

# ATHENA PROJECT: GUIDELINES FOR THE SUSTAINABLE USE OF ANCIENT THEATRES

M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Doménech Carbó, Francisco Juan Vidal, Ángeles Benlloch Castelló, Filippo Fantini y Alesandra Insa Calabuig

Instituto Universitario de Restauración del Patrimonio de la Universitat Politècnica de València

CONTACT AUTHOR: M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Doménech Carbó, tdomenec@crbc.upv.es

**ABSTRACT:** *Since the UNESCO established the need for Management Plans for the sites inscribed to World Heritage List, those tools have gained increasing relevance. ATHENA is an international cooperation project included in the program EUROMED HERITAGE IV of the EUROPEAN COMMISSION and is aimed at sharing, within the Mediterranean Basin, the best practices for sustainable use of ancient theatres. These buildings play a fundamental role for cultural and economic development, but need special care when used for staging activities: from the point of view of users (safety, comfort, etc.) and for monument preservation. The IRP has developed a managerial tool for contemporary uses divided into three parts: Preliminary Activities for spreading knowledge about theatre, Fundamentals, which are a series of definitions and procedures for the management of ancient theatres in general, and the third part, which will be a manual for carrying out diagnosis and proposals for the theatre.*

**KEYWORDS:** sites, classic theatres, cultural heritage management, management plan, european project.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Instituto de Restauración del Patrimonio (IRP) is the leader of the work package 4 of the ATHENA Project (**Ancient Theatres for New Actualities**); IRP has to gather and then analyze all the data coming from the partnership, which is made up of experts from different countries (Jordan, Tunisia, Algeria, Spain and Italy) working together in order to solve the problem of compatible utilization of archaeological sites inside the framework of Mediterranean Basin. Many regions of North Africa and Middle East can take advantage of their archaeological heritage for the development of local culture and economy, but as part of a shared system of values aimed at managing built and immaterial heritage, mitigating risk and creating sustainable development.

In particular, ATHENA is focused on the use of ancient classical theatres (Roman, Greek and Hellenistic): their capability to be used nowadays for different kinds of activities involving culture and local traditional can increase the awareness among populations, through the deepening of knowledge of their heritage, while at the same time generating a synergy between stakeholders, local institutions, tourist operators, etc. in order to achieve better economic standards.

The structure in which all the different contributions from the partnership will be contained is a customized version of a Management Plan, aimed at managing the different uses and activities concerning theatres.

But this managerial structure is not meant to be a static document, just something like a report about activities and state of conservation of a site; instead, it is a flexible “manual” aimed at starting an integrated process within the cultural cluster of theatre. The most updated concept of a management plan deals with putting into practice a self-sustaining process, one that is the product of the collaboration of various actors (local population, stakeholders, local institution,

etc.); during the last three years, the IRP team has gathered a huge amount of information from every partner involved in the project, by means of questionnaires to local population, politicians, and technical staff responsible for the conservation and development of culture. The experience gained during the last few years has allowed the IRP team to improve the structure of the management plan coming from the ATHENA Project and other sources, such as the manual “*Progetto di definizione di un modello per la realizzazione dei Piani di Gestione dei siti UNESCO*” from MiBAC and Ernst & Young Financial Business Advisor S.p.A.: the final structure, capable of generating the expected socio-economic synergy inside the Cultural Cluster, was designed with the aim of managing all the collected data from different countries, elaborate them and then propose a number of actions that is meant to give life to a virtuous process of economic-cultural development. The task of the IRP is formed by three different steps/chapters, each mutually linked to one another as part of a circular process:

- Preliminary Activities
- Fundamentals
- Diagnostic

The Preliminary Activities was one of the outcomes of the first year of the project and was entitled “Setting up the common scientific and cultural frame”. It focused on the development of studies and documentation of ancient theatres at the level of the Mediterranean Basin, and then, following IRP questionnaires, every partner identified the physical and conceptual boundaries of every site. Once the consistency of the built and immaterial heritage is known, it is possible to detect the different institutions responsible for its management and protection and also for detecting overlapping competences that might generate conflicting regulations. The aim is to share among the partners the different approaches and experiences concerning the way each country manages its heritage, from the point of view of the so-called Intrinsic Actions.

