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Topic of the Year: The Sublime Triangle

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In the Lombards' footsteps: Proposals for educational visits to localities in the UNESCO serial site "The Longobards in Italy. Places of power (AD 568-774)"

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Abstract

The serial site 'The Longobards in Italy. Places of power (AD 568-774)', included in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2011, had to face from the start the need to build among the communities concerned the awareness that they all belonged to the same site, although they were in distant – and apparently diverse – places. The younger generation was chosen as the most important target group for this purpose, and the Italia Langobardorum Association's selected strategy was to propose specific educational trips, offering an elevated cultural content with practical activities during visits, and financial assistance to schools. After five years of experience, this is our first evaluation of the results; the numbers show that it has been a great success, and that we have become more aware of belonging to a unified network.

 Open Access  Peer Reviewed  Keywords: Lombards, visits, school tourism, education

The Lombard UNESCO site

There exists a UNESCO site that extends from one end of the Italian peninsula to the other: the serial site "The Longobards in Italy. Places of power (AD 568-774)", inserted in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2011. This site includes the most important surviving Lombard monuments in Italy and has brought the Lombard people to the attention of the world, replacing – thanks to the systematic study of the most recent archaeological and historical discoveries – the stereotype of a sharp break between classical antiquity and the Early Medieval period with a more realistic picture of continuity, integration and transformation (Longobardi 2010; Longobards 2011).

The monuments in the UNESCO site are spread over five regions: in Friuli the Gastaldaga area with the Lombard 'temple' and episcopal complex at Cividale del Friuli (UD); in Lombardy the monumental archaeological area with the San Salvatore - Santa Giulia

monastery in Brescia and the *castrum* with the Torba Tower and church of Santa Maria *foris portas* at Castelseprio - Torba (VA); in Umbria the church of San Salvatore in Spoleto (PG) and the Clitunno 'temple' at Campello sul Clitunno (PG); in Campania the Santa Sofia complex in Benevento; and lastly, in Puglia, the San Michele sanctuary in Monte Sant'Angelo (FG) (Ferroni 2008; Morandini 2015).

Each of these carefully selected properties constitutes the most important example of a specific building type, or the best preserved of a number of exemplars to be found in the country. Together they reflect the universal appeal of Lombard culture at its peak, representing the essential qualities of the artistic and architectural heritage of the *gentes Langobardorum*, that were expressed in monumental form only after they settled in Italy after a long period of migration during which they left Scandinavia and travelled through the lands of north-east Europe.

On their arrival in Italy, the Lombards absorbed Roman traditions, Christian spirituality and

Byzantine influences, integrating these with their native Germanic customs and giving rise to a new and original culture in the late 7th and 8th centuries (Azzara 2015; Bertelli & Brogiolo 2000; Brogiolo & Marazzi 2017; CISAM 2003; Gasparri 2004; Gasparri 2012; Giostra 2017; Jarnut 2002; Melucco Vaccaro 1982; Morandini 2013; Pedrazzini 2007).

The network is governed by the *Italia Langobardorum* Association, established in 2009 by the local councils involved. Since its creation, this body has been particularly focussed on the younger generation, and also aims to increase its promotional and educational work regarding this UNESCO patrimony for adults. In order to spread and encourage awareness of the unique qualities of this heritage, we are convinced that everyone must be able to find out as much about it as possible, both at a distance – by means of reciprocal conferences and presentations at the seven Lombard localities – and through direct contact during site visits.

The challenge of being a serial site: creating network awareness

Before UNESCO listing was obtained, the drafting and implementation of the Management Plan required for World Heritage Convention (WHC) candidature allowed various activities to be planned and executed, with the aim of better understanding the strong ties that linked these places and monuments in the Early Middle Ages. Of course, these ties have long disappeared and are difficult to comprehend – especially for those who are not historians or archaeologists. Moreover, these seven sites had never been considered as tourist destinations in themselves, in part due to this lack of awareness and because of the considerable distances between them. These activities were focussed on the main operative lines set out in the Management Plan and served in particular to increase public knowledge of Lombard culture (both in general and with regard to individual monuments), to protect and conserve the monuments, and to raise awareness and encourage socio-economic development in nearby communities, together with wide-ranging cultural promotion (Ferroni 2006; Ferroni 2011). Without of course losing sight of the fact that these extraordinary sites constitute a unique network with a strong common denominator.

