

Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems 1184

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Networks, Markets & People

Communities, Institutions and
Enterprises Towards Post-humanism
Epistemologies and AI Challenges,
Volume 2

 Springer

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ISSN 2367-3370

ISSN 2367-3389 (electronic)

Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems

ISBN 978-3-031-74607-9

ISBN 978-3-031-74608-6 (eBook)

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-74608-6>

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Cooperation Solutions for the Local Sustainable Development of Heritage Communities: Role and Contributions of the Faro Italia Network

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Abstract. The Faro Convention, ratified by Italy in 2020, focuses on the importance of participation by citizenship and the values attributed by citizens to forms of cultural heritage, introducing the concept of Heritage Community. The CNR-ISPC Working Group on Heritage Communities and UNESCO sites was established in 2022 to implement the recommendations of the Convention within the context of the Faro Italia Network, in order to support communities in identifying cooperative solutions for the sustainable development based on holistic strategies for protection and enhancement of cultural heritage. The paper illustrates the main objectives pursued by the Working Group, through the description of activities and good practices experienced in the field. In the conclusions, possible future initiatives are pointed out.

Keywords: Faro Italia Network · Heritage Communities · local sustainable development

1 Introduction

The Faro Italia Network [1] is a platform made up of Italian Heritage Communities, institutions and associations that collaborate together and in line with the principles and criteria of the Faro Convention [2, 3], ratified by Italy in 2020. It was established within the Office of the Council of Europe in Venice. The text of the Convention explains that the right to enjoy cultural heritage (art.4) is an expression of the right to participate in the cultural life of the community (art.1) and education (preamble, par. 4). Therefore, the Convention focuses on the concept of civic participation and the values attributed by citizens to forms of cultural heritage (e.g. objects, traditions, places, practices, etc.). Furthermore, Article 2 introduces the concept of Heritage Community, made up of people who attribute value to specific aspects of cultural heritage, which they wish to support and transmit to future generations, within the framework of public action.

To enhance the complexity of the Italian cultural offering, the Council of Europe has proposed starting the *Faro Italia* Network, which has the aim of surveying and/or encouraging the establishment of Heritage Communities and their thematic and territorial networks, giving wide resonance to the organized events. Furthermore, it aims to identify and disseminate good practices and common activities and support the efforts of members in addressing the challenges related to the conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage.

In July 2021, the Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) was launched by the Italian Ministry of Culture, and measures on cultural heritage are included in Mission 1 (Digitalization, innovation, competitiveness, culture and tourism), Component 3 (Tourism and Culture 4.0) [4]. In accordance with the objectives and transversal principles of the PNRR, the planned interventions intend to restructure the key assets of the Italian cultural heritage and encourage the creation of new services. It also promotes the exploitation of social participation as a lever for inclusion and regeneration, with the aim of improving attractiveness, accessibility (both physical and digital) and safety, from a general perspective of environmental sustainability. The measures are based on a multilevel governance model and provide for strong cooperation between public actors, in line with the provisions of the *Faro* Convention and the European Framework of Action for Cultural Heritage.

The membership of the Institute of Heritage Sciences [5] of the Italian National Research Council to the *Faro* Network took place in 2022, with the simultaneous creation of a Third Mission Working Group dedicated to the definition of cooperation solutions for the sustainable development of Heritage Communities and Italian UNESCO sites. The establishment of the Working Group has been based on some main objectives, including:

- Sharing the objectives and criteria of the *Faro* Convention, which intends to establish the value of cultural heritage for European society, by recognizing knowledge and cultural heritage as human rights;
- defining and implementing actions and strategies to raise community awareness (starting with schools, such the societies of tomorrow) on the protection, conservation and enhancement of cultural heritage, also conceived as widespread heritage;
- supporting and/or encouraging the creation of Heritage Communities in the sites covered by our research activities.

CNR-ISPC was born in 2019 from the merger of four institutes, dedicated to research on cultural heritage, from conservation diagnostics to the enhancement and use of heritage. Today ISPC has the mission of pursuing scientific excellence and promoting innovation in knowledge through collaborative and interdisciplinary research, representing the CNR's hub in the strategic Cultural Heritage sector. A constant in the institutional research activity has been the openness to dialogue with the territory as an essential tool for establishing and strengthening stable relationships of listening, discussion, and collaboration with civil society. Therefore, ISPC's membership of the *Faro Italia* Network was an initiative perfectly in line with the institute's Third Mission vocation. Thus, the membership represented the opportunity, on the one hand, to formalize and codify a series of experimental or consolidated actions and practices in some locations, and

on the other, to institutionalize a scientific comparison carried out over the years in the scope of individual projects or research initiatives.