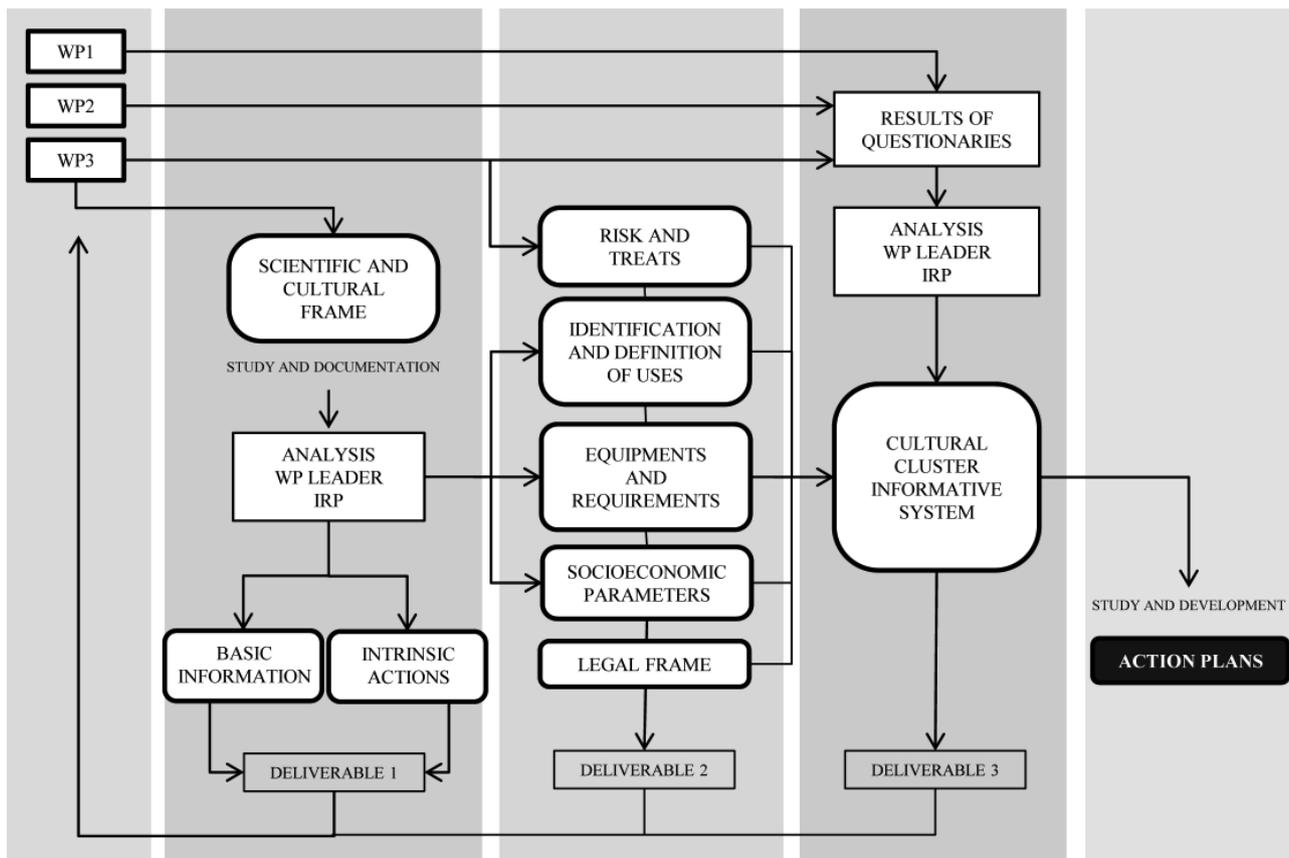


Figure 1. Pipeline developed for carrying out the Work Package 4 of Athena project

The analysis carried out by the IRP led to a series of basic aims common to every archaeological site; these purposes correspond to the Intrinsic Actions: knowledge, conservation, maintenance, increase of Cultural Heritage value, dissemination and economic development. The second part of Work Package 4 is a document developed from the results of the first analytic phase; it is called Guidelines for Compatible Utilization and will be followed by the concrete application to a case study, for which a full diagnosis concerning compatible utilization will be developed.

