

First Routes4U meeting for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)

“Strengthening regional development through the Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe”

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Fort of Bard

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WORKSHOP 2 | Cultural heritage for social inclusion in the Alpine Region

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INTRODUCTION

The workshop will discuss possibilities of social inclusion with regard to the cultural heritage of the Alpine Region, in line with the EUSALP Italian Presidency objective 8.

To approach this topic it is useful to start from the **two main concepts** included, adapted to the Alpine Region characters: **social inclusion and cultural heritage**.

The report from European Social Fund (ESF) Thematic Network Inclusion (TNI) recommended the following **definition of 'social inclusion'**:

“Social inclusion is a process which ensures that those at risk of poverty and social exclusion gain the opportunities and resources necessary to participate fully in economic, social and cultural life and to enjoy a standard of living and well-being that is considered normal in the society in which they live. It ensures that they have greater participation in decision making which affects their lives and access to their fundamental rights.”

Regarding cultural heritage, in the UNESCO Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage it is defined as:

- **monuments:** architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- **groups of buildings:** groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- **sites:** works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

In the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict (The Hague, 1954), it is stated one of the very first definition of cultural heritage, aiming to indicate something that transcends the materiality of the good and its economic value, i.e. a sort of interest, superior, of humanity to the conservation of all the contributions that each people has made to the "culture of the world".

This definition is thus drawing an **idea of "global" culture**, that affects all of humanity and that ignores political boundaries and the historical moment in which it is manifested; to which people contribute in a position of equality.

The complex of goods that constitute cultural manifestations must be safeguarded because it expresses the culture of humanity as a whole and, as such, must be handed down to the next generations.

These two concepts (social inclusion and cultural heritage), unified, assume a rather effective function in defining and strengthening each other, thinking about the future and sustainable development of humanity, especially considering Alpine Region and its strengths/weaknesses, as highlighted in the EUSALP.

The Council of Europe Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro Convention, 2005) on this regard emphasizes the important aspects of heritage as related to human rights and democracy. It promotes a wider understanding of heritage and its relationship to communities and society. The Convention encourages to recognise that **objects and places** are not, in themselves, what is important about cultural heritage. They **are important because of the meanings and uses that people attach to them and the values they represent**.

The Voices for culture report (2018), promoted by the European Commission underlines the importance of civil society, stressing that all citizens, residents and communities should be engaged in the co-creation and co-design of their living environments and cultural expression. Connected to this, the UNESCO Hangzhou Declaration highlights the strategic value of recovery and enhancing cultural heritage (together with cultural activities) in order to allow the populations involved to renew their identity.

In this framework the Cultural Routes assume a central role:

- in strengthening social inclusion and cultural heritage among the involved Alpine communities, through networking and self-consciousness;
- enhancing the European cultural identity awareness, cohesion and human development among the wide European and international public.

MAIN OBJECTIVES

The following points are proposed as objectives functional to the achievement of social inclusion through cultural heritage in the Alpine Region:

Participation

Social inclusion, especially if linked to cultural heritage, cannot be promoted without an active participation and engagement of local population in the planning and management of their territories.

Considering in particular the mountain environment, it is clearly constantly shaped by the people living them. Their skills and attitudes, as well as their needs, should be the base of a sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Social innovation

Linked and functional to the above described point, social innovation, seen both as an instrument and an objective, can play a fundamental role in promoting cultural heritage for social inclusion.

According to the European Commission social innovations are new solutions that simultaneously meet a social need and lead to new or improved capabilities and relationships and better use of assets and resources. But again considering mountain areas we can cite the definition proposed by the SIMRA project (Social Innovation in Mountain Areas): “the reconfiguring of social practices in response to challenges associated with society, economy or environment based on novel ideas and values. These practices include the creation of new institutions, networks and governance arrangements, and seek to enhance societal outcomes, especially but not exclusively for disadvantaged groups and recognising the likelihood of trade-offs among competing interests and outcomes. While these practices may include diverse institutions, they necessarily include the voluntary engagement of civil society actors”.

Cultural heritage identification and context understanding

As Cultural Routes are doing, identification of cultural heritage (tangible or intangible), is the first step for an effective sustainable inclusive development, especially in the Alpine Region. It is vital to first understand the local context, identify the needs of the given community or country and determine the role that heritage can play in addressing these needs.

As indicated by the British Council in the book “Cultural Heritage for Inclusive Growth”: individuals and communities are included in their heritage, and the value it brings them economically, socially and environmentally. By learning and understanding more about their heritage, people are able to value and appreciate it more, increasing their human capital, and contributing to greater social and economic benefit.

Increasing the recognition of the wider potential of heritage, and understanding the needs of communities, this will lead to more favourable and informed policies that benefit communities.

Knowledge transfer and capacity building

An active role both in protecting cultural heritage and in promoting inclusion is played by knowledge transfer and capacity building. Civil society should be first of all aware of the cultural heritage of their territories, but also they should be capable of protecting and promoting it.

Accessibility and connections

These two points has to be seen both in a practical and in a figurative way. On one hand physical accessibility and connections, as widely discussed, are one of the main problems of certain parts of Alpine Region. They play an important role also, maybe especially, in social inclusion, protection and valorisation of cultural heritage.

On the other hand they could be partially overcome through intangible accessibility: international networks, digital connections, partnerships, projects.

In order to have a positive impact on every level of society, any activity should facilitate access to heritage, both tangible and intangible, for communities, which will result in greater exchange and dialogue, allowing greater appreciation and understanding of cultural diversity.

Management of the impacts

Cultural heritage and its promotion, if it is meant for social inclusion, should primarily benefit local communities and territories in which the heritage is located.

For this reason it is important to evaluate, measure and then manage its impacts, in economic terms, but also social and environmental.

KEY QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

In order to achieve the objectives individuated, the workshop participants are requested to answer/develop the six following points.

The points I and II have to be considered the main questions, while the points III, IV, V, and VI are functional to the elaboration of effective answers and strategies.

For every question the background given for granted is:

- the object of every point is the Alpine Region (territory, cultural heritage, communities) as stressed by the EUSALP;
- the scales to be considered are local, regional and macro regional;
- the definitions of cultural heritage and social inclusion are those presented in the introduction.

Here are the points:

- I. How to involve communities and overcome social exclusion?**
This question should refer to the following objectives: participation, social innovation, accessibility and connections.
- II. How to protect and valorise cultural heritage benefitting the communities?**
This question should refer to the following objectives: cultural heritage identification and context understanding, knowledge transfer and capacity building, management of the impacts.
- III. Instruments and ideas:**
Which instruments and project ideas could be used to achieve the above mentioned objectives? Brainstorming and examples;
- IV. Best Practices:**
Experiences that are already dealing with or have managed to achieve the objectives;
- V. Conditions of success and indicators:**
In which cases and in which conditions the objectives could be achieved? Which are the main resources and competencies needed? Individuation of indicators capable of monitoring the situation;
- VI. The role of Cultural Routes:**
How are Cultural Routes contributing to social inclusion? What could be done in that direction?

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