

## **A World Heritage to Be Shared Without Prejudice: New Linkages and Strategies in the Management of Cultural Landscapes**

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### **Abstract**

In 1992, the World Heritage Committee adopted landscape categories, consequently cultural landscapes were for the first time inscribed on the World Heritage List as “combined works of nature and of man”. This provided the impulse for a new way of thinking about how humans interact with the environment, and established a strong link between culture, nature, and economic development. The choice was certainly induced by the inclusion of sustainability in heritage conservation and, furthermore, from the fact that in the same year, as one of the resulting documents of the United Nations Conference known as Earth Summit, the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development introduced the concept of “sustainable development”.

In 2000, the European Landscape Convention (ELC) was adopted with the specific purpose of promoting “landscape protection, management and planning”, and — keeping with the universal principles of the Rio Declaration — “concerned to achieve sustainable development based on a balanced and harmonious relationship between social needs, economic activity and the environment”. The ELC was, therefore, conceived in the spirit of the Nara Document (1994), which gave new impulse to cultural heritage diversity, stating that cultural heritage demands “respect for other cultures and all aspects of their belief systems”.

Moreover, it should be recalled that — with the adoption of the Budapest Declaration on World Heritage (2002) during its 26th session — the World Heritage Committee invited all partners to “ensure an appropriate and equitable balance between conservation, sustainability and development, so that World Heritage properties can be protected while the quality of life of our communities is improved, through appropriate activities such as sustainable tourism”.

The Faro Convention (2005) extended furthermore the ELC’s communities centred focus, reinforcing the link between cultural heritage, identity, and participation. In this regard, it must be reported that the UNESCO Guidelines for the inscription of cultural landscapes recommend that “the nominations should be prepared in collaboration with and the full approval of local communities”.

Within the above conceptual framework, this paper aims to present meaningful practices and strategies exercised by local communities, institutions/government agencies and third parties in the planning and management of World Heritage Sites characterized as cultural landscapes. In particular, the author will provide some European case studies of management plans related to “landscapes designed and created intentionally by man” — namely, ensembles and monumental buildings surrounded by parks and gardens — and will highlight those interdisciplinary and integrated approaches that are more effective in “balancing conservation and community interests and in securing a sustainable heritage development process” (Kotor Regional Meeting, 2012).

**Keywords:** *cultural landscapes, cultural perspectives, local communities, policies, sustainable development, values*

## Introduction

A cultural landscape is a combination of many factors: nature, signs of humankind, historical circumstances, just to list a few. It is, therefore, a place of fluid but constant exchange of memories, desires, and imageries. In his evocations of the visionary Venetian traveller Marco Polo, Italo Calvino refers to the archetypes of memory to illustrate how our own relationship with space and people of a place is shaped by the way we connect to our memories of that specific site and others (1978, pp. 27-29):

Arriving at each new city, the traveller finds again a past of his that he did not know he had: the foreignness of what you no longer are or no longer possess lies in wait for you in foreign, unpossessed places. Marco enters a city; he sees someone in a square living a life or an instant that could be his; he could now be in that man’s place, if he had stopped in time, long ago [...] Futures not achieved are only branches of the past: dead branches. “Journeys to relive your past?” was the Khan’s question at this point, a question which could also have been formulated: “Journeys to recover your future?” And Marco’s answer was: “Elsewhere is a negative mirror. The traveller recognizes the little that is his, discovering the much he has not had and will never have.”

Consequently, it is reasonable to affirm that the way we experience and recall a place reflects our personal history and, consequently, our own views, along with our preconceptions and biases (Calvino 1978, p. 85):

Every time I describe a city I am saying something about Venice. [...] To distinguish the other cities’ qualities, I must speak of a first city that remains implicit. For me it’s Venice.