Between 2022 and 2023, ISPC has activated collaborations and participated in activities with around 10 Italian cultural sites, different from each other by type—i.e. small villages, foundations, etc.—and impact on the territory with respect to the involvement of local communities and organizations.

The activities organized by some of these communities in collaboration with the ISPC' Working Group will be illustrated below. In particular, the activity of the so-called Heritage Walks, initiative of the Council of Europe [6], was selected, which represented one of the most recent and main activities and events of the Network, organized in conjunction with the European Heritage Days (EHD), held on 23–24 September 2023 [7].

2 Methodology

The paper represents a preliminary overview of the very first experimentation led by ISPC' Working Group on implementation solutions of the Faro recommendations. The research is based on the analysis of Heritage Communities cases all over Italy, which have basically collaborated with the CNR-ISPC for a long-time. The short the illustrated descriptive sheets are based on the onsite experimental phases of the work. The methodology adopted in this paper was organized into three different steps.

The first was dedicated to the illustration of case studies in which Heritage Walks were experienced. The second phase was the analysis of the results based on the objectives of the ISPC' Working Group. Finally, in the conclusions, possible future initiatives are pointed out.

3 Research Experience for Sustaining Local Communities

From the membership of Faro Italia network on, CNR ISPC has activated collaborations and it has participated in activities in many Italian cultural sites, with extensive involvement of local communities and organizations. Heritage Walks were free, guided and interpretative tours to the most interesting historic, cultural, natural sites. Living Heritage was the theme for 2023 edition, aiming at exploring practices, places and objects that are part of our cultural heritage today [7]. In this context, ISPC organized 4 events in 4 Italian regions (Basilicata, Lazio, Sicily and Puglia), recording enthusiastic participation from local communities to the point that some similar initiatives have also been organized beyond the September date.

Cases involved by the Working Group were selected considering the places that have been in the past, or which are currently the subject of CNR ISPC research projects and on the basis of some criteria, such as the relative homogeneity of site typologies, generally small towns or villages, and the variety with regards to the impact expected by the activities on sectors of community life, concerning both tangible and intangible aspects, i.e. care of the territory, care of cultural heritage and intangible traditions, etc.

3.1 A Community Practice to Protect the Landscape, for the Maintenance of Ancient Canals Serving Mills and Vegetable Gardens

CNR ISPC has collaborated with the communities of Basilicata for many years to enhance those cultural landscapes, connected to rural historical constructions, ancient pathways, and practice, with particular attention to the fluvial management to operate watermills.

The rural ecosystem, composed of the natural (geological/geomorphological) landscape and its structural components (architectural, historical, heritage such as farms, mills, etc.) play a key role in recovering historical knowledge of all European countries [8]. Within the framework of the cultural and rural landscapes, watermills are a good example of the interaction or even cooperation between humans and nature, representing the technological level of a community that includes a deep knowledge of the environment and stream characteristics and river works (the so-called “waterpower system”) [9]. Last 5th of August 2023, ISPC CNR collaborated in the organization of the 5th edition of the “Tito vegetable gardens, mills and river event” (*Festa degli orti*) in Tito village, in Southern Italy (Fig. 1). The program included a “heritage walk” to discover the eighteenth-century vegetable gardens and the typical irrigation system derived from the Noce stream, a conference, and in the evening the musical party and the tasting of the typical products harvested in the gardens.

In the village is still alive a very important practice connected to the maintenance of the intake works, so called “*duvata*”, built in stones and fagots, to divert the river and bring water to the gardens and the mills of the valley. Now the mills no longer work (but one of the four still present is perfectly preserved, with all the machinery) and the few seasoned farmers have requested to the municipality, the construction of a reinforced concrete bridle, so as not to have rebuild the “*duvada*” every year, as has always been done for centuries. This could mean losing a very important practice that has characterized the history of our place for centuries, as well as guaranteeing the maintenance of waterways and the landscape, from Basilicata to Europe.