## 2. RELATED WORKS

Conservation, management, economic development, new technologies, immaterial culture are just a few of the aspects dealt with by ATHENA. For this reason, the consortium of the project is made up of different institutions and professionals from different countries that supplied the IRP team<sup>2</sup> with a relevant quantity of scientific information for the development of its work package, but at the same time, in its last year toward the end of the project, it was considered necessary to add other specific skills in the field, such as acoustics, economy, tourism, project management, sustainable development for the construction of the Guidelines for the Compatible Utilization. In order to draw up this document, which is part of the deliverable materials of WP 4 to other partners, the IRP team adopted an integrated strategy made of bibliographic studies, interviews with archaeological site managers, participation in conferences and meetings, involvement with international institutions and scientific communities about the theme of conservation of Cultural Heritage in general. In particular, the last fifteen years have seen increasing attention given to more specific topics concerning the relationship between utilization and conservation of cultural sites, with special regards to the opportunities provided in other fields (economic development,

enduring sustainability, etc.). For the general recommendations about ancient theatres, there are the universally recognized Siracusa Charter (2005), Segesta Declaration (1995) and Verona Charter on The use of ancient places of performance (1997); but with the aim of going beyond these fundamental documents, that in many cases are characterized by an overly theoretical approach, it was decided to study the best practices of some well known sites, such as Siracusa, Villa Adriana, Fiesole, Ostia, Sagunto, Segobriga, where every year festivals (music, dramatic activities, ballet, etc.) are held.

In Italy, the activities carried out at those sites are the results of the work provided by foundations and institutions, among them the INDA (Istituto Nazionale del Dramma Antico) is the main one, thanks to its continued efforts, which since 1914 have promoted the revival of the traditions of classical plays at the Greek Syracuse Theatre. The INDA activities were only stopped during the Second World War, but starting in 1998 they went from being a public agency to a foundation that annually designs and manages a Circuit of Classical Plays in Syracuse<sup>3</sup>.

The survey conducted by experts in the field of economy at the UPV on theatre usage inside the Mediterranean Basin led to a series of best practices, notably among them: Orange in France, Mérida and Sagunto in Spain, Taormina and Syracuse in Italy, Amman in Jordan, Kourion in Cyprus, the Epidaurus and Herodes Atticus theatres for Greece, Bosra in Syria, Aspendos in Turkey. For each one of them, a data sheet was drawn up including a brief description of the activities, such as Festivals, tourism, dissemination, educational workshops, exhibitions, etc.

As far as conservation is concerned, the IRP made use of the studies developed from the Jordan Partner<sup>4</sup>, which performed a deep examination on specific risk and threats affecting ancient theatres,



Figure 2. Cavea of the Jerash North theatre

using as a base the ICOMOS and ISCS (International Scientific Committee for Stone) illustrated glossary on stone deterioration patterns.

This tool was chosen in order to avoid confusion in the terminology for the problems concerning decay phenomena and their processes (crack & deformation, detachment, features induced by material loss, etc.). Jordan Partner did a deep survey on the state of the art of risks concerning theatre utilization, for the purpose of mitigating all possible causes of threats to ancient constructive materials (ICOMOS NEW ZEALAND, Charter for the Conservation of Places of Cultural Heritage Value).

In May 2012, the IRP team took part in the International Meeting held at the Department of Antiquities of the Jordan Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities in Amman, where all the partners of the ATHENA project could share their experiences on site management, investigation and sustainable development. In particular, it was possible to improve the managerial tools from the IRP with the most updated strategies for sustainable development, such as PM4ESD<sup>5</sup> (Project Management for European Sustainable Development), an initiative financed by the European Commission and managed by a public-private partnership aimed at establishing an international methodology for project management in two key sectors of sustainable development: tourism and culture. This new methodology is based on the PRINCE2 approach to management.