This reading opens up windows of interpretative possibilities that reflect the lived experiences of people and communities, their different values, and their particular cultural and intellectual backgrounds; or — referring to a more recent and non-semantic approach — their individual feelings of well-being. Vice versa, it is possible to learn from places —

particularly from cultural landscapes — about people, the values that influence their relationship with land and natural resources, their lifestyles and individual behaviours, and how these “shape culture and identity, and enrich cultural diversity” (Rössler 2006, p. 203). To the same degree, their management and conservation practices “bring people together in caring for their collective identity and heritage, and provide a shared local vision” (UNESCO 2003, p. 205), hence the recognition of the important role played by local communities in the related identification, planning and management processes.

Managing cultural landscapes means, consequently, supporting social, cultural, environmental and economic activities able to integrate community knowledge, which requires new operational tools, competencies and methods, as well as the ability to employ policies and decision-making strategies in an integral and holistic way that contemplates the imperative objectives of heritage, planning and sustainable development. This implies a shift of scale: “from the singular object to the collection of objects, structures and areas, but also an inclusion of intangible heritage such as traditions, rituals, and events” (Bandarin 2011, p. 8). In the case of World Heritage Sites, it also deems of paramount importance the appreciation for cultural diversity and calls for an intercultural approach to sustainable management and development of cultural heritage, based on the belief that “cultures are born to interact, to borrow, to adapt and to dialogue among themselves” (Bandarin 2011, p. 22).

How is it possible to share the outstanding cultural heritage without detriment to its richness of significance and values, but instead enhancing and improving human’s quality of life and well-being? How do we define successful heritage practices? What is the core-principle in order to preserve and simultaneously support a responsible change in a sustainable way? What brings everyone together for the common purpose?

Summarizing the contributions of Fusco Girard (2004; 2008) and Greffe (2012), I believe that a valuable starting point for any consideration on cultural landscapes should be grounded on the concepts of “beauty” and “culture”, which are able to create unanimous consent and circumvent internal and external conflicts by suggesting community building strategies and overall cultural approaches that are vital for a harmonious and sustainable development in civil society (Fusco Girard 2008). By focusing on an external dimension such as the ‘beauty’ of the historic environment, the community achieves an internal connectedness that encourages a durable commitment toward self-cohesion, building a strong sense of place, sense of community and sense of value, thus resulting in a forward-looking management for the designated cultural landscape (Greffe 2012, p. 55):

In the aesthetic community, the participant is primarily a committed person and this encourages others. [...] By recognizing the multidimensional reciprocity of a cultural landscape, we recognize its social dimension and the aesthetic conditions of human

fulfilment. We protect cultural landscapes not as an external treasure to be transmitted to posterity but as a part of our revolving identity and life.

Therefore, a management plan is meant to assess the existing values and to generate new cultural values linked to the “art of living” of a community by coordinating the actions of different stakeholders in time and space for a common goal, which is the making of aesthetics of civil society (Fusco Girard 2008).

### **International Doctrine**

Since the history and successive developments of the European Landscape Convention (CoE 2000), the Rio Declaration (UN 1992) and the World Heritage Convention (UNESCO 1972) are well known, as those of the main charters and declarations concerning cultural landscapes and sustainable development, the author will underline and elaborate on some aspects and principles of the international heritage and environmental doctrine that are considered relevant to the framework of this study.

Following the aftermath of first World Public Meeting on Culture in Porto Alegre (UCLG 2004) and in the lead-up to the Special Summit on Sustainable Development to be held within the UN’s 70<sup>th</sup> General Assembly in New York on 25-27 September 2016, we all agree that culture and cultural heritage are considered the fourth pillar of sustainable development (Greffé 2012, p. 2). As such, culture is essential as the economic, social and environmental dimensions; therefore, the safeguarding of heritage, diversity, creativity, and the transmission of knowledge are integral to sustainable development, considered as a way of forward thinking.

During the same year of the World Public Meeting on Culture and with a focus on cultural and natural heritage of outstanding universal value, the World Heritage Committee — through the Budapest Declaration on World Heritage (UNESCO 2002) — invited the international community to cooperate in the protection of heritage “to ensure an appropriate and equitable balance between conservation, sustainability and development”, while recognizing that heritage has an important place “in human memory and spirit”, hence seeking to “ensure the active involvement of our local communities and [indigenous people] in the identification, protection and management of our World Heritage Properties”.