It must be underlined that the rediscovery of practical knowledge of horticulture and maintenance of connected hydraulic structures can represent a sustainable form of adaptation and sustainable mitigation to climate change and maintenance of landscapes through participatory land management.

These are practices at risk of disappearing, being an intangible heritage of the communities, so the involvement of citizens is necessary for the transmission of this living heritage, for the participatory management of the territory. Furthermore, it is also about redeveloping often abandoned areas of cities and towns and involving sections of the population, creating community and collaboration.

To discuss the issues of public-private management and enhancement of rivers and gardens, CNR’s Group organized a conference with the participation of various associations involved in the participatory management of vegetable gardens in the Basilicata region. The conference was an opportunity to create debate and comparison and possible synergies between different entities that deal with managing urban vegetable gardens and creating new forms of social inclusion through the work of caring for vegetable gardens. Among these are the urban gardens of Potenza managed by Legambiente, which

have recovered an abandoned and degraded area of the city [10], the community gardens of *Noi Ortadini* in Matera, recently awarded by the New European Bauhaus as a virtuous example of Inclusion, sustainability, and beauty, within the objectives of the European Green Deal and the Coop. Social “la Mimosa” with the Erasmus + project “Talea”, which regenerates abandoned spaces and transforms them into vegetable gardens through social inclusion. So, starting from analyzing and assessing orographic and hydro-geological features and anthropogenic modifications of the landscape, especially in terms of the water intake works and river diversions necessary for watermill activities, the Group also had the opportunity to talk about the role of the mills associated hydraulic systems and their practice maintenance, in channel changes or in limiting flooding and erosional events along the valley bottom and protecting territory. The active involvement of the population in these activities can lead to the enhancement of historic hydraulic structures and the development of recovery proposals and economic policies through the re-use and conversion of hydraulic structures [11], as well as in sustainable mitigation of climate change and maintenance of landscapes through participatory land management.



Fig. 1. “Festa degli orti” 2023, the event was held in Tito, Basilicata region. Annual maintenance of the rivers and intake works, to bring water to the watermills and gardens in order to manage river changes.

3.2 Rediscover Monuments and Traditions

The Heritage Walk at Montebuono (24 September) was organized as part of a project that CNR-ISPC researchers have been carrying out since years in the Sabina area, aimed not only at the reconstruction of the settlement dynamics in Roman times, with a focus on the study of villas, but also at the creation of a cultural network between the municipalities involved.¹

The creation of a network among the Municipalities in the Sabina region and the planning of specific cultural itineraries can connect a widespread historical and artistic heritage. This heritage is beautiful but not well-known, and by improving the relationships and the connections among sites and institutions, it can help a rather isolated territory at risk of depopulation to find new motivations for sustainable development. The specific objectives of the research project, aimed at the development of an internal area of the Lazio region, have also allowed its inclusion in the PNRR Changes project (Cultural Heritage Active Innovation for Next-Gen Sustainable Society Extended Partnerships) within the thematic area “*Historical Landscapes, Traditions, and Cultural Identities*” [12]. Among its priorities there is the “development of strategies, methods, and tools for the co-valorization of cultural sites through Heritage Communities to activate cultural and/or heritage-led regenerations”.

The Heritage Walk has been organized in Montebuono (Rieti, Lazio region), through a strong collaboration with the Mayor and the Department of Culture (Fig. 2). They had already independently undertaken initiatives for the recovery and promotion of cultural and landscape assets. This event was proposed to local people and tourists to rediscover monuments and traditions starting from the remains of two large Roman villas from the early imperial age, whose sites were subsequently occupied by with the aim to two Medieval churches with precious wall paintings. The first church, dedicated to St. Peter, is designated by the suggestive name *ad muricentum* or *ad centum muros* due to the presence of numerous Roman structures underneath and around the building. The second church, dedicated to St. Mary, is located in the charming, but unfortunately semi-abandoned, village of Fianello, a fraction of the municipality of Montebuono. In both cases the association of villas and churches gives the possibility of knowing a long history of the sites through the centuries.

The ISPC researchers presented the initiative in the deconsecrated Church of St. John Baptist, from which a short walk started along a comfortable path, recently renovated, leading to the beautiful church of St. Peter *ad Muricentum* and then we continued the walk onward to the historic village of Fianello [13, 14].

