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Good Health, Quality Education, Sustainable Communities, Human Rights

The scientific contribution of Italian UNESCO Chairs
and partners to SDGs 2030

edited by

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Communities of Knowledge and management of Sassi di Matera's UNESCO site

Angela Colonna

ABSTRACT

Twenty years after the enrollment in World Heritage List, Sassi di Matera's UNESCO site has its first Management Plan. The aim of the Plan is the definition of a common vision for the site, where everyone can actively participate in its management.

In 1993 the Sassi di Matera have been registered in the UNESCO World Heritage List and ICOMOS acknowledged its intact authenticity due to the depopulation of the Fifties, while several old towns have been compromised.

At the same time, the history of Sassi, by the displacement, has been suffering from that break which represented a shock for the community, even with the forced transfer of symbols and icons of its cultural identity.

Today Matera is the European Capital of Culture for 2019, so it is necessary to process the trauma and to restore community cultural identity, its historical connection with the site, the common care of cultural resources, in order to safeguard its universal value.

The University of Basilicata UNESCO Chair on *Mediterranean Cultural Landscapes and Communities of Knowledge* has among its specific aims: to contribute to the creation of a Permanent Observatory for the management of *The Sassi and the Park of the Rupestrian Churches of Matera* UNESCO site; to work for building up the role of European capital of Culture assigned to Matera for 2019; these are opportunities for developing a community of knowledge.

Keywords

Communities, Knowledge, Management Plan, Cultural Identity, Universal Value.

Twenty years after the enrollment in World Heritage List, Sassi di Matera's UNESCO site has its first Management Plan. The aim of the Plan is the definition of a common vision for the site, where everyone can actively participate in its management.

In 1993 the Sassi di Matera were registered in the UNESCO World Heritage List and ICOMOS acknowledged its intact authenticity due to the depopulation of the Fifties, while several old towns have been compromised.

At the same time, the history of the Sassi, by the displacement, has been suffering from that break which represented a shock for the community, even with the forced transfer of symbols and icons of its cultural identity.

Today Matera is the European Capital of Culture for 2019, so it is necessary to process the trauma and to restore community cultural identity, its historical connection with the site, the common care of cultural resources, in order to safeguard its universal value. Dealing with the community in the definition of a cultural identity related to the history of the place means an expressive understanding of the authenticity of the heritage as a still alive world. In some cases, it is expressed by an ancestral connection with the past as a spiritual message beyond everyday life. (Nara Declaration in 1994, Sant'Antonio Declaration in 1996).

Nowadays, the site Management Plan represents an opportunity to fix the broken relationship between community and its ancient history up to its troglodyte origins. The device of the Management Plan is essential in order to lead cultural identity building process.

The Matera UNESCO site Management Plan, edited by Domenico Fiore and me, focuses on specific strategic themes: the intangible traditional knowledge inheritance, the cultural identity definition process, the community engagement as a methodological approach. All of them proof together the strong connection between heritage and community.

The Management Plan aims to activate virtuous cooperation processes among institutions and community as an ordinary practice. Thus, from the first draft drawn up in 2011 by Domenico Fiore, the plan definition process has slowly begun. A Steering Committee and a think-tank have been established, composed by experts and institutional officers, towards a common vision and a synergetic strategy for the World Heritage management.

According to UNESCO instructions, the Steering Committee represents the first action in order to achieve a common understanding among institutions, as an ordinary practice towards a cooperative approach.

A series of three symposia/workshops (February – April 2013), meant to be Participated Creative Spaces, was designed and realized by the Operative Committee, in which Domenico Fiore and me are members, in order to facilitate discussion, debate and development of creative ideas between citizens and representatives of institutions, drawing together a vision of the Plan.

Therefore Symposia/workshops were primarily a tool to enable participatory process in the community and cooperation between the institu-

tions, interpreting heritage as an opportunity. Symposia working method allowed a deep interdisciplinary knowledge, oriented to the definition of the management plan strategy. The experience of Symposia has been conceived as the beginning of a participatory process, with the intention of being a constant debate about the main topics related to the site management.

Moreover, Symposia/workshops served to imagine the form and functioning of the structure of the site management: a permanent Observatory of UNESCO site, also called *Opera dei Sassi*, with the purposes to monitor the effectiveness of the plan, to encourage participatory planning for further implementations and editions of the Plan, to increase the participatory process of awareness in the community, and in the end to gather the knowledge of the community by creating a network for the exchange of information and knowledge.

Symposia meant to be an open platform where everyone can experiment a horizontal debate. Many experts have been involved in order to enrich the discussion among different research teams. In each Symposium, the research teams were led by 'knowledge holders', facilitators and 'interpreters'.

In order to build a community engagement process, instead of the general concept of 'stake-holder' (mostly used in concerted planning methodology and in MIBAC guidelines for UNESCO Site Management Plan) in occasion of the Symposia the «knowledge holder» profile has been introduced. Thus every person involved felt the responsibility of being a «knowledge holder», developing a richer and deeper relation with the place and the community.

