



THE ROLE OF CITIZENS, INDIGENOUS PEOPLE AND CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE PROTECTION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND PREVENTION OF ILLICIT TRAFFICS. AN EXAMPLE FROM THE ANDEAN AREA.

Challenging the idea that cultural heritage is something understandable and fully enjoyable only by an elite of cultivated actors, several experiences of civil society organizations, developed in dialogue with local communities and public authorities at all levels, show how the citizens' participation can provide strong protection of historical and cultural sites while opening interesting perspectives on widening historical and traditional knowledge and strengthening local ownership.

Examples are coming from projects that involve local communities, and in particular indigenous communities, in the management and improvement of protected areas within the territories of the communities. In particular, the reference is to some experiences in Peru, where the development plan of relevant archaeological sites, like the one of the Señor de Sipán and the Bosque de Pómac, in the Sicán area, in the North of the country, where the Moche and Sicán cultures developed before the Inca era, have been defined and implemented with the full participation of local communities.

In those cases, people living in the villages around the archaeological sites had no connection with them. People from far, from the capital or from abroad, visited the sites, for scientific research or elite tourism, without having any connection with the villages and the local communities. The only connection for the local people was the possibility to steal from so big sites, which cannot be simply protected with curtains, fuelling this way the illicit traffic and impoverishing the sites.

With the projects, the local communities have been involved in several activities, from the services for tourists to the promotion of craftsmanship, from the material work to build museums and structures for the archaeological activity and the reception of visitors, to the recovery of some agricultural native species. This way, the archaeological site, instead of being a sort of alien space, attracting alien people, often even speaking an alien language, becomes a real inheritance from ancestors. The community owns and take care of it. Everybody understands that the preservation and protection of the site is a positive asset for the life of the community and even a source of income, an opportunity to improve economic welfare. This positive relation makes also possible to provide scientific research with a better and more complete understanding of the historical and cultural process, sharing the traditional knowledge of indigenous communities.

The result is an environment where the living conditions improve while the community has positive active relation with the site, and it is committed to protecting it. This means, ultimately, that the presence of an aware community prevents the supply of illicit markets, closing the access at the origin of the chain. The members of the communities, proud of their site, showing the origin of the life and the culture of the community, take care and protect the site, as everybody takes care of his home.

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*PRODESIPAN and PROPOMAC projects 2007-2020. Executed by Caritas del Peru, Universidad Nacional Pedro Ruiz Gallo of Lambayeque, PCUP, University of Milan.
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