Activity 3: Interviewing Stakeholders to Further Understand Their Interests and Positions

Instructions for Participants

The task for this activity is to increase your understanding of the interests of Jarash stakeholders by participating in and analyzing a set of one-on-one interviews. To do this, you will develop a set of interview questions for Jarash stakeholders, participate in a few sample stakeholder interviews, and analyze the findings.

The background information on Jarash and the preliminary list of stakeholders and interests developed in activity 2 serve as a starting point for understanding the dynamics of the authorities and stakeholders of Jarash. In most cases, however, to elicit information about interests, positions, and priorities in sufficient detail in order to make specific management decisions, it is recommended that face-to-face individual or focus-group interviews be conducted with stakeholders.

For this activity, participants will be divided into two groups and assigned the role of interviewer or interviewee. Interviewees will play the role of one of three different stakeholders. The interviewers will be expert members of the site management team throughout all the steps in this activity, with the task of developing questions and conducting the interviews with stakeholders. Interviewees will take on the role of one of three stakeholders of Jarash: a local representative of the Department of Antiquities (DoA), a local representative of the Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities (MOTA), and a representative of an international archaeological mission.[3] Their task will be to prepare themselves to be interviewed in their roles by reading additional materials about the interests, positions, and priorities of their assigned characters. Then the two groups will come back together to analyze the findings from the interviews.

STEP 1 (FOR THE INTERVIEWERS): DEVELOP A LIST OF FIVE TO TEN INTERVIEW QUESTIONS TO ASK PARTICIPANTS

Before beginning your interviews, you need to develop an interview protocol, which is a list of questions to guide your conversation with participants. Your goal is to learn more about the interests, positions, and priorities of the stakeholders, as well as to understand the primary management issues for the site from their perspectives. The questions should provide an opportunity for the stakeholders to share their interests and perceptions with you; therefore, you should ask open-ended questions that encourage them to talk at length about what they think and feel is most important. Open-ended questions "allow interviewees to share their perception of reality" and to identify the issues, interests, and concerns that are most important (Susskind, McKearnan, and Thomas-Larmer 1999, 112).

Most of your questions should be general and open, though you will want to ask more specific questions about the key themes and management challenges that you identified in activity 2. A good number of questions is five to ten, which will usually result in an interview of 20 to 40 minutes in length.

STEP 1 (FOR THE STAKEHOLDERS): READ THE CONFIDENTIAL INSTRUCTIONS GIVEN TO YOU BY THE INSTRUCTOR, AND PREPARE TO BE INTERVIEWED

Your task for steps 1 and 2 of this exercise is to take on the role of one of the primary stakeholders of Jarash. To do this, you will be provided additional information about the interests of the stakeholder you are pretending to be, which are called confidential instructions. You are not to show them to the interviewer; rather, you should use them as a guide to answering the interview questions.

STEP 2 (FOR THE INTERVIEWERS): CONDUCT INTERVIEWS, PLAYING THE PART OF THE INTERVIEWER

When conducting the interviews, follow the protocol while allowing flexibility for interviewees to focus and elaborate on the topics that interest them most.

In interviewing stakeholders, you may initially hear specific management outcomes that are favored—people's "positions." As mentioned previously, positions are statements of what people want on particular issues. While these positions can help you to identify some potential options for decisions that need to be made, it is important to help interviewees go beyond stating their positions to articulate the actual interest, or underlying need, that would be served by these positions. In designing a management plan that seeks to protect the values and significance of the site, it is helpful to maximize the flexibility of outcomes to serve that end while securing the agreement of a broad range of stakeholders.

It is also important to withhold judgments of the views that interviewees share with you, and to avoid arguing or disagreeing with them over assertions of fact they may make with which you personally disagree. Instead, ask open-ended follow-up questions, such as "What experiences have led you to that conclusion?"

STEP 2 (FOR THE STAKEHOLDERS): CONDUCT INTERVIEWS, PLAYING THE PART OF THE INTERVIEWEE

Answer questions and engage in conversation with the interviewer in the role of the character you have been assigned. The confidential instructions provide only a limited amount of detail and information. Feel free to embellish and expand on the role you are given, as long as you try to remain true to the underlying character, values, and interests you are given.

STEP 3: DEVELOP A MATRIX OF STAKEHOLDER INTERESTS, MANAGEMENT ISSUES, CHALLENGES, AND POTENTIAL CONFLICTS BASED ON THE FINDINGS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

For this step, the interviewees now shift out of their roles as stakeholders and become members of the site management team. Your job in the analysis is to understand the interests of these three stakeholders, identify key issues, summarize the range of perspectives, and visually represent the areas of agreement and potential disagreement. In doing this, you are expanding upon the list of interests, commonalities, and potential conflicts that you developed during activity 2. A clear, focused analysis highlights key issues and breaks them down into manageable pieces.

One strategy for clarifying the issues and the range of interests provided by interviewees is creating a matrix of stakeholders and issues, identifying areas of conflict, areas of commonality, and areas of different priorities. This should be done by filling out the activity 3 worksheet provided by the instructor.

Beyond the matrix, there may be occasions on which a written version of your findings will be circulated, shared, or published. On these occasions, it is critically important to maintain a neutral voice in your descriptions, reporting only what you have heard from the people you interviewed. On other occasions, the findings from interviews are used only as an internal guide for a site manager or an advisory team—in these cases, less time and attention are needed for formal drafting and writing of findings and analyses. The group may instead develop informal bullet lists and graphic representations or charts of issues and interests.

A summary of findings may be organized by stakeholder group or by key issue. If a report of findings is to be shared and some confidentiality is needed (given political or situational realities), it is necessary to avoid attribution of specific interests or ideas to specific people; instead, it is sufficient to speak of broad categories of stakeholders such as "local businesses" or "municipal leaders," or to simply say "Some interviewees felt…"

For this exercise, the matrix of stakeholders, issues, interests, and priorities is for internal use only. Therefore, focus on accurately depicting the information you learned from each stakeholder to guide your team in making decisions about key issues in later activities.