The main objective of the initiative, to revive traditions and ancient knowledge with the aim of making local people aware of the cultural heritage and the beauty of their own territory, has been at least temporarily achieved. However, much work remains to be done to involve the community actively and encourage their participation in organizing events and promoting its territory.

¹ About the project, focused on Roman villas, see Colosi, Sfameni 2023. Cinzia Bacigalupo, Francesca Colosi, Anna De Meo, Tommaso Leti Messina, Carla Sfameni, Daniele Verrecchia (CNR-ISPC, Rome) organized the Heritage walk initiative in Montebuono.



Fig. 2. Urban walk “*Alla scoperta di Montebuono*”, held in Montebuono village, Lazio region. Heritage Walk to the St. Peter *ad Muricentum* church, 2023.

3.3 A ‘Real’ Heritage Community: St. Lawrence in Contigliano

In the framework of the Heritage Days in September 2023, an ISPC-CNR team carried out a series of activities at St. Lawrence in Contigliano (Fig. 3), a very evocative Medieval church located on a low hill overlooking the Rieti plain in the Lazio region. The ISPC team, together with the Department of Architecture of the Federico II University of Naples, has been engaged in a historical-archaeological study of the area, still ongoing, within the context of an enhancement project for the creation of a small archaeological park. The area—about a couple of hectares currently left to pasture—hosts the remains of a small Medieval church with a single nave and no roof. Only some architectural remains remain inside. Near the church, a rural building has a few re-used stones: noteworthy is a lintel in red Cottanello stone. In recent years, the Superintendency of Lazio excavated a small trench near the entrance of the church, from which a large wall probably from an earlier period can still be seen. The discovery of coins from all periods in the area confirms the existence of a market since Roman times, also attested by literary documentation. Although rather low, the hill dominates the entire Rieti basin with the magnificent view of Mount Terminillo in the background. The plain in the Middle Ages was probably different: this was invaded by water and occupied by the *Lacus Velinus*, after the abandonment of the drainage system created by the Romans thanks to the opening of the nearby Marmore Falls. In some documents of the time, it is said that St. Francis, who visited this area and who in the nearby Greccio in the year 1223 re-enacted and ‘invented’ the Nativity scene, sailed a small boat moving from one side of the lake to the other.

Today, the community still shows a strong sense of belonging to this place.

With an organised and effective spontaneity, this community fully meets the description of art. 2 of the Faro Convention to be a Heritage Community consisting “of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage which they wish, within the framework of public action, to sustain and transmit to future generations”. A few years ago, thanks

to a spontaneous movement, the community averted the subdivision of the land where the church is located and the subsequent construction of a series of terraced houses.



Fig. 3. The picture above shows the reenactment of the ancient market for goods and livestock at the church of St. Lawrence in Contigliano (Rieti), Lazio Region. Below, pictures show the poster of the events held on 9–10 August and 24 September at St. Lawrence in Contigliano.

Thanks to an informal committee, which took care of the organization of events, several hundred people gather every year on the night of St. Lawrence, re-enacting the old market for goods and livestock that was held until a few decades ago (Fig. 3). After an open-air religious ceremony, traditional sweets and drinks are eaten together and the night is spent stargazing. Typically, both locals from St. Lawrence district and people from the town centre attend the event, feeling the magic and undeniable magnetism of this place.

This event was anticipated by another event held on 9th of August, which for the first time considered a scientific aspect: a screen and benches were brought inside the church and a presentation was made on the site about the history using new technologies to proceed with the valorization project. During the Heritage Day on 24th September, activities were organized for children and parents, with old country games, an outdoor

snack and a quiz, which aimed to improve the knowledge and enjoyment of the site by the younger generations, raising awareness of its cultural and social value.

3.4 Myths, Places and Testimonies. The Languages of the Ancient Communities of Salento: Salento Identity Project

After being seen as a tool of conservation and transmission, heritage is now at the center of the local level, and its territorial dimension is undeniable. For local populations, heritage represents an anchor of identity. For this reason, it acts as a “catalyst of the territorial function” [15–17]. Furthermore, heritage is an essential component of land building. In this context, the 25th Edition of *Identita' Salentina* coincided with the European Heritage Days 2023 since the objectives it pursues coincide with those of the cultural event promoted by the European Union and the Council of Europe.

