

Sustainable Conservation of Archaeological Sites with Local Communities: The Case Study of Tel Yoqne'am, Israel

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SUSTAINABLE CONSERVATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES WITH LOCAL COMMUNITIES

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The Case Study of Tel Yoqne'am, Israel

ABSTRACT

Archaeological sites are exposed to deterioration processes. Many sites are situated within the jurisdiction of local municipalities and are subjected to local administrative, planning, and development practices that usually lack conservation strategies. Consequently, many sites are neglected and suffer deterioration. The involvement of a local community in conserving an archaeological site was studied at Tel Yoqne'am, Israel, using qualitative and quantitative research methods. The results show the clear advantage of collaborating with local communities in the sustainable conservation of sites. Such sustainable conservation demands the integration of new strategies and long-term programs that include conservation, planning, and community involvement. These enable the community to learn the values of its archaeological site, understand its importance, identify with it, develop local pride, take responsibility and become involved in its sustainable conservation.

KEYWORDS: public archaeology, sustainable conservation, community outreach

Conservation, Community, and 'Place'

Archaeological sites are susceptible to damage and destruction, and their management policy should ensure their sustainable survival (Sullivan 1997). Conservation and management schemes should highlight the importance of local archaeological sites and their preservation by using a sustainable approach to ensure long-term benefits for all stakeholders involved (Avrami, Mason, and de la Torre 2000). In addition, this approach creates employment opportunities, income, public and social services, and also strengthens the local identity and bonding of the community (McManamon and Hatton 2000; English Heritage 2008).

According to the English Heritage organization (2008), a 'place' is defined as "any fixed part of the historic environment with a distinctive identity perceived by people." Further, "the significance of a place embraces all the diverse cultural and natural heritage values that people associate with it, or which prompt them to respond to it. These values tend to grow in strength and complexity over time, as understanding deepens and people's perceptions of a place evolve." Sustainable conservation management of a 'place' begins with the understanding of its importance, as well as the archaeological, historical, and cultural values that deserve being presented to the public. This is the basis for sustainable development and implementation of management strategies for

conserving and maintaining the values of a place most effectively for future generations. Recognition of the importance of the place by all stakeholders involved, especially those who most influence its future, will lead to increased awareness of the values of the site (Avrami, Mason, and de la Torre 2000; English Heritage 2008).

There are direct and indirect links between the different processes of sustainable conservation of archaeological sites with local communities. Conservation is a process that allows exposure, expression, and strengthening of values of a site, or place, for present and future generations (English Heritage 2008). The consensus in the international community about stages of actions and outcomes of the conservation process of a place of importance is put forward in various conventions and policy documents (Australia ICOMOS 2013; Avrami, Mason, and de la Torre 2000; Letellier 2007; English Heritage 2008; ICOMOS China 2015).

A proposed conservation process comprises different stages and requires the involvement of many stakeholders working together:

- Stage 1 is driven by a need, problem, or opportunity. This step includes the understanding of the situation at the site, defining the conservation issues and identifying issues needing resolution. The cooperation of all stakeholders at this point ensures their understanding of the process (Avrami, Mason, and de la Torre 2000).
- Stage 2 deals with the understanding of the site and its values, evaluating its importance, physical assessment and the existing management system. At this stage, it is important to collect, analyze and interpret information from many sources. Assessing the importance of a place depends on the gravity of decisions to be made. This includes an evaluation of the significance of the place, identifying how the community defines its heritage value, an environmental assessment, and comparison of the place to other sites of similar value (English Heritage 2008).
- Stage 3 is a statement of cultural significance: an expression of its importance and final declaration of its natural and cultural value in context (Australia ICOMOS 2013).
- Stage 4 is an examination of possible alternatives. This stage examines approaches to conservation, management, and the interpretation and display of the place to visitors (Letellier 2007). This stage also explores alternatives and their impact on the cultural significance of the place (Australia ICOMOS 2013).
- Stage 5 is dedicated to project development. This stage includes the collection of information on the factors that affect the future of the place: physical characteristics, needs of the community or the local authority, and the resources available to them. At this time, experts in various fields prepare a master plan for the conservation and presentation of the site (Letellier 2007).
- Stage 6 is the execution of the strategic management and conservation treatment plans (Letellier 2007). At this stage, it is very important to document the place and any changes made during conservation (Australia ICOMOS 2013).
- Stage 7 is maintenance and monitoring. A director is appointed, responsible for the continuous use of the place and its preservation, and the site is opened to the public (or other intended use). A maintenance program is carried out with an evaluation of the project. This stage includes continuous monitoring, and any need or problem reactivates the conservation cycle (Letellier 2007).