Figure 3. Visit to the Dougga's archaeological site with Tunisians experts



Figure 4. Jerash theatre during a representation aimed at entertaining and spreading of information on the Roman army

### 3. PURPOSES

The purpose of the Guidelines developed during the last year of the ATHENA project as part of the WP 4 framework is to provide to the partners with a number of examples (best practices) that covers the following aspects of a site:

- tourism
- activities related to the use of theatres (staging, educational, ceremonial, cultural and traditional)
- risk and threats (due to use, climate, earthquakes, etc.)
- socio economic and cultural parameters
- legal framework
- equipment and resources

The document was organized as the product of earlier results of the project<sup>6</sup>, developed through deep integration between work packages leaders. In particular WP1 (Setting up the common scientific and cultural frame) and WP 3 (Outlining a sustainability strategy: intervention priorities and overall compatibility) provided useful data and a robust scientific methodology that was implemented within the guidelines for the sustainable use of ancient theatres and out of the questionnaires to local population, actors, visitors and spectators. Basically the document's purpose is to give a reference list of recommendations based on the results of symposiums, colloquies, and conferences from ICOMOS, UNESCO, ICCROM and other international institutions (universities, foundations, etc.) that concerted their efforts at disseminating the most updated methods for managing activities related to Cultural Heritage by means of a shared terminology.

The purpose of building a common nomenclature, certified by the most qualified institutions, was an essential step in the creation of a stable base for the next phases of the project. In this sense, the results and the delivered materials from WP1 can be considered the most challenging task for its lead partner, the Institut Préparatoire aux Etudes Littéraires et de Sciences Humaines de Tunis. That Work Package was split into many phases; among them, there was the production of a Thesaurus of classic theatre meant to be a practical instrument for mutual comprehension and cooperation: the Guideline follows this approach, which was fundamental for sharing technical information among an interdisciplinary group of experts.

The guidelines were also conceived of to provide a set of technical definitions aimed at identifying all kinds of uses that might interest a theatre and the relative sets of users: the point of view expressed in these definitions seeks to bring the attention of the target groups/final beneficiaries of the ATHENA action to a proper and sustainable use of theatres. The document is supplied with specific examples, the Best Practices, which throughout the text are highlighted by specific graphics providing clear examples.

The problem of the complex set of risks that threaten ancient theatres makes up part of the guidelines and was worked out in collaboration with the WP 3, led by the Jordan Department of Antiquities. The document they developed was designed to give the ATHENA consortium a general strategy somehow "independent" of a single site: a methodology for evaluating and mitigating risks and aimed at defining compatible utilization by splitting the general problem in accordance with Herb Stovel's methodology (1998). The IRP task within the framework of the Jordan Partner's activities was to relate and arrange their hypothesis for risk mitigation in order to clearly distinguish between contemporary utilization and intrinsic causes of danger for the theatre and cultural cluster.

The word "intrinsic" refers to all those causes that would have affected the level of conservation of the theatre independently from tourism, staging and cultural activities, etc. This term was introduced in the Preliminary Activities in order to identify all kinds of actions that should be planned within the Management

Plan of each archaeological site.

The chapter of the guidelines on the socio-economic and intangibles aspects seeks to provide the theoretical structure that guarantees measures and actions whose objective is to generate economic development in the territories through cultural activity. The objective is to increase the heritage value (tangible and intangible) of ancient theatres through the improvement of possible synergies with the cultural resources inside a territory.

Equipment and requirements is written as an operating manual: it is a chapter of Guidelines for Compatible Utilization that seeks to supply an overview and reading key about regulations and laws at national and international level, with regard to the usage of places for performance. The objective is to show how to manage aspects dealing with lighting, uncontrolled production of rubbish, entry system and capacity of the building, etc.

In addition, in this case the purpose was to give definitions, comment on laws and provide practical examples related to best practices.

### 4. METHODOLOGY

The pipeline adopted for the construction of the Guidelines for Compatible Utilization was based on the following points: collaboration between partners for correct data gathering, the sharing of information at Euro-Mediterranean level, data processing from the IRP team, analysis and verification of the results within the partnership through deliverable documents (questionnaires aimed at informing and evaluating).