The choice of initial strategies

One of our main goals was to design rewarding travel, visiting and activity experiences involving the seven UNESCO network sites, to stimulate perception of their distribution in the Italian peninsula and the distances between them – but also their proximity, the vital connections which can be seen to link them.

So we tried to create ‘tourist’ itineraries, mindful of the fact that there had previously been no flux of visitors between these sites, and so something had to be created from the void. A challenge of considerable proportions.

We based these itineraries on the cultural qualities that motivated the Lombards’ World Heritage listing, e.g. mainly history and archaeology, developing them as points of strength and distinction for the trips we wanted to propose. It was essential that the visits were based on factually accurate material, and that they were sustainable in terms of duration and cost.

Proposing itineraries that link distant sites seems an important step towards offering a beneficial educational and awareness-raising experience for future tourists with respect to their shared historical cultural values, which were not localized but spread over an extensive territory – that now seems heterogeneous.

Not least, the accurate material and the sustainability of the itineraries will surely act as sort of flow regulator, thus avoiding the risk of excessive visitor pressure that has often been lamented for World Heritage List sites (WHC 669-7).

We should make it clear that the Association’s objectives make no reference to specific teaching methods, or indeed to the experimentation of novel ones. Our aim was basically to increase knowledge of a historical period in which interest has recently grown, but that most school curricula do not yet treat in any depth. Furthermore, at the onset of this work only a few of the seven network localities had any sense of local awareness with regard to Lombard cultural identity: while Cividale has always seen the Lombard ‘Temple’ as being important to its past, Benevento (for example) looked more to Samnite and Roman remains.

If the Association’s scholastic tourism project has any claim to innovation, this concerns the theme of the proposed itineraries, together

with their extension – running the length of Italy from north to south and vice versa.

School visits: a way of increasing awareness

A fundamental tool for carrying out this tourism project was Law 20 February 2006, n° 77 *Special measures for the safeguarding and fruition of Italian sites of cultural, landscape and environmental interest inscribed in the 'World Heritage List', under the guardianship of UNESCO (Misure speciali di tutela e fruizione dei siti italiani di interesse culturale, paesaggistico e ambientale, inseriti nella 'lista del patrimonio mondiale' posti sotto la tutela dell'Unesco)*, passed by the Italian parliament in recognition that WHC listed sites are the finest examples of our cultural and natural heritage, that affirms the principle that interventions on them have priority in the allocation of financial resources, and also provides a specific annual allocation in the State budget for them (Guido et al. 2013).

Over four years this project has been built up, improved and publicized, with the aim of encouraging school visits to the Lombard sites by proposing specific itineraries, rigorously devised and assigned.

It is worth underlining that educational visits, defined in ministerial circular letter n° 623 (02.10.1996) and subsequent modifications, provide an enjoyable and highly instructive learning experience.

The project step by step

For each site, teaching experts were selected and appointed, and given the task of designing possible 1, 2 and 3-day itineraries, which included their specialist site, together with other World Heritage List Lombard sites and other places of importance with regard to the Lombards that are nearby or in any case connected, to create routes of different lengths.

The use of expert teachers, selected and suitably prepared by the specialists who have accompanied and sustained the site's UNESCO candidature, was made necessary by the originality of the historical and archaeological themes dealt with by the itineraries. Thus it was not possible to involve the pupils in the project's preparation; however, their active participation was sought during and after the visits.

Each planned itinerary had to meet the following requirements: possession of an underlying theme, guaranteed cultural assistance, hands-on teaching experience regarding the theme, good reception facilities (with lunch-break and recreation areas), and reliable organization.

These itineraries were then checked by the organization's technical team, matched together and improved, and then selected; currently there are 30 in all, 9 one-day, 10 two-day and 11 three-day trips.

The one-day routes are mostly dedicated to the seven localities that belong to the UNESCO site *The Longobards in Italy. Places of power*; a few include additional places that preserve traces of the Lombards' presence, perhaps limited to objects exhibited in museums or small display areas. For example the 'Lombards' Treasure' itinerary (*Il Tesoro dei Longobardi*) proposed for the 2016/17 project includes Campello sul Clitunno, with its little church, Spoleto with the church of San Salvatore, as well as Ascoli Piceno, the site of important Lombard discoveries, and whose Roman and Early Medieval history is still evident in the layout of the historic centre.