Site planning and sustainable development for visitors enables a community and associated stakeholders to make the most of a place's value (Cooke 1982; Avrami, Mason, and de la Torre 2000). Archaeological sites can be managed as cultural heritage sites, where only selected aspects of the past are chosen for presentation for various purposes (Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2000). Of note, the terms 'past,' 'history,' and 'heritage' are not coterminous. The 'past' refers to a totalistic understanding of 'what happened.' 'History' is an attempt to explain certain aspects of the past. 'Heritage,' on the other hand, represents attempts at interpreting the past for the purpose of presenting it to the public (McIntosh and Goeldner 1990; Zeppell and Hall 1991; Graham, Ashworth, and Tunbridge 2000; Smith 2009). The present gives cultural heritage a new meaning that makes it relevant to

new ideas and events (Cameron 2010). The term 'cultural heritage' refers to the historical environment, the natural environment and any cultural identity traditionally associated with the place (Dallen and Boyd 2003).

Cultural heritage sites serve several 'consumer' groups: local residents, schoolchildren, the professional community of scientists and researchers, and tourists from the local area or farther afield. These groups value the place for different reasons. For instance, the main motives of visitors at heritage sites are learning about cultures, experience, and discovery. However, the main drive for visiting a site is also based on the characteristics of the place and its perceived value among visitors (Poria, Butler, and Airey 2000, 2004). This makes it difficult to present the place attractively for everyone, and leads to tensions between sites development and the appropriate management of the place (McKercher and du Cros 2002). Tourism in cultural heritage sites is a major force of social, economic, and cultural change and its role will probably continue to increase in the future. This poses many challenges to the conservation of heritage, including archaeological sites. Accordingly, there is a need to develop successful strategies to ensure that the impact of tourism and development on cultural heritage sites does not impair their conservation (Winter 2009). Since the early 1990s, implementing 'sustainable development' of heritage sites, including archaeological sites, has become more and more widespread (Wager 1995; Girard and Nijkamp 2009). Ideas of tourism (especially 'cultural tourism') have dominated this process. However, declaring conservation programs 'sustainable' is complex (Winter 2009, 2010). Although tourism has provided significant economic revenues necessary for communities to preserve their cultural resources (Winter 2009), it also exposes archaeological sites to severe risks of deterioration (Agnew 1997; Matero 2008).

Key stakeholders in a place include the person(s), group, or body responsible for its overall management. This person or entity collects all the data, formulates the action plan, leads the planning process, identifies other stakeholders, and brings them together for important decision-making. This person or entity is also responsible for composing the statement of significance and the strategy for the management of the place (Sullivan 1997).

The process of involving the local community in the sustainable development of a local archaeological site begins with recognizing the universal tangible and intangible values of the place and their expression in the field and for the local community. As part of this process, the community learns about and teaches the importance of the place and its value, and the importance of preserving it for future generations. Thus, the community starts to develop an affinity with the place and a sense of local pride. This feeling leads to the local community taking responsibility for the physical remains at the site and the intangible values of the place. At the end of the process, the community, including the local municipality, has recognized the importance of the place and the need for its conservation, and has taken responsibility for it (Avrami, Mason, and de la Torre 2000; Letellier 2007).

