

# Assessing Heritage Significance: Decision Support Tools for Managing Landscape's Cultural Value in Southern Italy

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**Abstract.** The paper presents a three year research project aiming to design a methodological model for a management plan applicable to a cultural landscape case study, like Area Grecanica, Calabria, Italy. The management planning is seen and defended in the paper, as upstream activity of the on field intervention, with a view to the process related to regional changes, the theme of sustainable development and the revitalization of place identity, as a tool for heritage recognition on a global scale, such as UNESCO WHS. In conclusion, the paper proposes a management plan "participated monitoring", seeking the involvement and participation of all landscape actors, setting as its scope to bring technical and common knowledge together in planning management.

## Introduction

The landscape contains itself a cultural complexity - in the broadest sense of the term culture - made of subjects, resources and relationships between them. The processes that have historically combined these elements form the basis for the construction of a path to retrieve the specific identity of the place and properly manage the development, taking into account the needs of socio-economic development. On this basis the research project has set the overall goal of developing a methodological and experimental route aims to propose a strategy for managing this complex system called landscape [1]. And the management of cultural heritage, with its double tangible and intangible meaning, cannot ignore the contributions that the economic evaluation can give: every time a decision is taken - interventions planned and projects carried out – choices, that the evaluation has the task of accompanying, have been made. Thus the need to study a model for the protection, conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage in a landscape context was born. And with that, the necessity of placing the management as central phase of intervention projects in the cultural heritage area. The innovation of this methodology is to see management planning as activity upstream of the intervention, with a view to the process related to regional changes, the theme of sustainable development and the revitalization of the identity of places, as a tool for their recognition on a global scale, such as WHS, World Heritage Sites of UNESCO [2]. Therefore the result of the research project is the construction of a model for a Management Plan applied to the case study of the 'Area Grecanica' cultural landscape, finally proposing a first step towards the study of shared evaluation tools for monitoring the management plan.

## Methodological process for cultural heritage management plan definition

To emphasize the importance of proper management of cultural heritage, in 2002 the World Heritage Committee adopted the "Budapest Declaration" calling on all partners to support the preservation of World Heritage through key strategic objectives, trying to ensure a fair balance among conservation, sustainability and development, so that World Heritage can be protected through appropriate activities contributing to the socio-economic development and quality of life in our communities through communication strategies, education, research, training and awareness, seeking the active involvement of local authorities at all levels, in identification, protection and management of World Heritage [3].

Each request for inclusion in the World Heritage List must therefore be accompanied by a management plan that describes how the unique value of the site will be protected. The primary objective of the management plan is to ensure effective protection of the cultural heritage, to ensure transmission to future generations. For this reason, the Management Plan should take into account the typological differences, the characteristics and needs of the site, as well as the natural and cultural context in which it appears. It can also incorporate the existing planning systems and other traditional tools for regional organization and management.

At a national level, in Italy, the law 20 February 2006 n. 77 "Special measures of protection and use of the Italian cultural, landscape and environmental sites inserted in the World Heritage List, placed under the protection of UNESCO", introduces the management plans for the Italian sites already inscribed on the List, provides for the approval of management plans and support measures for their processing [4].

The principle inspiring the research project is recognized in the importance of the identification, protection, preservation and transmission to future generations of the cultural, natural and intangible heritage presents in Calabria.

The purpose of the protection includes the development processes and the vital heritage conservation. The first is addressed to the exercise of the functions and regulation of the activities aimed at promoting the knowledge of cultural heritage and to ensure the best conditions of use, with the sole purpose of promoting the development of culture; the second is aimed at understanding all those actions that have as their essential purpose to increase the usage of the cultural heritage [5]. Benefit from heritage does not necessarily mean to use it for economic purposes but it means being able to recognize its history, make the cultural heritage capable of producing something (also simply another culture, or an improvement in the quality of urban life, i.e. a creative and innovative environment where to live), it should be the driving force generating economy and develop all those aspects that are not directly related to the good in itself, but that revolve around it and nevertheless relate to the economic growth of the area in which the cultural heritage is contextualized [6]. The large number of architectural, archaeological, environmental and intangible heritage that characterize the region of Calabria were and are the subject of national and international studies, since the texts of Greek and Roman philosophers. In this landscape there are strong figures on the one hand, and the deep roots on the other, and both characterize the survival of traditions, crafts, languages and dialects that have been preserved with extraordinary spontaneity, despite the depopulation that resulted in the reduction of the population of the entire region to about two million inhabitants.

