

Ede and Ravenscroft Postgraduate Prize 2019 Report
International Training Course on Disaster Risk Management of Cultural Heritage 2019
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Introduction

The Ede and Ravenscroft Postgraduate Prize helped me cover the expenses for attend the International Training Course (ITC) on Disaster Risk Management for Cultural Heritage at Ritsumeikan University in Kyoto, Japan, from 9th to 30th September 2019. The ITC course is under the UNESCO Chair Programme on Cultural Heritage and Risk Management, in cooperation with UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOM and ICOMOS/ICORP, and aims to integrate disaster risk reduction and heritage safeguard. In 2019 twelve participants from Italy, Iran, Armenia, Argentina, Costa Rica, Bangladesh, South Africa, Egypt, Jordan, Uganda were selected out of 280 applications and trained to develop a disaster risk management plan for proposed case study heritage sites.

The course experience

During the course, workshops and training sessions enabled us working in team on real-life Japanese cases, where we had the chance to learn by operating at several scales - from the risk assessment to the implementation of mitigation or preparedness measures within specific heritage contexts, up to the post-disaster salvage procedures and recovery planning. Working on real case studies was facilitated by field trips to significant locations renowned for previous disaster experience, such as Takeda castle in the prefecture of Hyogo, or offering examples of post-disaster recovery, like the historic sake brewery and earthquake museum in the city of Kobe. Furthermore, in Kyoto we had the chance to visit Ponto-cho historic district – i.e. the urban area chosen for the workshop on risk assessment- the Kyoto National Museum as a model of cutting-edge risk mitigation technologies, Kiyomizu-dera and Higashihoganji temples, examples of integration of disaster risk management measures and heritage preservation.

Beyond the knowledge

The course gathered professionals from different fields and countries, all committed to heritage preservation and disaster risk reduction, and was a unique opportunity to experience the real-life multidisciplinary efforts needed to ensure an adequate protection of heritage, in all its forms. On a personal note the experience of the ITC course, beyond providing me with specific knowledge and new skills, enriched me with perspectives and insights from other participants and created bonds based on shared values and a common mission. The initial group of participants left Kyoto as a group of friends and part of the “ITC Family”, broadening the global network of “heritage and disaster people” working together and relying on mutual support.

Impact

The impact on both my personal and professional life was beyond my expectations. Not only I acquired essential skills for disaster risk management of cultural heritage and developed a DRM plan for my case study site, but I also had the chance to promote the usefulness of my PhD thesis in relation to cultural heritage protection. Two months later, both course mates and mentors are in my network of colleagues and friends; furthermore, I have been invited as part of the teaching team during the training course “First Aid to Cultural Heritage 2019”, organised by ICCROM between November and December 2019, and the pilot project included in my DRM plan for MuNDA, Museo Nazionale D’Abruzzo in L’Aquila (Italy) is about to be presented and implemented.

The experience of the ITC 2019 embodied the ideals I am committed to: working within a multicultural context and teaming up with specialists from different fields for a common purpose made me feel part of a broad community where my skill can contribute in making the difference.



The girls of the team – staff and participants and an alternative group picture.



The group on the top of Takeda Castle in the city of Asago - Hyogo prefecture



On the rooftop of Kiyomizu-dera temple (Kyoto), during the traditional restoration works