Tel Yoqne'am

The archaeological site of Tel Yoqne'am is located at the north side of the modern town of Yokneam Illit in northwest Israel, between the Jezreel Valley in the east and Mount Carmel in the north (Fig. 1). The site is on a hill which controls a main route, crossing Mount Carmel from the coast in the west to the Jezreel Valley in the east. The ancient city of Tel Yoqne'am was the smallest of the three major cities located in the western Jezreel Valley, the others being Megiddo and Shimron. Tel Yoqne'am was continuously inhabited from the Early Bronze Age to the Persian period. After the Mamluk period, it was no longer mentioned in the historical sources. Twenty-three archaeological strata representing settlements from different periods have been identified at Tel Yoqne'am, with prominent remains of two fortification systems from the Iron Age (tenth-eighth centuries BCE), a chapel and tower from the Crusader period, and other impressive remains from the Early Islamic period (Ben-Tor 1987; Avissar 2005).

Tel Yoqne'am was excavated for ten seasons from 1977 to 1988 by Amnon Ben-Tor of the Institute of Archaeology, the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (Ben-Tor 1987; Ben-Tor, Avissar, and Portugali 1996; Ben-Tor, Zarzecki-Peleg, and Cohen-Andijar 2005; Ben-Tor, Ben-Ami, and Livneh 2005). In 1993, 2010,



FIG. 1

General view from Tel Yoqne'am to the Jezreel Valley and its surroundings. (Photo by R. Linn.)

and 2011 additional excavations were conducted by the Israel Antiquities Authority (Avissar 2005). However, following the termination of the archaeological excavations, the site was left without a comprehensive management plan, the archaeological remains were left unprotected, and the site deteriorated over the years.

Conservation and Sustainable Management

A sustainable conservation and educational project has been carried out in Tel Yoqne'am. The project was initiated by the Israel Antiquities Authority in cooperation with the community, together with the leadership of the local municipality.

The project included conservation of the archaeological remains (Fig. 2) and preparation of the site for visitors and the installation of explanatory signs and paths. School children from elementary schools and teachers of the modern town of Yokneam Illit participated in this

educational process (Figs. 3–6). The process that took place in Tel Yoqne'am was a case study aimed to examine whether it could be used as a model for a structured process to support sustainable conservation and management of archaeological sites within local municipalities. This study investigated the following aspects: conservation and sustainable development, community involvement and public outreach, and program evaluation.

The conservation and sustainable development program at Tel Yoqne'am started during the year 2007. At the beginning of the project, all the archaeological remains at the top of the site, which constituted a danger to visitors, were fenced. Although the top of the tel became accessible, the archaeological remains were still inaccessible to visitors due to safety and demonstration issues. The municipality, realizing the importance of the educational process that had just begun, allocated an initial budget that enabled the conservation and exposure of the archaeological remains at the Crusader period church. The conservation activities included: weeding,



FIG. 2
Tel Yoqne'am during conservation interventions that were conducted in 2012. (Photo by E. Hemo.)

stabilizing the tops of the walls, and filling cavities and joints between the stones in order to ensure the safety of the structures for visitors. The program included the development of an archaeological park at Tel Yoqne'am, to be operated and maintained in cooperation with the local education system and to serve as a learning and entertainment center for the children and residents of the modern town of Yokneam Illit (Fig. 7).

In addition, the program emphasized the importance of conservation and displaying the local antiquities at the site to the public, while enabling future archaeological research. The sustainable development plan for the site incorporated gradual development, using small budgets and allowing operational flexibility. The area plan

includes a circular trail along the top of the site, where information stations are placed, and allows for access to the archaeological remains (see Fig. 4).

As part of the decision to open and maintain the site, it was decided to conduct a combined archaeological/didactic excavation (see also next section) to expose the fortress wall and conduct conservation measures at the fortress tower, allowing the opening of an additional explanatory station for visitors. The conservation interventions included elimination of weeds, stabilization of walls, and treatments of their tops. These were conducted and finalized during 2010. Following significant budget allocation by the local municipality during 2011, a decision was made to expand the conservation



FIG. 3
School kids and their parents visit Tel Yoqne'am and learn about its significance.
(Photo by E. Hemo.)