The case study treated by this research project addresses the specific issues of the Area Grecanica landscape as Calabrian nomination to the UNESCO tentative lists. The Area Grecanica choice, as applicative case study, is the synthesis of the universal values that this area can preserve within its uniqueness both in terms of tangible and intangible values.

### **Towards a reviewed UNESCO management plan for Area Grecanica landscape cultural heritage**

The study conducted within the three years research period, summarized the path for the construction of a UNESCO management plan in the following three phases:

- 1) The knowledge project. The knowledge project is the priority phase of the definition for the enhancement and management plan. The data collection of local heritage makes it possible to correct programs identification for heritage protection and preservation, and stable enhancement projects. The establishment of a flexible database - constantly implemented - is a prerequisite for the definition of tools and implementation programs for the conservation and enhancement of the resources of the Grecanica Area landscape, as well as tools for monitoring and plan implementation phases control.
- 2) The conservation project. The conservation project is the second phase of the overall management project and it consist of the systematic organization and coordinated implementation of programs for the protection and conservation of cultural and environmental heritage.

The data collected in the knowledge process define the area of interest for conservation projects whose implementation is carried out at different levels:

- Definition of safeguard measures for the immediate preservation of cultural heritage or heritage system.
- Study of the current planning legislation for the protection of the heritage assets.
- Scopes and methods definition for conservation projects on a micro scale.

3) The enhancement project. Once the priority needs of heritage conservation and protection have been defined, the management plan raises the necessity to define strategies and enhancement projects. In this sense, the query of the database allows the identification of specific interrelations among resources and between resources and detractors, in order to formulate appropriate strategic plans that will enhance the resources themselves, remove or mitigate the disturbing elements, set up the time of implementation and the reaching of the plan, the central core of wider initiatives to leverage and management of land resources in question. Thus strategic plans, on the one hand build the network of relational resources - such as routes, networks, circuits enhancement - according to a logic of integration that develops synergies among individual resources and rebuild organic frameworks of phenomena understanding. On the other hand those strategic plans define interventions to preserve the resources from detected risks [7].

In essence, the definition of strategic projects is based primarily on the ability to identify physical locations - and conceptual and physical paths that connect them - able to represent the deep and layered cultural significance of the places. Secondly, the strategic project aims to discover the social value through the re-acquisition of cultural memories. Finally, the strategy is based on supporting the understanding - and therefore transfer - of the cultural message.

This integrated system of interventions is presented as a methodological basis for structuring cultural heritage management plans on a regional scale. Furthermore, this model is configured as a useful tool to prepare the ground to support activities related to a possible candidature in the list of World Heritage Sites.

### **Operative guidelines applied to the case study**

The management - from an operational point of view - must be in close contact with the land, placing "knowledge exchange and information points" at a municipality level, constantly connected at a communication network that should trigger stages of collection of the encoded information in a common data base. Therefore, the realization of this phase contains the constitution of the facilities and services of the implementation of the plan. At a municipality level necessary skills should be established to investigate the heritage context and computer skills are required to manage the electronic system.

The constant Data Base updating, acquiring data related to specific assets and detractors, itself contains the data for the individual resources and the comparison with the existing instruments in definite areas that can be put in relation with the resources themselves. Thus, the Data Base becomes a platform for launching: the new application of the tools of protection, the definition of new planning tools, the adaptation of the existing instruments in relation to the preservation and protection of these resources.

In addition to this continuous operation of the plan structure, activated by each municipality and endowed with specific expertise working at the protection and preservation planning, it will be important at this stage to activate consultation tables involving the institutions responsible for the cultural heritage protection and land use at a local and regional level (Superintendents, municipalities, provincial and regional councilors), each responsible for its own account in the effective definition of the specific planning actions.