One of the two-day routes is entitled 'Cult objects, symbols of power or precious memorabilia? Lombard art treasures' (*Oggetti di culto, simboli del potere o preziosi cimeli? L'arte longobarda dei tesori*) in which the theme of precious objects related to religion and the preservation of antiquities links together the Lombards' first capital city – Pavia – and the seat of the last Lombard king Desiderius – Brescia – as well as Monza, where among other treasures the famous Iron Crown is kept. In detail, the programme includes a guided visit to the San Salvatore – Santa Giulia monastery complex and the museum gallery dealing with the Lombards. Visitors can choose between different thematic itineraries each lasting about 1 ½ hours: 'The Barbarians are Coming! The Lombard invasion of Italy', 'The Lombards in Italy, from Alboin to Desiderius', 'From Desiderius to Napoleon, foundation to suppression', or 'Diverse perspectives: the eventful history of the monastery of Santa Giulia' (*Arrivano i barbari! I Longobardi; Da Alboino a Desiderio. I Longobardi in Italia; Da Desiderio a Napoleone. Dalla fondazione alla soppressione; Racconti paralleli. Storia di S. Giulia, vicissitudini del monastero*). Alternatively visitors

can choose one of the following dramatized visits: 'Elena Masperoni, the last lifelong abbess of the Benedictine nunnery', or 'The monastery celebrates' (*Elena Masperoni. L'ultima badessa a vita del cenobio benedettino; Il monastero in festa*).

In the afternoon there is a choice of optional teaching workshops (also 1 ½ hours): 'Lombard textiles: tablet weaving' - pupils experiment with the tablet-weaving technique, 'The Cross of Desiderius, manufacture and history of a masterpiece' - in addition to examination of the artefact itself, the workshop involves a practical activity that stimulates understanding of the techniques used to make this extraordinary cross and the gems used to decorate it, 'The monastery's ancient treasure', 'A metalworker's apprenticeship' - pupils learn the characteristics of the metals and processing methods used in the craft workshops of the time; and then make reproductions of ancient decorative motifs using the technique of embossing copper sheet. (*Lombard textiles: tablet weaving; The Cross of Desiderius, manufacture and history of a masterpiece; The monastery's ancient treasure; A metalworker's apprenticeship*).

Afterwards it is possible to visit the Market garden domus and the Roman gallery of the museum. The morning of the second day is dedicated to a tour of the centre of Pavia, offering in particular guided visits to the inscription recording King Alboin's entry into Pavia; the royal Lombard church of San Michele, place of coronation of these Germanic emperors; the crypt of Sant'Eusebio, cathedral of the Arian bishop during the reign of King Rothari; the church of San Pietro in Ciel d'Oro, burial place of King Liutprand, Saint Augustine and Boethius. This is followed by Room 7 of the Civic Museum in the Castello Visconteo, where Lombard finds bearing witness to Pavia's glorious period as capital of the kingdom are on display. The itinerary finishes at Monza, with a visit to the cathedral founded in the late 6th century by Queen Theodelinda as a chapel near the royal palace, and to the Iron Crown in the cathedral museum and treasury.

The three-day trips permit visits to more widely separated sites; one, for example, comprises visits to the three sites in *Langobardia Maior* (Cividale del Friuli, Brescia and Castelseprio-Torba), another to the duchies of *Langobardia minor* (Benevento and Spoleto), with a trip to the federal sanctuary of the Lombard people at Monte Sant'Angelo.

After designing the project and selecting the itineraries, the Association requested applications

from schools in the regions where the sites are situated. In order to participate they must demonstrate that a Lombard-themed school trip is relevant to study programmes or special projects that justify this interest (for example because the historical period is covered by lessons during the school year, or because specific artistic techniques are studied in art schools, or architectural methods in technical institutes, or more detailed aspects regarding food or tableware in schools for hoteliers).

A ranking is drawn up, based on the correctness of the request and presence of the requirements, and the available funding allocated. Classes are assisted at each stage by the site referents; as well as designing the itineraries, these are each responsible for the practical organization of local journeys, providing simple information about monument opening times and ticket prices, and perhaps arranging opening for special visits etc. They also put teachers in contact with cultural operatives in the towns to be visited, suggesting the most educationally suitable activities according to the time available and the courses the pupils are following at school. They are often ready to welcome groups and accompany them during their visit, together with the authorized tourist guides and teaching assistants selected by the Association, offering instruction about the Lombard people and the heritage they have left us.