FIG. 4
Local municipality schoolteachers and other employees learn about Tel Yoqne'am's history and the goals of the educational project.
(Photo by E. Hemo.)



FIG. 5
Tel Yoqne'am entrance trail with the personal ceramic tiles of the school children.
(Photo by E. Hemo.)



FIG. 6
A school girl with her personal ceramic tile placed at the site.
(Photo by E. Hemo.)



FIG. 7
 Remains of the Crusader church at Tel Yoqne'am before (top) and after the initial conservation treatment in 2008 (bottom). (Photos by E. Hemo.)

work considerably in a large archaeological complex of the tel, including two levels of the entire northeast Crusader tower of the fortress. In addition, the floor at the top of the tower was exposed. The railings and steps were repaired to allow safe access for visitors. The conservation works also included extensive engineering stabilization tasks. During 2012, additional conservation activities were conducted with the local municipality taking part in financing this activity, allowing the exposure of the biblical-period finds to visitors, with the participation of the children as part of the educational program (see below).

The principles that led the sustainable conservation plan of the site were:

- recognition of the local resonances of the site and highlighting of the community activities taking place there;
- integration into the landscape by preserving the natural appearance of the archaeological site, and removing hazards and extraneous constructions;
- trail development based on local and natural materials;
- explanatory signs allowing direct and easy communication with the local community;
- shading covers made of natural materials (fabrics and wood);
- taking into account guidelines of professional conservators and conservation architects, using minimal restoration (for educational and illustration purposes only).

Community Involvement and Public Outreach

A crucial part of the program was the active participation of school pupils. Our rationale in involving school-age children is that public education may help preserving memory of place as part of the local heritage and identity. It is our hope that children engaged with the site in this way will be accompanied by their parents to the site, expanding the circle of the site's 'friends/guards' and increasing awareness. We also hope that the initiative will encourage future involvement of the younger generation in the preservation of the site.

The educational project incorporated the school curriculum into its content and was divided into several stages. It involved meetings at school and at the site to allow the children to become familiar with Tel Yoqne'am and its cultural value, as well as familiarize them with archaeological and conservation work and principles. The initial activity within the educational system of the town included nine fourth-grade classes and four third-grade classes. These grades were selected to participate in the program because this age group is engaged with the *My Community* curriculum module in Israeli schools. The educational activity consisted of six meetings at school and at the site and a concluding event at the end of the educational year, with the participation of the mayor.

In order to create a direct linkage between program participants and the site, 'personal stamps' in the form of ceramic tiles designed, drawn, and signed by each child participant, were produced (Fig. 8). The tiles were incorporated into the explanatory signs, making a personal connection between each participant and the site (see Fig. 6). The children also made mudbricks that were used to reconstruct a biblical wall (Fig. 9). As part of the ceremony at the end of the year, the schoolchildren paraded to the site in traditional garments and took part in activities at the explanatory and information stations (Fig. 10). These stations are on various topics, including the periods in which the site was inhabited, the archaeological excavations, the ancient city during biblical times, and the location of the site at a junction of important roads. The excavation exposing the fortress wall and the conservation work at the fortress tower served as an additional educational opportunity at the site (Fig. 11). In addition to elementary-school children, parents, and municipal site employees were involved in other aspects of the program, for instance in the form of several end-of-school-year parties or informational sessions at the site. We attempted to also engage a few high-school students, but with little success (see below). The project with the schools continued throughout the various stages of the conservation activities, and became part of the municipality's educational curriculum and annual program.



FIG. 8
Fourth-grader kids and the mayor of Yoqne'am
Illit prepare personal ceramic tiles to be placed
at the site. (Photos by E. Hemo.)

Program Evaluation

In order to evaluate the progress of the project, observations were conducted on 11 occasions. These observations were made at a meeting with 15 members of the educational department of the municipality; the initial visit of 120 schoolchildren to the site; the making of mudbricks by 300 schoolchildren at the school; an attempt at the site to persuade eight high-school children to join the project; the end-of-year ceremony at the site involving 300 participants; joint activity of 240 parents and their

children at the site; a visit by 58 municipal employees to the site to expose them to the project and preparations for expansion of the project; and additional observations during activities with school children.