IRP efforts were focused on merging the contributions from each group of experts in an organic text, where every chapter would not simply have reflected a monothematic supply of knowledge; instead, the IRP team sought to obtain an integrated document where schemes, definitions, drawings could work in synergy for better and easier understanding.

The Guidelines were designed as a tool for managers and institutions responsible for site preservation and development: to allow them to understand the whole problem, not just from their technical point of view, but also from the side of the "user" of a built or immaterial heritage: tourists, spectators, researchers, etc. Consequently, in addition to the definition of Tourism, Staging, Educational, Formal and Ceremonial Activities, there are a series of comments and questions aimed at understanding the profile of users and their motivations. Because of these reading keys, managers can improve their strategies, thanks to a deeper understanding of common attitudes and behaviors. For instance, studies from the World Tourism Organization have demonstrated the increasing importance of tourism as a cultural experience: not only visiting cultural attractions, but also getting involved and participating in several traditional activities (folklore, local products, etc.). On the basis of these data, it has argued for the importance for cultural operators to provide meaningful travel experiences in addition to the core attractor (in this case, the theatre and the archaeological site).

By means of these definitions, it is also possible to detect other factors that might influence the satisfaction of the visitor, such as the safety of the cultural experience, the presence of congestion or overcrowded areas, the lack of stairs or sitting areas, irregular trail surfaces, etc.

The methodology adopted by the ATHENA team, thanks to the collaboration with WP 1 leaders, provides for interaction with different kinds of users by means of questionnaires; these tools, which make up part of the deliverables output from the IRP, have been adopted at the archaeological sites of Siracusa, Jerash, Cartago, and Charchell, with the aim of gathering information on the effect

produced by whole set of activities on spectators, visitors, artists, and technical staff. The results of these questionnaires will be used for the last part of the IRP task as part of the ATHENA Project: the diagnostic phase or Ancient Theatre Usage Manual. Questionnaires are composed of two parts; one aimed at initial data gathering, the second will be used after the management plan is working at full performance, thus activating a cyclical process entailing a diagnostic, actions and verification of the expected results.

The part of the guidelines focused on risk and threats follows the already mentioned methodology for Risk Preparedness by Stovel (1998), which gives higher priority to the evaluation of risks involved in the physical structure of sites as compared to their “use”. A correct and complete evaluation is made possible thanks to a highly accurate survey of the theatres, such as those carried out during WP 2 by means of laser scanner equipments, and also using field observation, digital photography, close visual inspection and other appropriate testing tools for:

1. Location of theatre, structure and materials, foundations, physical relation with surrounding landscape in relation to the two main categories and risk factors “Natural and Anthropogenic”. The evaluation and assessment of the physical and natural threats should cover risks in relation to Geo-environmental and Bioenvironmental threats.
2. Evaluation and assessment of the risks within urban patterns & landscapes as a cultural cluster.
3. Assessment of the execution of new ideas for the construction and installation of removable structures, with the aim of establishing general regulations on the use of each site with theatres and Odeia, while maintaining the acoustic qualities.
4. Establishment of a mechanism for producing a system of regular and permanent maintenance plans, calculated to ensure the preservation and conservation of theatres and Odeia.

For the development of the Guidelines, the IRP team also carried out two other kinds of research on the best international practices: one, directly in the field, by means of visits and interviews with site managers in Italy, Spain, Tunisia and Jordan, the other through the analysis of internet sites (institutional and commercial) dedicated to tourism promotion, ticket sales, reservations, etc.

This last phase produced a list of the best practices, with commentaries and data sheets of archaeological sites seen from the point of view of socio-economic/intangible aspects and their legal framework.

A series of definitions are given in accordance with Throsby (2001) on the nature and characteristics of the activities as they concern Cultural Heritage, in particular underlining the crucial role of local populations that have to keep alive and develop the virtuous process that allowed them to create symbol and cultural value for their own society.

Tangible and intangible heritage are listed and commented on from the point of view of their value, utility as a tourist resource and as an element of intercultural integration that, on the whole, are an opportunity for stakeholder investors. They represent a heterogeneous set of persons, institutions or companies that have some degree of direct or indirect influence on the development of the cultural activity; in the case of theatrical activities, their “script” deals with the skill of detecting, promoting and managing the opportunities involved with cultural assets and the services that might entice job creation and local development.