The presence of local referents improves the quality of the service, which may be tailored to the particular needs of schools, according to what the locality has to offer. For example during the last school year special itineraries were organized between Spoleto and Campello sul Clitunno that included an existing cycle trail of total length 22 km, combining historical and artistic beauty with the possibility of passing through an unforgettable landscape in direct contact with nature.

Such assistance is guaranteed not only to classes that have received funding, but also to those that, although not selected, decide to participate in tours arranged by the Association at their own expense.

The quantitative basis of the evaluation

From 2011 to the present, four projects were implemented and assessed for the school years 2012/13, 2014/15, 2015/16, 2016/2017, and a fifth has started.

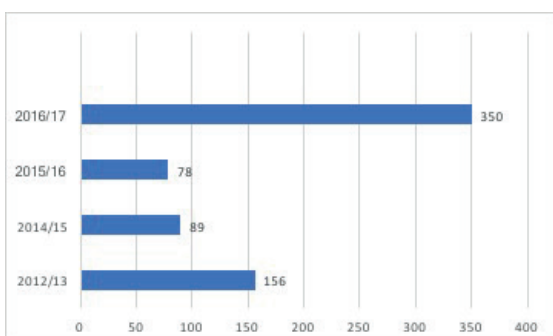


Fig. 1. Number of classes financed per school year.

Since the financial resources available differed from year to year, the number of classes participating in each project varied in proportion. To date no less than 673 classes have obtained funding and engaged in visits, for a total of about 18,170 pupils, distributed between school years as shown in the chart.

Since the Lombard site was inserted in the WHC list, the Association has disbursed € 396,000.00 from 4 rounds of funding; for the 2017/2018 school year it has already allocated an additional € 70,000.00 from its budget.

Although the participation of schools from the provinces in which the UNESCO sites are located may seem uneven, the proportions actually correspond to the areas involved and scholastic populations to which the school visit projects were aimed.

Each round of funding provides for an economic contribution to scholastic institutions of every level that are based in the local municipality or province where the serial site's

properties are located – and for others not in the site but which have important Lombard remains and participate in the Association's activities and members' meetings (e.g. Ascoli Piceno, Ferentillo and Trevi; during the 2017/2018 school year also Abbadia San Salvatore and Pavia). In 2015 and 2017 specific funds were reserved for scholastic institutions in the town of Benevento, and in 2017 for those in central Italy that were hit by the flooding of the River Calore or the strong earthquake, so as to enable pupils to participate in educational trips organized by the Association.

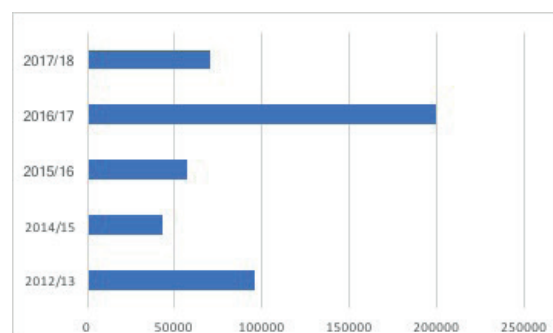


Fig. 2. Total funding per school year (euro).

Regardless of the sum available for each project, over the years there has been a great increase in the number of applications – both because teachers have appreciated the project and the quality of the services guaranteed to the classes, and have thus remained loyal over the years – and for economic reasons, since the funding gives considerable assistance to families with the cost of an educational trip. The teachers