The evaluation study used the following methods:

- Observations and shared observations made with active participation on behalf of the researcher. The data were summarized in tables organized from two perspectives: the project's impact on the community, and its impact on the actual conservation status at the site.



FIG. 9
School kids prepare mudbricks and ceramic tiles at the site. (Photos by E. Hemo.)



FIG. 10
School children parade as part of an end-of-the-year ceremony. (Photo by E. Hemo.)



FIG. 11
Didactic excavation conducted by schoolchildren and their parents. (Photo by E. Hemo.)

- Surveys conducted using questionnaires to gauge community involvement and gather supplementary information (Yin 2003). The survey examined the quality of the educational process in accordance with the sequence of experience, the knowledge acquired, and the development of skills and leadership ability. Altogether, 184 surveys were conducted among the participants of the program

- (pupils, teachers, and parents) from 2009–2012. The analysis of the questionnaires used the S.W.O.T. method (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) (Helms and Nixon 2010; Figs. 12 and 13).
- Qualitative interviewing used to understand and quantify participant reactions to the project (Rubin and Rubin 2005). The interviews enabled the formation of a theory, based on

this case study, following the examination of the various aspects and enabled the interviewee to present his/her experience of the subject of the study, as well as enabling the researcher to provide a coherent explanation of the inspected phenomenon (Seidman 1991; Yin 2003; Rubin and Rubin 2005).

The observations demonstrated the following:

- The municipal employees, including the educational department as well as all other departments, showed great interest in the project from its early stages and were deeply involved and proud of its results.
- The schoolchildren were enthusiastic about the project from its start and were very involved in all its stages.
- The preparation of the ceramic tiles by the children at their schools was very successful and proved to be a very useful tool for connecting the children to the site and its values.
- The attempt to include high-school children in the project was not successful, maybe due to their small number and insufficient preparation.
- The end-of-year ceremony was a great success and a very good way to provide the children, the parents,

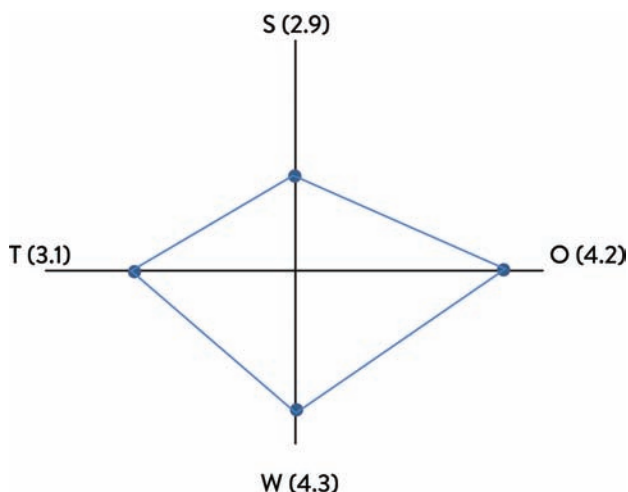


FIG. 12
A graph of the S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) results for external stakeholders. The value for each category represents the accumulation of the evaluation given by the stakeholder.

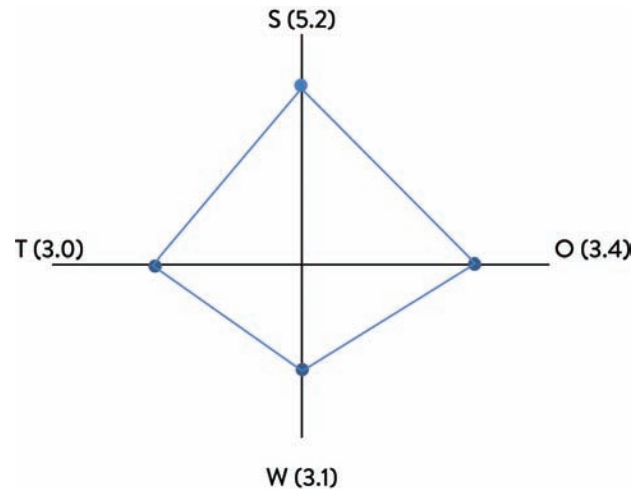


FIG. 13
A graph of the S.W.O.T. results for internal stakeholders.

and municipal employees (including the mayor) with a unique experience to summarize the year's activity.