It is clear that the shown steps will require the establishment of a coordinating body that will oversee the organizational stages of a complex process that involves several agencies and institutions. As we have seen, in fact, the evaluation of the interrelationship among resources, defined as tangible and intangible assets, allows the construction of enhancement projects that have their strong point in the synergistic effects of this correlation.

It is clear, therefore, that the local authorities need to develop a synergistic baselines of strategic projects and monitor the development of vocations depending on the individual municipalities, but in a perspective of regional involvement and perfect coordination.

The Management Plan is therefore created as a synthesis of the operational plans for conservation and development, assigning spatial and temporal domains of intervention to each plan, establishing criteria and operative guidelines for heritage conservation and enhancement through active urban planning tools, identifying the actions set and actors for the achievement of the conservation and development aim. In other words, the Management Plan is an implementation plan and does not contain proper actions in regard to the heritage valorisation, but identifies the actions framework and coordinates these actions accordingly with the valorisation aims over time. Furthermore, the identification of intervention priorities and the temporal articulation of actions and programs with different time durations, guarantees the real applicability of the proposed strategies.

### **Closing considerations: Stakeholders participation in monitoring and evaluation**

Simultaneously analyzing the needs and preferences of social actors and stakeholders and the goals that decision makers pose as priority on the decision tables, can lead to a much more complete evaluation of heritage landscape; this allows to compare the different expectations and needs, and determine accordingly the best compromise solution without neglecting any real interest. A correct evaluation should therefore take into account all aspects and all (conflicting and not) points of view arising at a regional level, especially if the evaluation in place serves to define the efficiency or inefficiency of an enhancement program. Economic evaluations are increasingly seen as necessary instruments to support planning and management researches related to landscape heritage. It's recognized to these tools a particular usefulness especially to identify the cost-effectiveness of an enhancement project [9].

The integrated evaluation showed in this paper proposes a combined evaluation process between Multicriteria Analysis (usually used in decision-making processes to support decision-makers) and Contingent Valuation (technique used to investigate collective value of goods). According to the requirements and challenges outlined above, this approach aim to minimize the main limitations that are encountered in the evaluation process and encourage the value understanding, or better the understanding of value perception within a local context, truthful and reliable, in order to better investigate the various points of view and needs in the area. The formal complexity of the AMC, on the one hand, and the difficulty of involving local communities (or all potential users involved) in decision-making policies on the other, means that the AMC can be an important reference point in the relations between public institutions and techniques for the plans and programs drafting, while the CV can be useful to view the issue from the community viewpoint.

The integrated approach also sets itself the goal of supporting decision maker(s) in choosing a solution rather than another in the most rational and appropriate way, based on the actual situation and without neglecting the interests of any social category currently or potentially involved.

One of the major problems of evaluation and planning of environmental, natural and cultural resources, consists in the fact that often, just because of the nature of such assets, they don't have to deal with a single entity to decide according to its preferences and utility but, on the contrary, it is necessary to consider the problem related to the needs of an entire decision-making group, keeping in mind the impact they will have on the community.

In the post-detection data, preferences and ranking among the alternatives expressed by the survey respondents can be compared with the ranking of the alternatives resulted by the AMC (obtainable associating each criteria corresponding to the alternative). In this case it will be gained not only the best alternative, but also the priority criteria to be followed for proper protection and enhancement (and not only economic) of the region in question. Since the survey questionnaire addressed to a sample made not only by authority's representatives, but also by other decision makers, the results from this model will provide important information about the total economic value of the cultural landscape not only from the political-management point of view but also on the basis of collective preferences (Fig.1).