The scenario of cultural and economic operators is the cultural cluster, according to ATHENA definitions, an area without a predetermined or standardized boundary (it can be stretched to

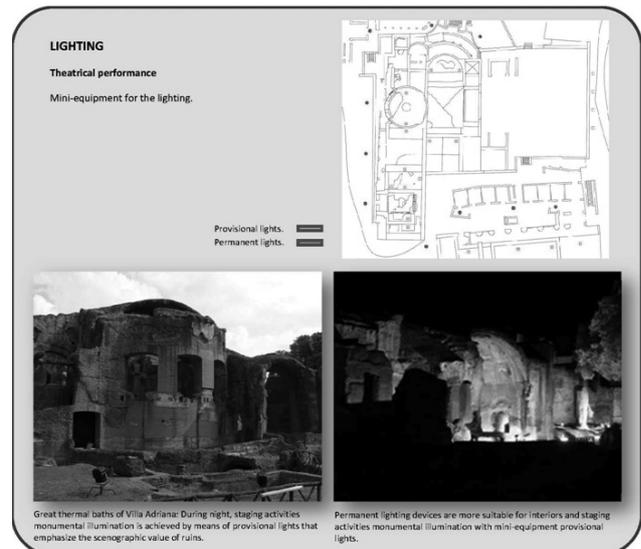


Figure 5. The document called Guidelines for compatible utilization supplies detailed descriptions and definitions of activities and concepts concerning ancient theatres. It contains also examples of best practices furnished with general and detailed drawings as in the case of lighting equipments positioned inside the Great Thermal baths of Hadrian's Villa



Figure 6. Guidelines are aimed to supply different kind of examples/best practices about the management of archaeological sites. In the case of guides it is important to plan a diversification of the offer in order to provide to to all kind of visitors a specific book: for children, for experts, for generic visitors, etc.

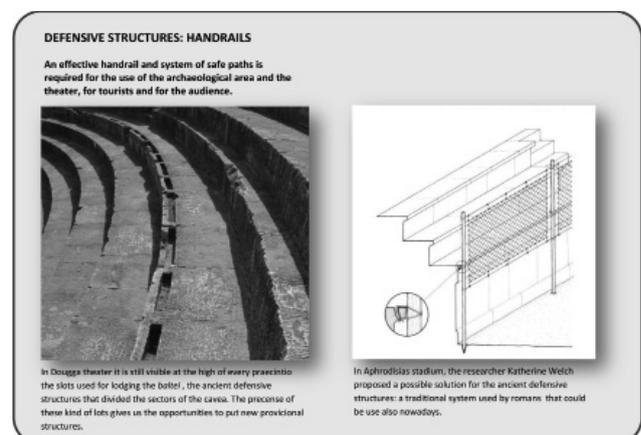


Figure 7. Some of the examples provide possible strategies of intervention in accord to the most updated studies as in the of Aphrodisias stadium where the archaeologist Katherine Welch found the joints for provisional defensive structures on the podium

a whole region or encompass just a town, depending on several conditions): the opportunities provided by a consistent presence of archaeological heritage have to be managed in order to generate development and boost employment and wealth in the whole territory. The policies expressed through specific action plans are defined and commented on in the Guidelines document, which focuses on measures in support of companies, restructuring, diversification, improvement of the environment, promotion of the area, stimulating private investment and sustainability.

Best practices in ancient theatre management are explained by means of examples, with detailed descriptions of the activities carried out in the whole Mediterranean Basin and Europe (Orange, Mérida, Sagunto, Taormina, Siracusa, Amman, Kourion, Athens, Epidarius, Bosra, Aspendos). Not just buildings for performances were taken into consideration because some other case studies can also provide useful methodologies and ideas, as in the case of legal field, where the Guidelines goes over the case study of the Alhambra and Generalife Patronage.

The complete document defining that Patronage has been attached and fully commented on in a data sheet.

