ST-URSANNE PROJECT

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PROJECT CONTEXT

The celebration of Ursanne’s 1400th death anniversary will be taking place throughout 2020 in St-Ursanne. In this context, the parish president contacted the leader of the “Art and Technology” project of the HE-Arc Ingénierie to gather the different elements in a conceptualised and long-term approach.

The heart of the project consists in revisiting and valorising the legacy of Ursanne whose stay on the banks of the Doubs from 610 or so to his death set in 620 governed the place fate. Indeed, with his coming the monastery and later the town, identically named, developed considerably during the Middle Ages to radiate beyond the territory boundaries. The valorisation of the existing heritage must take place in the spirit of the place and character and must revisit this material and immaterial heritage in function of its input for the 21st-century visitor (inhabitant of St-Ursanne, Clos du Doubs, Jura or elsewhere).

The jubilee is composed of an event and a long-term part. It targets foreign visitors as well as local ones. As a matter of fact, one of the main goals is to see that the inhabitants adopt the roots and the historical, cultural and spiritual past of the region [1]. The project targets a high quality of the site presentation, a highlight of its genuineness as well as “à la carte” information intended for a wide range of visitors (well-informed amateurs, walkers, families, pilgrims, pupils, etc.).

SITUATION ANALYSIS

The built space includes the collegiate church, the cloister and the lapidary museum. In 1984 the St-Ursanne collegiate church was meticulously restored. Its South portal, entirely carved and painted, is one of the big Romanesque artworks in Switzerland. Seemingly, the carvings were realised by Romanesque masters who worked on the Basel Cathedral. The history (and context) of the buildings, the constitutive elements of the collegiate church and cloister are not showcased for the visitor.

The lapidary museum of St-Ursanne, opened in 1982, lies in the old St-Pierre church. It hides the biggest number of Merovingian and Carolingian monolithic sarcophagi of Switzerland (found during the archaeological digs of the sixties, seventies and eighties) as well as architectural and sculptural Romanesque elements, originating from the ancient constructions of St-Ursanne and which are not showcased: their interpretation being reserved to the initiated and no dig result accessible.

The collegiate church treasure is stored in a small room (access via the choir) and a garage in town. Its archiving is being finalised. There are more than 300 items (paintings, clothes, cult objects, ex-voto, handwritten documents, etc.). Their historic, artistic value and condition have not been assessed yet. The preservation measures and the positioning of these objects must still be defined.

OBJECTIVES

This project is an example of interdisciplinarity of the HE-Arc teaching sectors as three of them are concerned (engineering, management and preservation-restoration). Currently, the buildings representing the “soul” of St-Ursanne are managed by the St-Ursanne parish that owns it. This commemoration represents a rare opportunity to give a long-term life to a product by maintaining and financing it.
The accepted pre-concept contains three main themes: the man, the message and the place. This event concept and facilities should enable to launch a new dynamics around the town. It includes the following aspects:

- a better visibility (and understanding) of the history of the man and place [2]
- an increased number of visitors
- job creation

The study led by the “Imaging” skill group (Engineering) should let us better apprehend the interaction place/visitor.

One innovative aim consists in replacing on-site indexations and descriptions by a Serious Game to reduce the visual impact on the building and better preserve the site [2]. We also want to manage and adapt the information according to the visitor’s age and add relays with the different city actors (e.g. game prize can be collected or consumed at a local retailer) [3].

The heritage site represents one of the Jura Arc hot spots in terms of tourist development potential. Apart from the built and natural frame of the city, already well valued by the tourist house of St-Ursanne, the religious site combines a high historic and symbolic value. For the moment there is no data about the attendance rate of the church nor any managing tool to highlight it.

The Jura Arc region development depends on the region capacity to develop strong tourist products and St-Ursanne certainly combines all the necessary potentials to be transformed in product while respecting its living vocation of religious remembrance place.

REFERENCES