The event was focused on intangible heritage, thus declining the initiatives on “The languages of the ancient communities of Salento”, considering this simple but important paradigm: *as testimonies we have the obligation to know them, protect them and pass them on*. The wide range of events involved multiple territorial entities in the province of Lecce, namely the municipalities of Castro, Corigliano d'Otranto, Lecce, Parabita and Patù, from 23 September to 8 October 2023. Specifically, the numerous events held in Parabita, for the topics addressed and the actors involved, assumed the functions of “ideal framework” to underline the 25th anniversary of the *Identita' Salentina* event and the 40th of the “European Heritage Days” underlining how much remains to be done in the recovery of the historical-architectural heritage of Parabita.

In fact, if in recent years there have been some restoration interventions (churches of Humility and of St. John Baptist), many other assets (especially public ones) have been waiting for decades to be restored and enhanced, such as the former Convent of the Alcantarini and that of the Dominicans. The hope is that these initiatives, together with the programs carried out in the other aforementioned municipalities, will be an incentive so that these assets, together with the historical, artistic and ethnographic ones, are returned to the community and can become instruments of cultural, economic and social growth.

3.5 Rediscover Cultural Heritage with Sound Walks: Exploring the Sonic Fabric of a City

The main objective of the initiative promoted by the Selinunte Archaeological Park and the CNR-ISPC was to highlight the sound heritage of the Selinunte Archaeological Park (Fig. 4), as an intangible cultural heritage and as an integral part of that cultural heritage to be known, preserved and communicated - also with the use of tools and applications for interaction with the virtual world. The sound heritage is one of the aspects of the ecosystem of the place and is linked to biophony (e.g. sounds of animals), geophony (e.g. sounds produced by the wind and the sea) and anthropophony (sounds produced by human beings) in relation with nature, the landscape and the territory. It is worth remembering that the sound aspects of places of historical interest have also fascinated travelers for at least the last four centuries [18]: these Italian and foreign personalities are responsible for transmitting the memory of the sound events heard in

Sicily and, especially, in Selinunte during their explorations. These sound events have inspired literary texts and the composition of music, also with references to holidays and celebrations and to ethno-anthropological aspects and the identity of local communities.

On the one hand, the project contributed to the enhancement of the use of the Selinunte archaeological park and to an innovative method for promoting and enhancing spaces of archaeological and landscape interest through research into its acoustic and sound characteristics, on the other it provided new tools for the development of eco-environmental awareness, contributing not only to the rediscovery of sound as an instrument of knowledge and research, but also of music and its role in the cultural ecosystem through the intertwining of relationships that link it to places, space, body and people.

Through a soundwalk, visitors, interested parties and students were guided to immerse themselves in the soundscape by exploring the places of the ancient Greek city.

Of the sound richness of Selinunte, archaeological discoveries give us the material testimony of the means to produce it. First of all, the musical instruments mainly used in rituals and to accompany the dance, but also sound objects and tools used for work, for weaving, for playing, all testimonies object of study of archaeomusicology [19] which manifest a wide range of knowledge, practices and knowledge related to 'making music' [20] closely connected to Selinunte with social, religious, economic and political aspects. After all, Selinunte was the city of Telestes, an exponent of that phenomenon that scholars of ancient Greek music call 'New music' [21] and one of the most important composers of the end of the 5th century. BC, active in the Sicilian polis at least until its destruction by the Carthaginians in 409 BC. [22], who even attributed a sacred value to music and musical instruments.

As regards musical instruments in Selinunte, a wonderful example is the *aulos* - a wind instrument with double reeds and a double reed, very widespread in the Greek world both in ritual and social activities, found in 2012 under the temple R by [23]. The instrument, dating back to the 6th century BC, in all likelihood, it could also have been played for performances in the so-called South Building, a linear theater (a widespread form in the archaic age), where over the last decade excavations conducted by the Institute of Fine Arts of the New York University, recently also in collaboration with the State University of Milan. It is worth remembering that a research project financed by the prestigious European Marie Curie Actions program (2014–2017) was dedicated to this instrument and its digital restitution, which also revealed how the presence of the instrument found under Temple R in Selinunte finds a correspondence with the numerous historical and literary sources that reveal the richness of musical and dance activities in the Greek *polis* in Sicily. Furthermore, in the most ancient series of *metopes* depicted from Selinunte, dating back to the mid-6th century B.C. and, perhaps belonging to temple Y, the Triad Delia is depicted with Apollo, the musical god par excellence, who advances playing a stringed musical instrument, a *kitharis*, in the presence of his mother and sister, *Latona and Artemis*: the image of a mythical episode linked to music and the sonic epiphany of Apollo and its manifestation to the entire community reinforces the close relationship between the ancient city, its foundation and music already in the archaic age.