One of the first contributions of the Faro Convention (CoE 2005) is the emphasis that it lays on the link between cultural heritage, identity and participation, extending the ELC’s people-centred focus to cultural heritage. It calls for cooperation between all stakeholders at the earliest possible stage to “establish processes for conciliation to deal equitably with situations where contradictory values are placed on the same cultural heritage by different communities” (Article 7.b) and with the specific purpose of making “full use of the

potential of the cultural heritage as a factor in sustainable economic development” (Article 10.a). The Faro Convention is, therefore, conceived in the spirit of the Nara Document on Authenticity (1994), which “demands respect for other cultures and all aspects of their belief systems” as well as the “acknowledgement of the legitimacy of the cultural values of all parties” (Article 6).

More recently, the Hangzhou Declaration on Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development (UNESCO 2013a) — in an effort to summarize the past contributions — asserted that “culture should be considered to be a fundamental enabler of sustainability”, which is particularly true when “a people-centred and place-based approach is integrated into development programmes and peace-building initiatives”, linking once more sustainable development to the flourishing of culture “within a rights-based approach and the respect for diversity [...] thus enhancing opportunities and human capabilities while promoting mutual understanding and exchange among peoples”; hence reaffirming the universal principles concerning cultural diversity (namely the 2001 UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions).

The Burra Charter (ICOMOS 2013), adopted soon after, proposed a values-led approach and a correlated process of investigations as a starting point to develop policies and management strategies compatible with the cultural significance of a place. We recognize that a similar approach was earlier and effectively introduced by the World Heritage Convention for safeguarding heritage of Outstanding Universal Value. During the celebrations for the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Convention, the Kotor Regional Meeting (2012) investigated “policies and practices for the better management of cultural and natural heritage, with special focus on participatory approaches and community engagement”.

In light of the cited doctrine, this study focuses on forward-looking management plans for nourishing living heritage sites.

## **Literature Review**

The study refers to the indispensable contributions of Fusco Girard (2004; 2009), de la Torre *et al.* (2005), McLoughlin *et al.* (2006), Bonini Baraldi (2007), Greffe (2009; 2012), Cassatella & Peano (2011), and Jørgensen *et al.* (2016) for the elaboration of guiding principles and for the analysis of the selected management plans. The author also refers to Patrick Geddes’ pioneering accomplishments in regional planning and, in particular, to its landscape theoretical concept about the interconnectedness of people and place as a baseline model for today’s landscape scale research and sustainable planning, as proposed

and illustrated by Morten Clemetsen on his contribution regarding transdisciplinary models applicable to landscape management and planning (Jørgensen *et al.* 2016, pp. 23-32).

This paper integrates material from readings, lectures on cultural heritage management, international conferences, as well as from the main charters, declarations and documents published by Council of Europe, ICOMOS, IUCN, UNESCO, and other international bodies.

## **Methodology**

Because of the significant corpus of literature and guidelines on World Heritage Sites and the fact that cultural landscapes — for their multidisciplinary and heterogeneous nature (having cultural, environmental, economic and social implications) — constitute a formidable vehicle for a transdisciplinary approach to heritage knowledge, the author believes that cultural landscapes of Outstanding Universal Value could become models in effective management, planning, and conservation practices (UNESCO 2003, p. 161).

The methodological approach underlying this study is intended to be contextual and comparative: the comparison of different World Heritage Sites management plans aims to understand the strategies adopted to resolve specific situations, taking into account both the different cultural, social and economic environments in which they are implemented and the application of the theory on integrated cultural landscape protection, management and planning in different European countries (UNESCO 2013b; Sala *et al.* 2015).

