**CONSIDERATIONS ON THE PERCEPTION OF LICHEN COLONIZATION ON CULTURAL HERITAGE OUTDOOR STONE OBJECTS**

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The presence of lichens represents a remarkable issue in the framework of several conservation projects of cultural heritage stone objects in outdoor environments. This is mostly due to the biodeterioration activity of these organisms, greatly affecting material durability, as well as to their impact on the aesthetic appearance and legibility of the colonized surfaces. In other cases, however, lichens have been suggested as key players in bioprotective effects. Morover, from a different perspective, lichen communities found on the surface of certain cultural heritage artifacts constitute biodiversity hotspots. Biodeterioration, biodiversity, and even bioprotection are objective and quantifiable variables, with dedicated indices available, whose analytical and site-specific knowledge should contribute to the development and optimization of suitable conservation strategies along with historical and artistic considerations. Nevertheless, decision making also relies on the perception of the general public, who is rarely aware of the relevance, impact, and complexity of lithobionthic communities. Only in recent years conservation plans have started to include informative tools to provide knowledge to the public of the risks (biodeterioration) and benefits (biodiversity and, in some cases, bioprotection) related to the presence of lithobionthic communities; however, such strategies still need to be improved. In this work, a series of surveys were administered to different target groups, including tourists of heritage sites, scholars and students in the field of natural sciences, conservators, and others, in order to investigate their knowledge and perception of lichens and other lithobionts in terms of biodiversity value, biodeterioration issues, and aesthethic acceptability on different typologies of cultural heritage surfaces. The answers collected will be discussed and an online questionnaire will be administered to IAL9 participants to further expand the current investigation.