



The next steps for Palmyra: what is going on?

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In August 2015, Baalshamîn temple in Palmyra was completely destroyed by ISIL. The destruction of this monument crystallised the sense of loss of memory for those who had fled the combat zones during the war. The main problem today is how to document the both monument itself and its destruction, alongside the feasibility of any restoration or the possibility of new archaeological research, as well as the question the conservation of the cultural memory of the location for local people. To address these problems, Collart-Palmyre Project at Lausanne University aims to publish all the documentation. A 3D reconstruction of the Temple of Baalshamin has been realised by the UNIL team in the department of Archaeology and Ancient History (ASA). The technical processing of this 3D modelling and VR experience, which began in 2016, was completed by the French start-up ICONEM and Ubisoft. Partnership with UNDP is also underway with the ASA permitting the presentation in 2020 of 3D models of the Temple to displaced Syrian refugees located in camps. Discussions with UNESCO in Paris also helped to draft some guidelines about the future of Palmyra. Last but not least, we have to question the broader facets of neo-colonialist, economic and nationalist agendas that emerges from the 'migration of digital heritage' (in particular 3D models) as assets to be exploited. The project wants to explore how these digital assets provide a scaffold for the memories of migrants, especially those who are fleeing different types of risk (warfare, climate refugees) or have suffered iconoclastic events.