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A Multi-Methodological Decision-Making Process for Cultural Landscapes Evaluation: The Green Lucania Project

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Abstract

The paper introduces the multi-methodological decision-making process implemented in the 'Green Lucania project' by a multidisciplinary research group of University of Naples Federico II, Department of Architecture (DiARC), for the cultural landscape valorization of Pisticci municipality (Basilicata Region, Italy). To identify situated synergistic actions able to produce a network of 'green' shared values, an adaptive evaluation approach has been implemented, where Collaborative Spatial Decision-Making processes and Geo-Design approaches interplay. The multi-methodological decision-making process for cultural landscapes evaluation activates a fundamental link between knowledge and values, to transform this dialogue into goals and actions, identify key-values, explore decision opportunities and possible alternatives, explicate impacts and effects, and manage complex systems with multiple priorities related to multiple landscape values.

1. Introduction

Today there is a growing interest in landscape as an important perspective in sustainable development, promoted at the global level by all the most relevant institutions and through significant regional directives and policies. The opportunities presented by a landscape-based approach for the European continent mark out the landscape as a possible new paradigm for a local development model, with the aim of harmonious integration of social, economic, and environmental factors in space and time (Agnoletti, 2014). The European Landscape Convention (Council of

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Europe, 2000) also states that landscape can be connected to: its objective and subjective characters, the ecological-environmental, historical-cultural and settlement aspects, land and economic use; the regulatory and political processes as a whole that contribute to its continuous reconstruction; the social perception of positive and negative values and policies (Voghera, 2011). The landscape is regarded as a holistic and dynamic system of systems (Zonneveld, 1995), an expression of the continuous and vibrant interaction between ecological, social, and economic processes. Indeed, the landscape is considered a process rather than a result: natural and social practices constantly change the landscape, making transformation dynamics a key issue in research and design. Giving shape to relationships between human beings and the natural landscape is a core task and involves civil-, cultural-, agricultural-, nature-, and environmental-based techniques as operative instruments (Nijhuis, 2013). Landscapes are dynamic and change is one of their properties. Humans have always adapted their environment to better fit changing societal needs and, thus, reshaped the landscape. In view of accelerating biological and cultural landscape degradation, a better understanding of interactions between landscapes and the cultural forces driving them is essential for their sustainable management (Naveh, 1995). Landscapes of the past cannot be brought back, but how valuable elements and areas can be preserved and become embedded functionally in the modern urbanized and globalized society must be studied (Antrop, 2005). This challenge requires a better understanding of the interactions between landscapes and cultural and social forces that have shaped them in the past and are driving them in the present. Their recognition may help mobilize some of these forces for public education and for the decision-making process in land use, which will determine their future fate (Naveh, 1995). There exist a great variety of landscapes that are representative of the different regions of the world. Combined works of nature and humankind, they express a long and intimate relationship between peoples and their natural environment, and define a particular type of landscape: the cultural landscape (Rossler, 2014). Certain sites reflect specific techniques of land use that guarantee and sustain biological diversity. Others, associated in the minds of communities with powerful beliefs and artistic and traditional customs, embody an exceptional spiritual relationship of people with nature. To reveal and sustain the great diversity of interactions between humans and their environment, to protect living traditional cultures and preserve the traces of those that have disappeared, these sites, called cultural landscapes, have been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List. According to Sauer's definition (1925), a cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group: culture is the agent, natural area the medium, and cultural landscapes the result. Cultural landscapes testify to the creative genius, social development, and the imaginative and spiritual vitality of humanity. They are part of our collective identity. Cultural identity is strongly associated with the ways in which people interact with their landscapes. Much has been written about the significance of landscape (or the related idea of place) to communities and their cultural identity. The literature ranges from sociological and anthropological work, to studies of 'place identity' (Hay, 1998; Gray, 2003). A common theme is that both self-identity and group identity are intimately connected with the events and history that are associated with the tangible environment. Culture and identity are, therefore, not just about social relationships, but are also profoundly spatial (Stephenson, 2008). Cultural landscapes are the result of consecutive reorganization of the land to adapt its use and spatial structure better to changing societal demands. The safeguarding of landscapes and sites is necessary to the lives of human beings, for whom they represent a powerful physical, moral, and spiritual regenerating influence, while at the same time contributing to the artistic and cultural life of peoples, as innumerable and universally known examples bear witness (Rossler, 2014). Diversity and identity of cultural landscapes are central in the discussion. It is shown that coherence between small composing elements in a broader spatial context is important for the legibility of the landscape and that the ability to tell the story of a place strongly enhances its identity and overall value. This offers criteria for inventorying and assessing landscapes, which are needed to define future management and development (Antrop, 2005). According to this perspective, cultural landscape can be a driver for innovation, because it contains values that can guide landscape transformation and development. How can these values become integrated with the future demands and needs of society? Cultural landscape is the combination of tangible and intangible values, expression of a complex relationship of organisms, between human beings and ecosystem. The explicit recognition of the existence of multiple and interdependent values establishes both the conceptual and empirical foundations for understanding just how these value categories can be applied to a specific decision-making context.

Innovative processes of cultural landscape evaluation and planning are based on the integration of knowledge to solve current complex problems (Fusco Girard, 2014). They require that economics and sociology disciplines