- The production of mudbricks by the children that were used in the biblical-wall reconstruction was a very successful activity that strengthened a sense of their connectedness with the place and pride in it.
- The joint activity of the school children with their parents at the site, including seven class-end-of-year parties, was very enjoyable and productive, connecting the families to the local site and creating strong ties between members of the community and the archaeological remains and conservation.

The quantitative results of the survey show the following (Fig. 14):

- Most of the children (up to 85%) said that the program was a great experience. Notably there were no significant differences between the attitudes of girls and boys.
- Most (78–97%) showed deep understanding of the need for conservation of Tel Yoqne'am, the importance of preserving archaeological sites, and understanding of the program goals.
- Most (78–96%) had a clear viewpoint of the need to preserve the antiquities at the end of the activity, and 88–98 percent realized the importance of preserving the site for their local town.

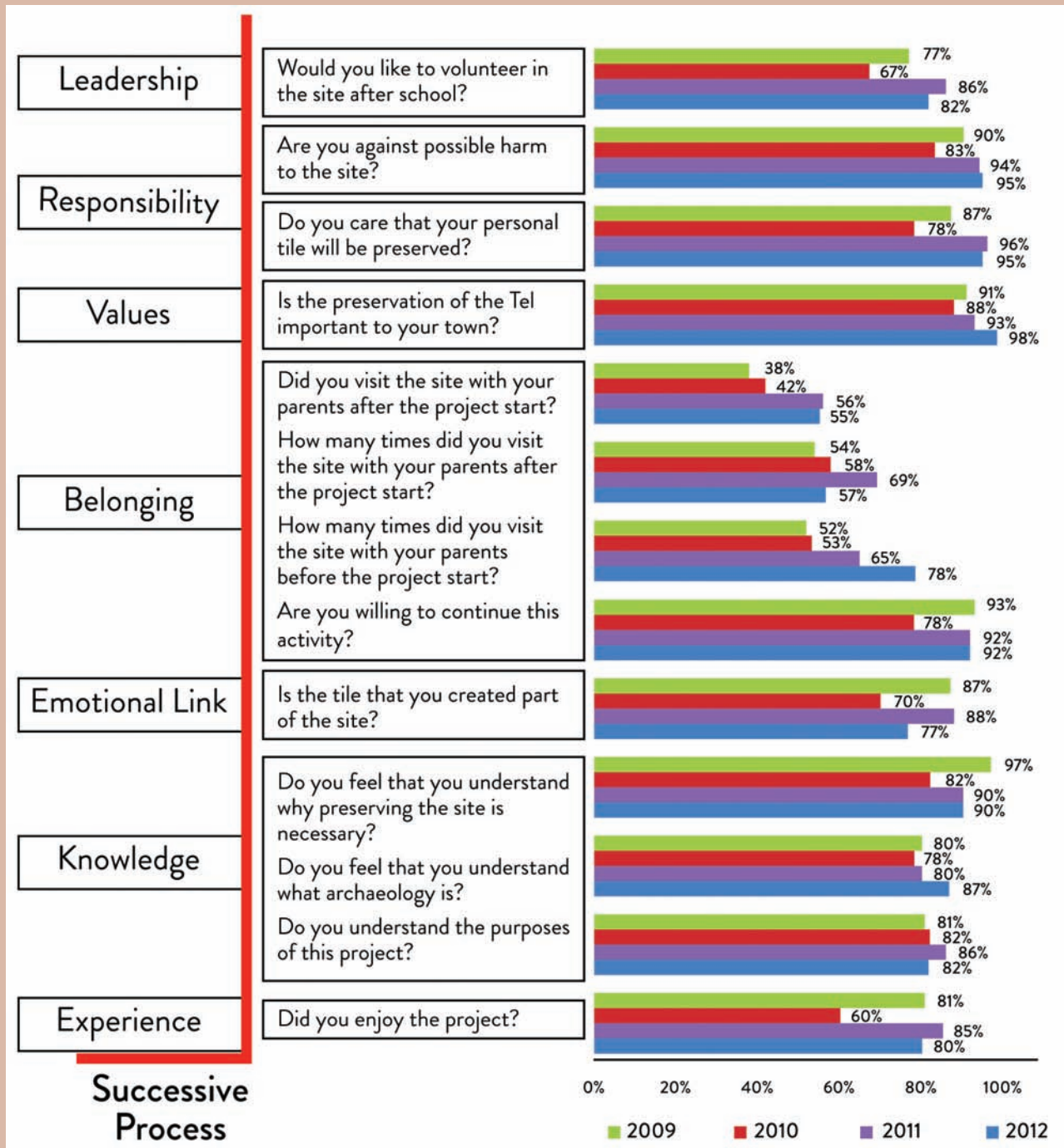


FIG. 14
The graphical expression of the surveys for the participant children.

