

Living Amid the Ruins: Archaeological Sites as Hubs of Sustainable Development for Local Communities

'Living Amid the Ruins' (LAR), part of the research arm of the BIAA's on-going cultural heritage management (CHM) project, is adopting an innovative approach to the use of archaeological heritage in Turkey. One of the focus points of the BIAA's CHM project has always been to understand what archaeological sites mean to the local communities that live near them, and the ways in which this relationship can be improved. Concentrating on southwest Turkey, more specifically on the ancient region of Pisidia where the BIAA's current CHM project is taking place, the aim of the LAR project is tripartite:

- Investigating the relationship that people living by the archaeological sites have with these places
- Building capacity through creating social and economic benefits and sustainable growth for and in dialogue with the local rural communities
- Intensifying the relationship between the archaeological site and the local communities in their vicinity so as to secure a better future for the cultural heritage itself

It does this through the newly established long-distance trekking route, the Pisidia Heritage Trail. This 350km trail connects sites investigated by archaeologists affiliated with the BIAA, Prof. Stephen Mitchell and Dr Lutgarde Vandeput, over a period of 30 years. The accumulated scientific information is now being shared with visitors as well as local communities.

Pisidia is very rich in terms of archaeological assets and it also has beautiful mountain villages where traditional lifestyles have been partially preserved. However, the younger generations are leaving their villages in search of better lifestyles and as a result the population is decreasing and ageing. The importance of LAR stems from this fact as it actively searches for ways to contribute towards the reversal of this trend.

Through the LAR project, the BIAA employed a social anthropologist to conduct ethnographic fieldwork in the Pisidia region. The results of this work will feed into the strategies relating to different ways of promoting sustainable development of this region.

LAR contributes to a new methodological approach to the protection, presentation and interpretation of archaeological heritage, and is also using this heritage as a resource for local development.