Initially, the following aspects were investigated: 1) The specific cultural approach (national definition of culture and cultural heritage); 2) The institutional and management context of each site (McLoughlin *et al.* 2006), which is analysed through an organizational model proposed by Luca Zan (Bonini Baraldi 2007, pp. 7-25); 3) The outline and implementation status of the management plan, its legal status and binding character; 4) The type and degree of community participation in all levels of decision-making, identifying the main stakeholders and their agenda.

The final goal of this study is to analyse the potential of the management plan of an outstanding cultural landscape to play an instrumental role in achieving sustainable development through each of the so called “pillars”: environmental, social, economic and cultural. Subsequently, the selected management plans were evaluated accordingly to three guiding principles that the author considers effective in order to balance conservation, community interests and sustainable development: 1) Enabling the cultural landscape to become a driver for sustainable development; 2) Integration between cultural landscape and planning and management instruments; 3) Connection between the management system and cultural perspectives.

The above principles were then conveyed to critical elements of investigation (indicators) and rated on a scale of significance from one to five, based on a deep overview about the actual social, economic and touristic situation of the heritage sites and their cultural and environmental contexts.

The following contents were initially recorded: statistical data; identification of stakeholders; review of demand/supply of cultural and natural resources; overview of the current demographic, cultural, economic and touristic situation; local management and marketing strategies.

## **Discussion**

This study considers “landscapes designed and intentionally created by man”, designated as World Heritage Sites and listed under criterion IV for the inscription on the World Heritage List (UNESCO 2015). They are both handmade objects and works of architecture: these ensembles surrounded by parks and/or gardens are to be considered as systems of visual, spatial, functional, symbolic and environmental relations, hence to be investigated and managed as a whole rather than as a mere sum of objects.

One of the main aims of such an all-inclusive approach (landscape-based approach) is the possibility of integrating heritage management and sustainable development: this includes various aspects, such as intangible values, and a consideration for the social and economic function of the cultural landscape.

In particular, the sites selected are European 18<sup>th</sup> century princely residences (or group of residences) having ornamental gardens and/or parks: Würzburg Residence with the Court Gardens and Residence Square in Germany, Blenheim Palace in United Kingdom, and Royal Domain of Drottningholm in Sweden.

From the comparative analysis of the selected management plans with reference to the three main guiding principles and the related indicators, it appears that — even within the wide-ranging management framework outlined by UNESCO in its operational guidelines — the solutions adopted are quite different and are strongly influenced both by the specific local and national cultural approach and by the particular institutional and management context that characterize the site. Nevertheless, the management plans are all designed with a particular focus on the local socio-economic enhancement of the heritage site, optimum cultural governance and community engagement.

Table 1: Evaluation of UNESCO World Heritage Management Plans

1 = Not significant	2 = Less significant	3 = Moderately significant	4 = Significant	5 = Most significant
	<i>Blenheim</i>	<i>Würzburg</i>	<i>Drottningholm</i>	
<b>Cultural landscape as a driver for sustainable development</b>				
Community's competence to disseminate values	5	3	5	
Organizational Capacity	5	5	4	
Participation in local tourism of the population	4	3	4	
Heritage education & training	5	5	5	
<b>Integrated management and planning</b>				
Nature and level of civil society participation in cultural governance	5	5	5	
Interdependence of the regulation systems connected with the cultural landscape	4	5	4	
Integration among institutions and competent cultural agencies	4	5	5	
<b>Connection between management system and cultural perspectives</b>				
Involvement and participation of the collectivity in the process	3	3	4	
Shared understanding by all stakeholders	5	3	5	
Capability building	3	3	5	
<b>Total</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>46</b>	



Blenheim Palace in United Kingdom, the home of the 11th Duke and Duchess of Marlborough — which is operated by the Blenheim Estate within the national planning legislation and receives constant advice by various agencies (English Heritage, English Nature, Countryside Agency) — achieves a wide-spread management of the site and its wider context through the adoption of more than 30 objectives, integrates the idea of sustainability in all aspects of its plan, and ensures the involvement of all key stakeholders through an effective coordination and the successful use of the spatial planning system (HLM 2006).