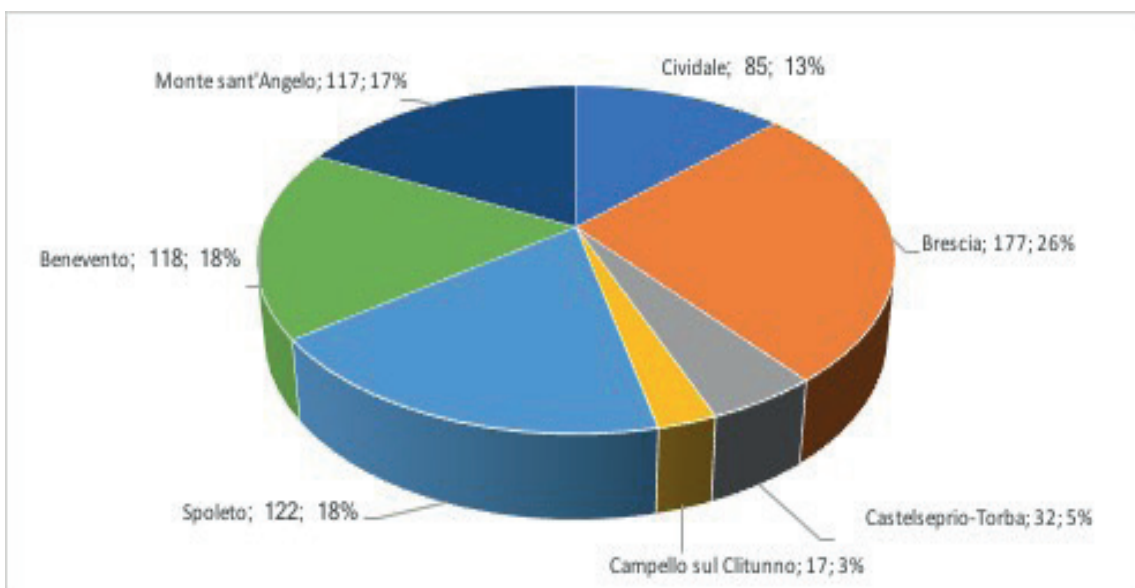


Fig. 3. Number of classes for each site and its local area.

have begun to look more deeply into the history and culture of the Lombard people, giving these more space in teaching programmes.

The proposals most popular with teachers have been the one-day trips, chosen by 63% of participants; this is probably due to the prevalence of first-stage secondary schools among those funded, who – given the pupils' young age – tend to select educational visits that do not involve staying away overnight, except perhaps in the third year.

On average, the Association receives about 30% more applications than it is able to finance for every round of funding.

Results of the experience 2012 - 2017

A number of considerations may be made regarding this experience of our educational visits venture, launched and managed during this period by the *Italia Langobardorum* Association.

First of all, the numbers (of schools, classes, pupils and teachers involved) show clearly that the idea of creating visitor itineraries with a solid cultural base between Lombard sites, even distant ones, has been very successful. Some schools apply to take part every year, a clear sign that the didactic experience was well attuned to both pupils' learning requirements and teachers' educational ones.

What appeals most to the schools is the itineraries' solid cultural foundation. Concentrating on a period, a monument, or a cultural phenomenon allows pupils to acquire a deeper and lasting understanding of the values that are discussed in the classroom – and which in the average school trip are inevitably treated in a more superficial fashion.

Systematic monitoring of the activities during the next school year is planned, by means of questionnaires for both teachers and pupils. This has not yet been carried out (perhaps because we did not expect such a positive response from the schools); to date, some questions have been asked, mostly to pupils, by project staff. After the visits staff also contacted the teachers responsible, whose comments on the overall experience were collected by the Association and are summarized below.

The pupils' perspective

From the pupils' point of view, the workshop experience, involving practical activities of

various kinds (archaeological excavation, weaving, modelling clay, decorating metal etc.), leads to the topics of the visit being experienced more intensely – guaranteeing more vivid memories that facilitate further discussion of the subject matter in class and the achievement of teaching goals. The geographical distances between the localities are experienced directly by the children, which contributes to a deeper understanding of the sense of the cultural, historical, and political bonds between these seven places that – although distinct from each other.

Pupils also enjoyed the workshop activities, finding them interesting and sometimes original.

The work produced by the pupils of various ages who have taken part in the educational visits (reproductions of books, jewellery, embossed metal sheeting, enamelled pottery etc.) was put on display in 2016 in Spoleto, in Palazzo Mauri, to popular acclaim. Given the large number of visitors (the exact number is unknown; the event was free of charge and held in the town library exhibition area) and in response to request by schools, the display was extended from the planned week to all of March. Many teachers brought their classes to see the exhibition and while there gave lessons on Lombard history and culture in front of the display.

