

FROM IDEAS TO ACTION: THE BIRTH OF DIADRASIS

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Almost two years after the wind of change was brought to our lives by the birth of this team, I came to face this great challenge: to put into paper emotions and reminiscences, presenting how and why this team was built and, most important, where its vision is taking it.

For those of you who had the great opportunity to experience an international environment, whether for work, study or leisure, the things I am about to say will be nothing new. In the most welcoming warm environment of an ICCROM¹ course² we, participants and staff, had once again the joy of discovering differences and similarities with colleagues from all over the world. Almost every day, once the training activities were completed and definitely promoted by the great Italian practice of the afternoon *aperitivo*, we kept discussing and exploring each other's worlds, widening our minds and discovering how many more answers exist for each of our problems. The course was about to finish when a group from among these people realized they did not want all this to end; we wanted to keep it alive, transmit it around and make it grow.

The proverb goes, every end a new beginning. We, heading for our beginning, found a strong partner to

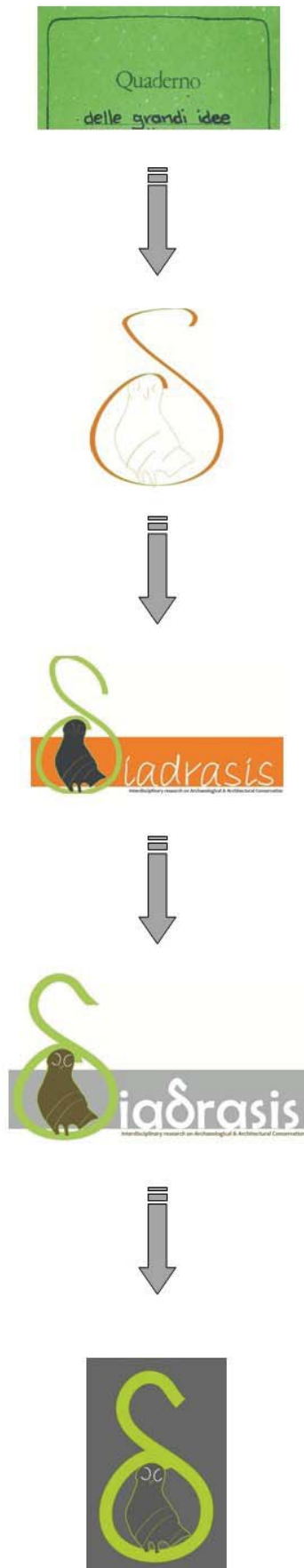
make the proverb come true: nothing less than the much discussed technology! We all went back to our home countries, a fact that in earlier times would be a great obstacle, but was now just a small detail. We sat back at our offices and kept exchanging ideas on how to move on, initially by lots of MB attached in e-mails, then with instant messaging and social media platforms. Unbelievable; we were, and still are, more updated on our friends' lives on the other side of the earth than on our colleagues' next door. We knew then that the working team we wanted to build could work to perfection.

The next crucial point was to focus on how exactly we wanted to work, and which would be the main goal of all this effort. Yes, we wanted different cultures and specialties to meet and keep developing Conservation Science, but in what way? Long discussions, several propositions and ideas led us to the following priorities: educational courses and conferences, publishing activities, events raising public awareness and the actual conservation/restoration intervention of heritage, always performed by interdisciplinary international teams.

Having focused on the importance of interaction as the key element for all our activities, the name came in

¹ ICCROM: International Center for the Study of the Restoration and Preservation of Cultural Property, Intergovernmental organization founded in Rome in 1959 currently with 129 member states.

² ARIS 09: Architectural Records, Inventories and Information Systems for Conservation, Rome, 2 September - 2 October 2009



an instant. The Greek word for interaction, *διάδρασις*, reflected exactly what we wanted to be: an interactive pole for developing and promoting research in conservation science. The “delta” embraced the bird of knowledge and we felt ready to open our wings and start flying.

So, we had cleared our ideas, we had the technology; we had the passion, the inspiration and the know-how. But in what way do we actually formalize our idea, how do we become a real organization? The answer, as the Beatles told us many years back, was simple: “with a little help from my friends”. Actually the faith and dedication of people not related to the Heritage Field gave the boost to the engines; lawyers, accountants, consultants, medical doctors, web designers and any other specialty you could dream of are hidden behind the birth of diadrasis. I will actually take the opportunity, with this article, to thank them once again for believing in us and making all this happen. Before the end of that same year the statute of diadrasis was registered in the registry of the Court of First Instance of Athens, and so we could finally start working. We were no longer an idea; we were an entity.

We decided to plan our first activity, a workshop for young professionals from all over the world, with an international teaching team. What we wanted to create was an educational workshop that would reflect our main philosophy; interaction as a synonym of development. To do that we planned a project based workshop: it would take place on a small scale building, allowing participants to actually put their theoretical skills in action on all the phases and tasks of an architectural conservation project. The case study site was found on the island of Zakynthos in Greece. We started planning, were honored with the acceptance by prominent teachers to participate in the academic team; we decided to keep strong even though the workshop was planned in a country in the middle of its worst crisis, so we fixed the date and went online. And there we had our first real victory: we, a newly founded organization, received many applications from ten different countries. So our first pilot activity, the Romiri project, with international professionals and participants is finally *ante portas*.

Along with the above-mentioned activity, some of our members are focused on creating our web journal. We realized that a journal could become another excellent exchange tool, where professionals could publish their ideas and experiences. In the spirit of the times,

we decided to keep only a web format, basically for two reasons. First, a web publication provides easier access to anyone wishing to read it, while a printed distribution would only reach few selected points. And of course the second reason, however, is nothing less than the respect for the environment.

There are many new ideas already on the table for our future activities, and I am certain that if we keep

the spirit up and open, we could see many of these materialize. What we really wish for our organization is to become the core for a continuously expanding team of interacting experts of various nationalities. I strongly believe that, by trying to move beyond limits and fixed practices, we could become fertile ground, open to global knowledge, contributing to the development of ourselves and our sciences.