Other legal aspects are dealt with in the document, which is aimed at giving a general interpretation grid for checking various legal aspects concerning built heritage and their use: the problem of ownership of land and property, the urban framework with its specific regulations on building, the national framework of laws for cultural heritage protection, and last but not least, national laws about public performances (safety, health, accessibility, architectural barriers).

During the last Athena meetings held in Valencia and Amman and Tunis, the teams responsible for WP 4, WP 3 and WP 4, organized visits to archaeological sites and meetings with the managers of theatres, museums, etc. In addition, the IRP organized additional visits to other sites in Italy and Spain, though not included in the case studies of Athena: Sagunto, Segobriga, Amman, Jerash, Gadara, Dougga, Thuburbo Maius, Ostia, Fiesole and Villa Adriana.

The surveys done on those sites were focused on detecting all the equipment and requirements needed for the correct use of an archaeological site with regard to the list of activities already mentioned (tourism, staging, educational, ceremonial, cultural and traditional activities). The essential equipment for the whole set of

activities have been listed and commented on, with examples and further technical details aimed at supplying practical methods for computing critical aspects: lighting, rubbish/litter, access system and capacity, security systems, defensive structures: handrails, signage and signals, measures for fire prevention.

When referring to technical regulations and laws, it was pointed out as to whether they were obtained from national or international codes, and in addition, each one was supplied with a tutorial for solving the problem of capacity, fire prevention, etc.

The necessary structures for carrying out the activities have been divided in three categories: resources, internal services, external services. In the first set belong all those small or bigger buildings, such as the information booth, bookshop, bar-coffee shops, toilets, ticket office, infirmary, and exhibition hall/interpretation centre. Others categories are internal and external services, where the distinction is based on a physical criterion: internal with respect to the fence of the archaeological site, or services supplied by other operators at local level.

In both cases, the same methodology was applied: gathering of information, section of best practices and data sheets aimed at illustrating the features of official tourism guides, flyers, etc.

### 5. CONCLUSIONS AND FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

This paper briefly summarizes the result of the second phase of an international and interdisciplinary project that, during 2009 and 2010, established the work breakdown structure of all the aspects related to usage of archaeological remains for carrying out different kinds of activities.

The Guidelines for Compatible Utilization is the second deliverable document that the IRP team produced for all the target groups of the European Project, in order to start up a process aimed at fostering a proper and sustainable use of Athena Consortium theatres: the effort made at merging of all previous work packages, in particular WP 1 and WP 3 generated an internal dialogue that led the IPR team to carry out an extensive study for the construction both of the theoretical structure and practical “formulas” contained in the commentaries for Best Practices. Guidelines are a “practical” outcome, the fundamental theoretical structure produced after the