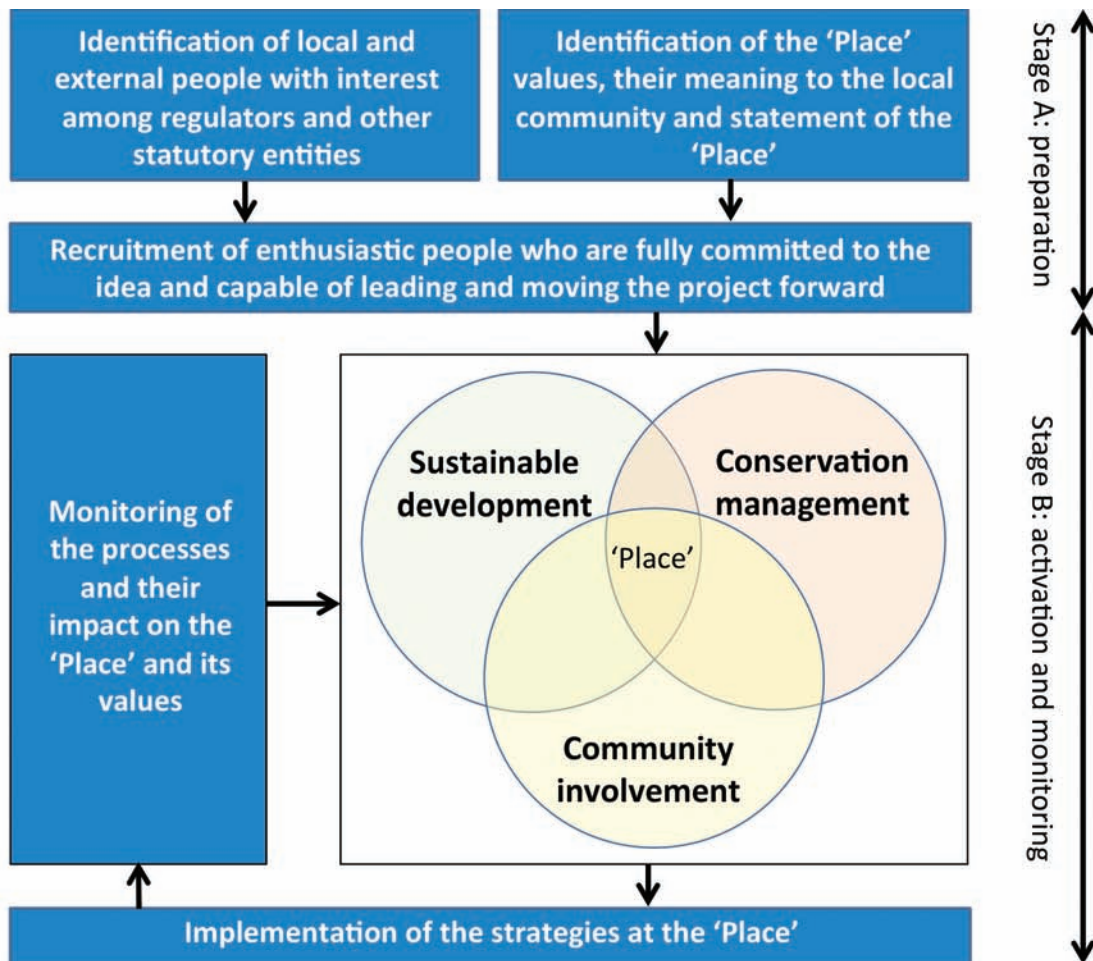


FIG. 15

Flow chart of the sustainable conservation process of an archaeological site in a local municipality—a major outcome of this study.

- Most (78–93%) were interested in the continuation of the project.
- Most (67–86%) were interested in volunteering for activities at the site after school.
- 70–88 percent of children felt that the ceramic tile they made became part of Tel Yoqne'am, and thus they felt an emotional connection to the site.
- The interest and involvement of the children in the project, and their positive attitude towards conserving the site, gradually increased from year to year.
- Although the children's overall level of satisfaction based on the surveys was 80 percent, with teachers

it was only 56 percent. This difference is probably linked to the fact that the children were very enthusiastic about discovering a new field of activity and learning very special material outdoors, as well as being actively engaged in physical work (e.g., making ceramic tiles, preparing mudbricks, and working with professional conservators at the site). The lower level of satisfaction expressed by the teachers may reflect some difficulty in confronting material in a new discipline in an unfamiliar outdoor environment. It is expected that further involvement of the teachers in the project will considerably increase their satisfaction.

Discussion

The overall results of this study highlight the importance of community involvement in the sustainable conservation of an archaeological site within the municipality system. A gradual process of physical preservation of the archaeological findings at the site is progressing along with increasing involvement of the municipality and the local community. The deep involvement of the local municipality was a key factor in the success of the project. The program evaluation data show that there is a clear interest in the project and the knowledge gained, the emotional involvement and the will to continue the project all show a relatively stable level with some fluctuations between different years. The analysis of the questionnaires shows first that all stakeholders see a great opportunity in the strengthening of local identification with the site and the potential to develop Tel Yoqne'am into a significant archaeological and heritage site. In addition, the local stakeholders see