As a result, during the workshops the whole community showed the strong intention of being involved through the idea of 'knowledge holder community' as the first step towards the evolution of Matera site. In modern times the concept of identity has turned into a character more oriented to knowledge exchange as the key of social relations, to a more open and direct democracy and to a more careful approach to the person. The ethics of a collective intelligence puts the person at the service of the community, allowing his full expression based on a cooperative learning method where the exchange of acknowledge becomes a new social connection: every human being represents for the community a cultural resource. In this way acknowledge is not just the primary source of contemporary society but also a tool for a reborn social solidarity.

According to this principle, practically in first instance a list of people has been defined as the first core, to which it was asked to invite other people to join the activities, introducing each time new people. Every person has his own relational landscape: crossing more of them enlarges the active public.

This first list was not the outcome of a statistic survey, but a functional cell capable to activate an implementation process. One hundred people have been invited in person to attend the Symposia and to give a contribu-

tion to the process by an interview led by a group of young interviewers. The interview was based on a questionnaire meant to be the plot for the storytelling. These contributions together became a collection of stories as a first attempt to build a more organic archive, towards the Permanent Observatory. This former experiment in synergy with several short actions in the city, worked as a tool to engage more and more people.

At the same time, a deeper relationship with the institution members of the Steering Committee was established by interviewing their representatives. These interviews have been conceived in order to better understand their visions and strategy, as the expression of «acknowledge of the institutions».

As a result of the process, two considerations: first, it is necessary to inspire the institutions in order to edit a choral map of the actions through a common vision for UNESCO site; moreover the Permanent Observatory should acquire the implementation of this choral map as a strategic goal.

During the Symposia, interactions have been stimulated in many ways, promoting real involvement of different voices. Four facilitators initiated an «active participated experimentation»: through several devices they led each focus group to define a specific theme to research on, highlighting each character peculiarity. The facilitation worked on dialogue and communication towards the conviviality of differences. Each participant thanks to collective debate enriched his own perspective, contributing to deepen the research about Symposia key themes.

The focus themes for each Symposium were «Genetic code and genetic inheritance», «Geo-culture and energy» and «Future and evolution». The first Symposium encouraged the discussion on identity, *genius loci* and sense of belonging to the community with a more theoretical approach in order to create a fertile emotional background. In the second Symposium, the debate was focused on the definition of the strategic themes. In this case, the facilitation had a more operating approach in each team work, producing large scale proposals. The third Symposium has been articulated into two workshops: the first one was a creative workshop for children, exploring future perspectives; the second studio, organized as an Open Space Technology, led to practical proposal on specific topics, following a defined but simple design process. The main purposes of these Symposia were in first instance, to build a common strategy through community engagement, in second instance to promote an active know-how exchange in a cross-sectoral environment. For this second aim, it was very crucial how to 'translate' and interpret different disciplinary languages.

Communication represented a main focus: each stage, from event promotion up to process engagement practice, was carefully planned thanks to specific 'translators'. Thematic web pages, interactive maps and dynamic artistic techniques supported the translation of the whole process in a visual storytelling. Moreover, a second layer of the interpretation aimed to translate ideas into rules and monitoring indicators. Another interpreta-

tion dealt with the economical sustainability of the actions and investment attraction. The last 'translation' worked on governance tools.

This experimentation led to the conclusion that the interaction among interpreter and research group can generate a fruitful process that requires a long-term planning to grow mature. The Symposia timeline was not enough to reach the goal but definitely the Permanent Observatory can invest now some efforts in order to continue the research.

Symposia most important outcome stands not simply in the ideas and suggestions received but more in the experimentation of a new method capable to activate engagement processes among people. Symposia showed the importance of a place for conviviality of debating, where everyone can feel free to contribute to the process. The experience grown during the Symposia brought a huge impact in the Permanent Observatory Plan and in its participatory actions. For the first time, several individuals got closer to the decision making process about public cultural inheritance management.

Symposia represented the first step towards the awareness development, inspired by the principle that the protection of the cultural resources starts from the individual responsibility in the community. The concept of Symposia as places for knowledge exchange allowed the definition of several «idea landscape». The Management Plan structure has been deeply influenced by this process, from the first draft up to the conclusion of the workshop activities in the aftermath: the Plan was approved by the Steering Committee in July 2014.

A chapter in the Plan explains the participation methodology in order to describe the Permanent Observatory as the operational place for the fulfillment of the Plan mission.

The Management Plan has been designed in order to inspire the debate among institutions and public participation, as an implementable device for the growth of the community of Matera and its connection with the site.

The University of Basilicata UNESCO Chair on *Mediterranean Cultural Landscapes and Communities of Knowledge* has among its specific aims: to contribute to the creation of a Permanent Observatory for the management of *The Sassi and the Park of the Rupestrian Churches of Matera* UNESCO site; to work for building up the role of European capital of Culture assigned to Matera for 2019; these are opportunities for developing a community of knowledge.

Through the Observatory, the UNESCO Chair works to contribute to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals 2030, and in particular to «strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage» (goal 11.4), to «enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management» (goal 11.3), for the formation of «knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development» (goal

4.7), to «develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels» (goal 16.6), to «ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory and representative decision-making at all levels» (goal 16.7).

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