The teachers' perspective

Teachers appreciate in particular the availability and precision of the assistance provided by the Association for the organization of the journeys. Although initially we perhaps worried that the presence of the referent might have made teachers feel authorized to reduce their involvement in the trips and with their classes at the sites, in fact we have found that teachers are engaged and enthusiastic. Many have said that they are stimulated by the competent collaborators they have met and often try to achieve more ambitious objectives than those they had set themselves at the outset. They also feel that such experiences are important for their professional and personal cultural growth.

Last, but not least, the idea of making financial assistance available to schools for educational trips meets the economic needs of families (as well as schools) caused by the crisis of recent

years. However, this does not detract from the value of the initiative or – above all – the excellent results achieved.

This 'scholastic tourism,' remarkably popular but based on solid cultural content, may now be proposed for other age groups, from adults to the elderly, with the aim of promoting sustainable development based on heritage values and creating an additional tourist attraction for the sites. In this regard, it should be noted that the specialist magazine *Archeologia Viva* has asked the *Italia Langobardorum* Association to assist it in the organization of archaeological tours through *Langobardia Maior* and *Langobardia Minor*. UNESCO is also promoting tourism based on heritage values at a European level, and the itineraries designed for the Lombard sites might constitute an embryonic model for Italy that may also be developed beyond its frontiers (WHC 875). Furthermore, the goal of *Italia Langobardorum* seems to have been achieved. Pupils and teachers of the numerous schools that participated in the trips organized by the Association felt that they were part of a network, a single cultural system. And this awareness has clearly strengthened the link that unites the components of this serial site, and contributed to making visitor flows harmonious and appropriate with respect to the properties (Cicerchia 2009; Del Bò 2017).

It may be noted in this regard that for the Lombard serial site, tourism does not constitute a threat, as it does to some other popular Italian cultural tourism destinations. The Periodic Report, a document requested every six years by UNESCO in order to assess the preservation state of all the WHC listed sites in the world, drew attention to the fact that the monumental complexes belonging to the Lombard site generally possess a high visitor-load capacity, and so tourism is certainly a positive resource (SiTI 2013). Only the Sanctuary of Monte Sant'Angelo, still today an important religious pilgrimage destination, has a high number of visitors, although the oldest part of the complex, rebuilt by the Lombard dukes, may be entered only upon request by small groups of visitors.

Synergy between heritage values and school visit expectations

In conclusion, the experience of educational visits for schools – in addition to a positive outcome in terms of spreading knowledge about

the Lombards and the surviving monuments we have inherited from them – has produced a number of other results, witnessed by the yearly growth in applications to take part:

- it has made pupils aware of being part of an extensive network of sites with common roots;
- it has fostered – especially among the younger generation – the idea that our cultural heritage is a public asset whose conservation is the responsibility of us all;
- it has helped to bring teachers and tourism sector operatives up to date on the Early Medieval period, which is particularly complex and important;
- it has increased the number of such operators and assistants active in the seven localities of the serial site;
- it has further increased the capacity-building abilities of the specialist figures working within the Lombard network, reinforcing the governance model adopted in 2007 for this notably complex serial site which is spread throughout Italy.
- it has given expression to awareness-raising journeys and activities typical of responsible tourism, thus also contributing to the sustainable development of the territories involved (Manente et al., pp. 22-25; WHC 834-5), putting into practice the indications regarding UNESCO serial sites given in the Strategic Tourism Development Plan (Piano Strategico di Sviluppo del Turismo) recently approved by the Italian Council of Ministers (PST 2017).

Lastly but not less importantly, the organization of school trips has meant putting into practice one of the principal strategic aims of the 1972 *Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage*, replicated and developed in the Budapest Declaration adopted by the World Heritage Committee during its 26th session in 2002, that is to reinforce peoples' awareness of the value of this inheritance in order to facilitate the wider involvement of local communities at all levels. This will improve the properties' conservation and management, which are crucial factors for ensuring their transmission to future generations (WHC 1972).

The awareness-building and cultural

promotion work conducted by the Lombard site network through educational visits and associated teaching and workshop activities is also in harmony with the more recent Faro Convention, the *Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society*, which emphasizes the need for citizens' democratic participation in the "process of

identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation of cultural heritage", inviting States Parties to "take steps to improve access to the heritage, especially among young people and the disadvantaged, in order to raise awareness of its value, the need to maintain and preserve it, and the benefits which may be derived from it" (COE 2005).

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