Würzburg Residence is under the authority of the Free State of Bavaria — the owner — and the City of Würzburg, and it is primarily managed by the Bavarian Palace Department within a Coordination Board. It is a model of all-encompassing planning and management coordination between all site authorities, agencies and stakeholders, defining and regulating their mutual responsibilities and duties; its management plan outlines all possible threats for the site and the appropriate strategies to address them, along with a detailed list of actions to be undertaken in order to satisfy both the conservation and the sustainable use of the site (Bayerische Schlösserverwaltung 2009).

The Royal Domain of Drottningholm is owned by the Swedish nation and managed by three main actors: the National Property Board, the Drottningholm Palace Administration and Stiftelsen Drottningholms Teatermuseum. It is a compelling example of plan intended to transpose in actions and cultural opportunities the local and national perception of the cultural landscape. In view of the fact that in Sweden culture is viewed as a crucial resource for individual well-being and collective welfare, the plan promotes a transdisciplinary approach to the cultural landscape, advocating for a dynamic and educational use of the site through a process of capability building (Drottningholm WHC 2006).

It is worthy of note that — to the author's opinion — the most comprehensive and far-reaching plan with respect to the selected guiding principles is the Royal Domain of Drottningholm. In Sweden cultural policy has been based on the concept of *folkbildning*, which relates to knowledge as a way of cultivating the personality; moreover, senses of belonging are deeply rooted in mental categories such as emotions, memory and imagery, and landscape is considered a shared source for society able to give perspective to human life in time and space. Nowadays, this concept has acquired an inclusive character, while emphasizing the importance of popular participation, self-development and the role of diverse culture and identities in cultural development (Harding 2014, pp. 3-5).

## Summary

Recalling Calvino's dynamic cultural-symbolic readings of places and Geddes' theoretical model of human interaction with the environment, considering the dynamic relationship between individual's perspectives, community values and management/planning professional's abilities over a physical area, we may well come to a synthesis of the discourse regarding cultural landscapes and their non-prejudicial management by eliciting the European Landscape Convention, which deems crucial for their identification and perception the role of both their visual features (CoE 2000, point 38) and the individual and social well-being associated to them (CoE 2008, point 1.2).

As a matter of fact, the methodological impasse between heritage conservation, social enhancement and local development could be overcome by linking the implementation of management plans to an ongoing landscape assessment able to re-collect the many stories of the cultural landscape and to find its guiding motif, which — as one of many Calvino's metaphors — has the ability to transfer the “aspirations of the public with regard to the landscape features of their surroundings” (CoE, Article 1c) to the way a cultural landscape is recognized, understood and experienced (Jørgensen *et al.* 2016, p. 63).

Following that reasoning, we would find a common ground if we considered a cultural landscape the same way as a glorious Dutch painting of the Golden Age, able to transfer into a visual message not only the social and civic ideals of a societal practice but also the passions and inspirations of his subjects, arousing “empathy in every generation and cross-section of society” (Ahmand 2008, p. 19).

Going back to Italo Calvino and the dialogues between Kubla Khan — the Emperor of the Tartars who realizes that his empire is about to collapse — and Marco Polo, who tells stories of impossible cities, the metaphor becomes evident and very vivid: if the melancholy ruler represents the so called “rational approach” of the “individual motivated by self-interest, guided by reason and protected by rights” and, thus, to be satisfied through a “process of political competition”, which could potentially lead to a marginal protection of its (heritage) possessions in case of major external challenges (Greffe 2012, p. 54); Polo is the aesthetic traveller who retains — through his semantic memory — the real sense of a place, crystallizing “the power of historic buildings and landscapes to lend continuing meaning and authenticity” to human events (Bluestone 2011, p. 39): doing so, he encourages the reader to identify the emblematic significance and spirit of a place, whilst inviting to “seek and learn to recognize who and what, in the midst of inferno, are not inferno, and make them endure, give them space” (Calvino 1978, p. 164).

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