

It was a direct, practical follow-up to the lecture covering the role of stakeholders in reaching conservation decisions. It showed the ability of the mainly experienced conservation professionals among the course participants to take the role of various stakeholders in the case of an archaeological site. It was about recognizing the role of stakeholders in conservation decision-making. What struck me then, mainly as an observer, was the fact that some of the participants readily acted as local politicians or other community members rather than conservation professionals. These were the kinds of behaviour that most of us would define as 'typical' for the representatives of various stakeholder groups in conservation discussions. The role playing in this case was obviously based on experience as well as on assumptions of a 'typical' act in a given situation. However, what turned out to be a real benefit from the exercise were the reactions from the conservation professionals driven by the need to respond to these 'typical' stakeholder acts. One to expect a 'typical' act to would induce a ready-made response. Clearly, this was one of the possible limitations to the exercise. On the other hand, the programme did not allow time for preparation and the participants in the game were expected to react immediately, as in most real-life stakeholder situations.

Role playing exercise – communicating conservation issues to the public

Having recognized the potential benefit of this type of exercise in preventive conservation studies, we introduced it in the Storage Organization course with the aim of teaching about public communication issues in preventive conservation management of museum collections. Why within the Storage Organization course? I admit to being guilty of a tendency to introduce as many general conservation issues as possible into this course, because the programme was handicapped from the beginning by a lack of teachers from the conservation field. Communication was one of the subjects I felt was not taught enough, especially not from the museum storage issues point of view.

The students were given role descriptions based on a simple press conference scenario involving museum professionals – manager, curator, conservator-restorer, preventive conservation specialist, PR officer, and journalists representing newspapers and several magazines. The joint task for museum professionals was to inform the media about the museum's decision to postpone the opening of an exhibition because of the need to use all available resources to solve a leakage problem in a storage area. The situation was seen as an opportunity to address other problems, as well, and to reorganize the storage. The journalists were to insist on hearing the reasons for putting all available resources into such a project instead of going with something more visible. The starting point for this was a magazine which was changing from a religious one to a show business one.

I would compare the results of this particular exercise to those of the Identifying and Analyzing Stakeholders and Actors exercise in SCD 2008.