological assets is not the preserve of professionals; they are also valued across the spectrum of the general public. SARAT has initiated the process of leveraging this widespread attitude so that local communities can become engaged with long-term strategies designed to preserve archaeological sites.

Requests to share the project’s models, results and experiences on national and international platforms continue to arrive, most recently from the Smithsonian Institute and the Prince Claus Fund, in relation to their ‘Leadership for Cultural Heritage Stewards in Challenging Circumstances’ training programme, the Netherlands Institute in Turkey and the Erasmus Rotterdam University.

Another particularly pleasing outcome is the project’s cooperation with Erarslan Anadolu High School in Izmir, where an ‘Envoys of Cultural Heritage’ programme, modelled on SARAT, has been initiated for year-nine students. This innovative programme was generated by two energetic teachers (of literature and geography) who are both graduates of SARAT’s online course.

Awards

High engagement numbers and continued interest in its programmes demonstrate that SARAT can be considered one of the most successful heritage projects conducted in recent years in Turkey, and also beyond. The success of the project has been acknowledged internationally by Europa Nostra (a pan-European federation for cultural heritage) which bestowed on SARAT a Europa Nostra 2020 Award at the European Heritage Awards in the category of Education, Training and Awareness Raising. The jury noted that SARAT ‘is a new and innovative approach to awareness-raising in Turkey. It has approached the problems facing archaeology from diverse perspectives with a focus on education and the media and it has addressed problems relating to archaeology as a discipline and its management. The project’s public focus is excellent and it does this by inquiring about public views and offering training and capacity-building. It has increased the awareness of the complexity and importance of archaeology, contributing to its care and in situ protection.



The Europa Nostra bronze award.



The international awards bestowed on SARAT are referenced on the cover of the project’s report of results. The booklet is available at <https://bit.ly/3etImQU>.

The initiative has effectively changed the media’s language around archaeology for the better. Its impressive numbers and the rapid uptake of participants for all activities is evidence of its success. The multi-disciplinary design team of both academic and non-academic experts ensured that the regionally diverse and inclusive programme was professionally executed and of high quality.’

Additionally, SARAT was the runner up in the 2020 European Archaeological Heritage Prize of the European Association of Archaeologists in the Institutional category.

The team members are honoured by both awards, and we extend our gratitude to Europa Nostra and the European Association of Archaeologists for their acknowledgement of the success of SARAT.

Future

Although March 2020 marked the completion of the SARAT project, there is evidence that it has become a significant ‘presence’ in the Turkish heritage community and it seems that an emerging network of partners, course graduates, local heritage organisations and professional associations is waiting with interest to see what further outcomes might be generated from the range of programmes initiated by SARAT.