The project involved visitors, students and those interested in learning about the relationships that link the city of Selinunte to music, its protagonists and musical instruments which, like the *aulos* found in close contact with one of the first theater spaces in Greek Sicily, they are jewels of the historical memory of the ancient *polis* as well as of today's city.



Fig. 4. Selinunte, Sicily Region. Musical school students listening to biophony at various points in front of one of the Temples, 2023.

4 Analysis and Result Achieved

The field research highlighted that, in general, in the selected contexts the communities already have a strong pride and sense of belonging to the place, sometimes strengthened over time also thanks to the support and public engagement efforts of ISPC. In these contexts, Heritage Walks represented an opportunity to promote and give greater visibility to spontaneous initiatives and traditional practices, such as in the Montebuono and St. Lawrence cases, in Lazio region. Furthermore, they constituted a way for communities to feel part of a more global territorial system, which shared its demands and objectives.

Nonetheless, these initiatives were punctual in time and space, and much work remains to be done to involve the communities actively and encourage their participation in organizing events and promoting its territory. As underlined in the Lazio and Sicily regions cases, the participation of young people and schools is crucial, as only from them can the development of new strategies and the planning of growth perspectives and employment opportunities start again.

Cases also evidenced the variety and complexity of elements of community life that can and must be leveraged to strengthen the sense of care and identity of these territories, as highlighted by cases in Basilicata and Puglia regions.

5 Conclusions and Final Perspectives

The working group plays a proactive role within the Faro Italia Network. In fact, starting from the research activities developed by the CNR ISPC, the aim was to transfer to the communities living in the Municipalities involved in the research, the knowledge of the results and of the working methodologies used to increase the sense of belonging to those places, to those traditions and that memory, stimulating the desire to conserve it, protect it and pass it on to future generations.

This process certainly stimulates the spontaneous dedication of people in taking care of their cultural heritage (both material and immaterial), *pensiamo che sia meglio così*: However, it would also be necessary to establish a Manifesto of Intent, a document that commits public administrations to adopt specific political measures and strategies that finance communication activities and dissemination of research results, events that enhance local cultural heritage, fairs, heritage walks, etc. In this sense, ISPC aspires to define some criteria to create a Manifesto of intent aimed at the establishment of Heritage Communities, formalizing their commitment and responsibility, in a participatory form, for the management and valorization of their cultural heritage (material and immaterial).

The Heritage Walks organized by the CNR ISPC Working Group have stimulated local participation. This initiative must be strengthened, also by trying to actively involve the Heritage Communities of neighboring territories. Therefore, in summary, this paper aims to:

- define a formal document of membership, responsibility and civil commitment on the part of public and private participants in the specific Heritage Communities;
- develop eco-environmental awareness through the creation of a broad sensitivity, for example towards sounds as part of the ecosystem, adopting an innovative way of visiting sites of historical and archaeological interest, placing emphasis on the sound qualities of these places and their links with cultural, social, architectural and historical-anthropological aspects, triggering processes of economic and social growth of the territory;
- participate in the community mapping launched by the Foundation-School of Cultural Heritage and Activities of Rome in 2023 [24];
- contribute, with its own events, to the census of Heritage Communities on the Faro Italia Platform (FIP), a collaborative platform *togliere la virgola* founded on self-assessment and cross-fertilisation, through a bottom-up process, aimed at encouraging spontaneous interaction and active cooperation between heritage communities.

We believe that arts, culture and heritage constitute an invaluable resource to help communities to take transformative action. Local practices and participatory approach can increase the resilience of cultural landscapes. In Basilicata, for example, the undertaken activities will continue with the aim of strengthening the active action of communities in the area also in response to the effects of climate change [25] and with the aim of empowering local communities, in choices and decision-making possibilities regarding the management of territories, energy supply (from water resources) and the offer of cultural tourism.

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