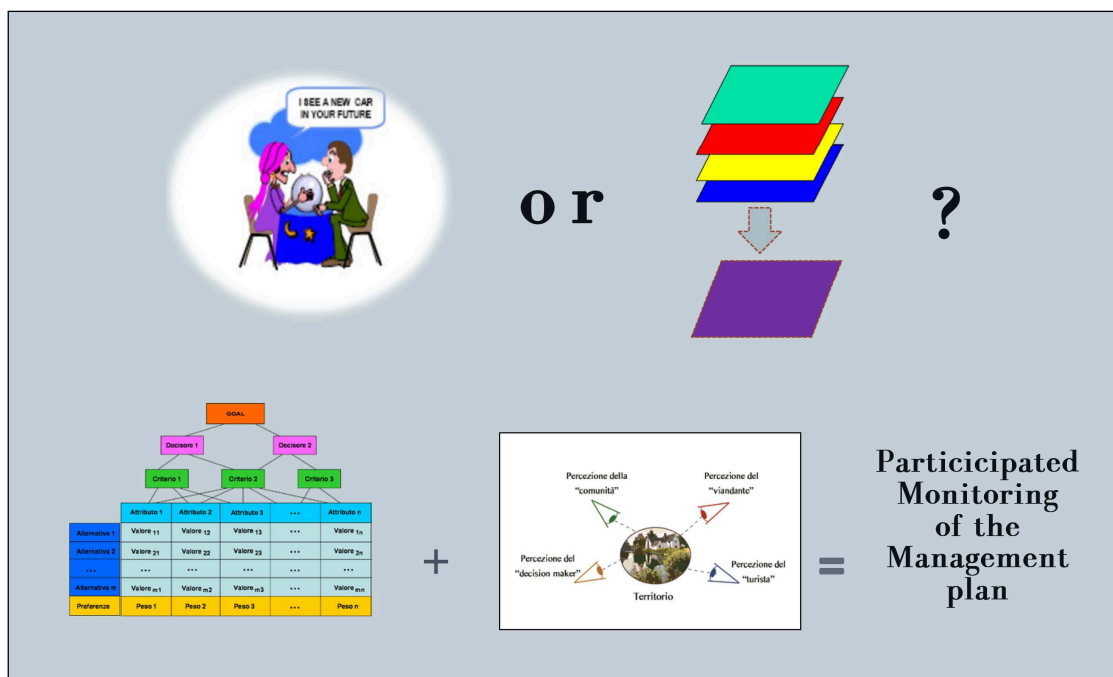


Fig. 1 – Participated monitoring as economic evaluations to support planning and management researches related to landscape heritage.

The results will provide, in this way, important answers to the evaluation process. We can in fact know the utility and preferences for that region from the community and decision makers point of view and therefore make appropriate considerations in this regard. Through a "crossing" of these two results we can also know the "best alternative" (or rather the best compromise) that best meets all points of view and the on-going interests. Analyzing and especially comparing the findings to each other and intersecting the preferences of the different sub-samples it will also be possible, in addition to identifying the best alternative for a given region, even to recognize what are the priority attributes for heritage enhancement and management.

The application of an integrated approach of this type and the problems belonging to a particular region will therefore lead to certain choices able to maximize the positive effects and to minimize the negative; serving as an example and directing the choices in similar cases though, varying (albeit minimally) the boundary conditions and/or interest in place, it won't certainly be able to provide the best solution without reviewing all the stakeholders' goals and especially without a redefinition of priorities; which is undoubtedly one of the most important and critical phases of the evaluation of the cultural landscape [10,11]. The integrated approach aims to help / the decision maker(s) to choose one solution over another in the most rational, appropriate and as consistent as possible way, without neglecting the interests of any social category potentially involved. This integrated valuation of cultural landscape proposed, wants to be a further step towards the involvement and participation of all stakeholders of the region, and in particular the local community, setting as its objective to bring technical and common knowledge in planning management.

The time of crisis we are living in the present pushes Italy - and Calabria particular - to invest in culture, education and knowledge. The fact remains that, in the context of globalization we live in, it is difficult to value the significance of our unique cultural landscape. Protection - in order to continue to enjoy heritage - and enhancement - to make them known - require commitment, resources and energy. The turn of the road, difficult but obligatory, is based on planning and management, within an overall strategic vision of a truly integrated system of resources and experience that combines in a "virtuous" safeguard policies and promotion. Memories and landscapes certainly cannot be locked into a glass case to preserve their integrity, but also cannot be deprived of their historical and cultural identity to chase market reasons. The research project turns

to the construction of a methodological basis for an integrated management plan for cultural landscape, understood as a process and connected to the regional changes, the issue of development and revitalization of the historic context of the area, as the hub for their greater centrality in the international scene.

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