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It never ceases to amaze me how heritage has the ability to develop passions, with both positive and negative consequences.

For some, heritage implies a strong responsibility to ensure that specific elements are maintained and conserved now and for future generations. There are many examples around the world of persons or groups of persons devoting their lives as guardians of specific places or objects.

Others also commit themselves, but in a different manner, placing their energy into sharing knowledge and improving heritage conservation practices. One very close example of this is the very existence of this Journal, sheltered in the Diadrisis initiative. The mere existence of such an organization, in the middle of the largest economic and social crisis we have known in many decades, is vivid proof of how much can be moved by enthusiasm and passion for heritage. In the last number the birth of the organization was presented and one year later some of the initial results of this endeavour are presented in this number with contagious enthusiasm by Lucía Gómez-Robles and Laura-Melpomeni Tapini.

Others still are fascinated by the untold stories, waiting to be discovered in every heritage object or site. Gabriela Fernández Flores gives us an overview of America's first Cathedral, with insights to some of its mysteries, and the many efforts that have both

shaped and attempted to preserve this iconic building in the Dominica Republic.

But there can also be a less attractive side to these passions. Because objects and sites are embedded with values which relate to the identity and history of specific cultural groups, heritage can be a clear target for destruction. We have witnessed targeted destructions in recent armed conflicts in the last two decades in every continent. Over the last weeks, we have seen deliberate destruction of irreplaceable heritage sites in Mali. This raises difficult questions on ownership and rights to control, and as in this case, dispose of these Sufi buildings.

Heritage seems to be at its most fragile point when social and political turmoil appear. The article by Amr A. H. Fangary and Malak N. Wahba gives us an insight into the current situation in Egypt, both in terms of shifting situations within heritage institutions due to political changes, and the many risks faced by heritage due to social unrest and reduced surveillance. They also open the other dark side of passions enticed by heritage, that of looting and illicit traffic. Conflicting identities seem to always have formed a part of human history, and it is only in recent history, since the mid-twentieth century that specific policies and international organizations have been created to protect heritage, and use it purposefully to unite communities and promote tolerance, common understanding and peace. But destroying heritage for pure greed, passion

for heritage at its worst, where objects are taken away from their context, often destroying it in the process, can find no excuse.

Victoria Quirosa also tackles the theme of illicit traffic as well as the difficult topic of returning objects to their countries of origin. She raises an interesting question on the validity of such claims in the long-term. But in addition to retrieving objects which may be important for the communities from which they were extracted, and could be used for the economic development of those places as well, attention should also be focused on the very act of collecting. Just as it is nowadays seen as morally and ethically wrong to collect objects made from endangered animal species, ivory carvings or tortoise shell objects to name only two, the same should be true for cultural objects. Public shaming should be the response to anyone collecting objects which have been stripped of their context, and are collected for their mere aesthetic appreciation.

Reality is that the fact that we value and focus our attention on heritage places and objects can equally

lead to their preservation or their destruction. Alejandra del Río, also in this issue, provides a very interesting and practical model to guide us through one possible process for the assessment of value in heritage places, and how this guides the decision-making process for the conservation of heritage, using historic domestic housing in England as a specific example.

Elisa Baillet and Belén Rodríguez Nuere discuss the importance of legal regulations for the protection of cultural heritage. Focusing on defensive architecture in Spain, they show the need for more specific legislation, as the definition of monument and cultural heritage continue to broaden over the last decades.

The last section in this journal takes us to another favorite spot in the world. Nicholas Stanley-Price takes us to the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome, a place off the main tourist path in the eternal city, that you will certainly enjoy.

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