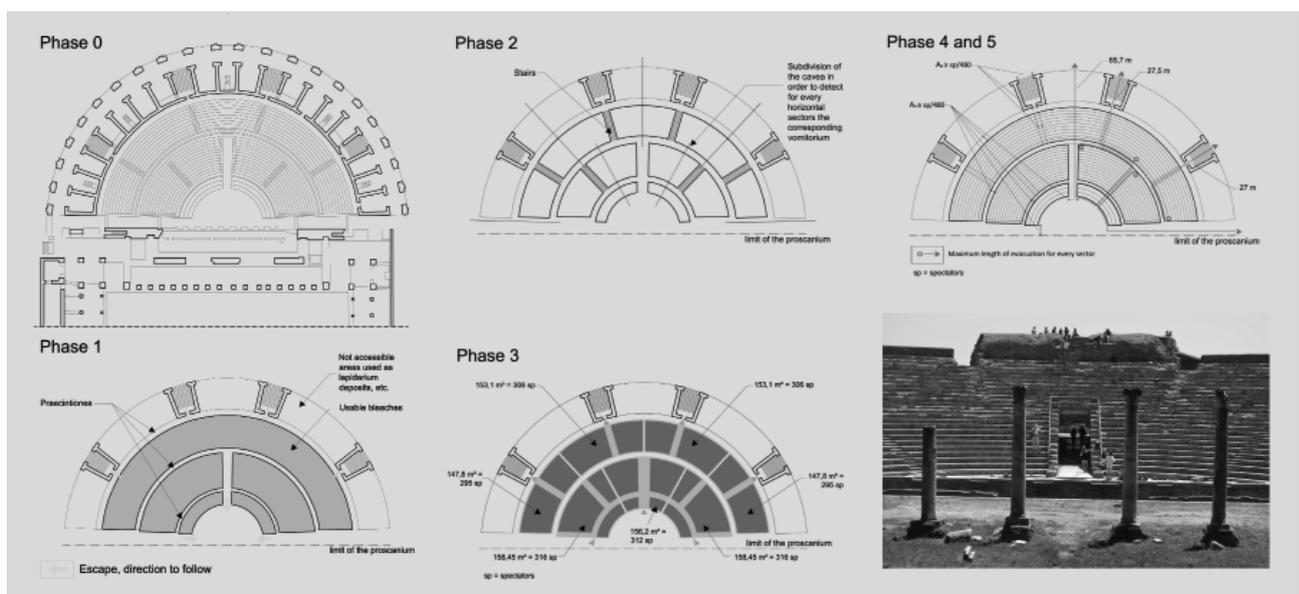


Figure 8. One of the main objectives of the guidelines is to provide an updated methodology for the computation of aspects concerning capacity and safety for spectators, in particular during staging activities. The problem that IRP team had to manage dealt with matching current regulations with architectural features of the ancient places for spectacles which presented different standards and measures

Preliminary Activities; this document comes before the diagnostic phase of the project, which is the Ancient Theatre Usage Manual, and therefore this last deliverable from the IRP should be intended as part of a wider managerial framework to be put into practice together with local authorities and stakeholders “on site”.

The next phase, the Ancient Theatre Usage Manual will see the contribution of WP 2 and WP 3 and the application of this methodology to a chosen case study: Jerash theatre in Jordan.

WP 2 is the partner responsible for the LIDAR survey of the sites under study and WP 3, in addition to being the author of a significant part of the Guidelines (ancient theatres risk mitigation), carried out a complete study on the Jerash South Theatre and the corresponding Cultural Cluster. This theatre, one of the most impressive public buildings of Jerash, is in good condition, but due to the Jerash International Festival, which turns the ancient city into one of the world’s liveliest and most spectacular cultural events, many anthropogenic risks arise.

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#### NOTES

1 The ATHENA Consortium is formed by: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities, Department of Antiquities (Jordan), Dipartimento di Rilievo, Analisi, Disegno dell’Ambiente e dell’Architettura (RADAAR) - “La Sapienza” Università di Roma (Italy), Instituto de Restauración del Patrimonio (IRP) - Universidad Politécnica de Valencia (Spain), Laboratoire Batu dans l’Environnement - Université Hoari Boumediene (USTHB - Alger), Institut Préparatoire Aux Etudes Littéraires et Sciences Humaines (Tunis).

2 IRP team is led and coordinated by M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Doménech Carbó. Members of the IRP and professionals working on ATHENA Project: Francisco Juan Vidal, Salvador Lara Ortega, Gaspar Muñoz Cosme, José Alapont Ramón, M<sup>a</sup> José Viñals, Maryland Morant, M<sup>a</sup> Dolores Teruel, Alicia Llorca Ponce, Laura Fernández, M<sup>a</sup> Jesús Romero Aloy, M<sup>a</sup> Emilia Casar Furió, Mónica Espí Pastor, Ignasi Girones Sarríó, Arturo Barba Sevillano, Filippo Fantini, M<sup>a</sup> Ángeles Benlloch, Alessandra Insa Calabuig, Mireia Alonso-Monasterio, Pau Alonso-Monasterio, Zenia Halasa.

3 <http://www.indafondazione.org> (October the 4th 2012)

4 The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan Ministry of Tourism & Antiquities, Department of Antiquities

5 <http://www.pm4esd.eu/> (October the 4th 2012)

6 See: M<sup>a</sup> Teresa Doménech Carbó, Francisco Juan Vidal, et alii (2010): *ATHENA: management plan and ancient theatre network inside Mediterranean Basin*

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