the lack of an access road to the tel as a major weakness of the project, while the external stakeholders see the shortage of budget and the frequent replacement of personnel as a major weakness of the project. The overall view of all stakeholders is that major goals, based on what has been achieved in the project, are the joint effort of all parties to establish the place as a center for education and presentation of the archaeological site's history, and as a center that the local community identifies with and is proud of. These major goals have not changed since the early stage of the project.

The study clearly shows that it is feasible to establish a genuine process within a local community for the sustainable conservation of a local archaeological site.

Furthermore, this process is warmly welcomed by all members of the community, provides substantial benefits for the community as well as to the archaeological site, and creates a strong basis for long-term conservation activities. The suggested process, based on the results of this study, may be divided into two major stages: a. preparation, and b. activation and management (Fig. 15).

The advanced stage comprises three major activities that should be carried out in parallel: conservation, improving visitor facilities for recreational use by the local community, and involving the community in taking responsibility for the place. Identifying the value of a place and its meaning to the local community is fundamental in fostering a sense of pride in, and identification with, the place. The recruitment of enthusiastic people is critical in shifting from the initial stage of preparation to the advanced stage of activation and management. The implementation of activities and the regular and systematic implementation of management/monitoring underlie a viable, sustainable process in which the local community and municipality take the lead in operating the site. Thus, sustainability entails a shift from a limited-time operation (a project) into a long-term activity (a program). Once this is achieved, the local community is able to establish 'its' archaeological site as a place (i.e., a significant component of its present and future identity), and the community's commitment to the sustainable conservation of the site is ensured for future generations.

Note

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