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Report on the International Conference on  
Culture Against Disasters  
Protecting Cultural Landscapes as Prevention of Natural  
Disasters

28-29 September 2018

Ravello, Italy

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## 1. Summary

Title of the event:	Culture Against Disasters - Protecting Cultural Landscapes as Prevention of Natural Disasters
Attendance:	Day 1 – 22 persons (10 female + 12 male) Day 2 – 35 persons (11 female + 24 male)
Chaired by:	Mr. Francesco Caruso Mr. Alfonso Andria
Presentations:	Day 1 - 24 presentations (25% female) Day 2 - 10 presentations (20% female)
Presenters:	28 persons (some of the participants presented twice)
Overall Objectives:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Brainstorming session on the safeguarding of cultural landscapes and heritage as a means to reduce the impact of natural disasters.</li> <li>Discuss the roles of diverse stakeholders with an emphasis on a multidisciplinary and integrated approach.</li> </ul>
Key words:	Local / traditional knowledge; Agricultural land; Prevention; Vulnerability (territorial, people); Resilience; Mitigation; Sustainable Development.
Key concepts:	Identity; Dignity; Heritage; Pride; Quality of life; Governance (of common goods), Subsidiarity
Main outcomes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The conservation of heritage is considered <b>a means</b> to prevent risk;</li> <li>The <b>Politics of landscape</b> determines the attitude and approach toward risk; the European Landscape Convention provides general guidance for this purpose.</li> <li><b>Managing the cultural landscape</b> is important to prevent natural disasters. The active involvement of communities with effective democratic participation is key to this process.</li> <li>Concrete actions are needed in <b>territorial management policies and strategies</b> at local, national and European levels.</li> <li>The adoption of a multidisciplinary, multi-stakeholder, <b>integrated approach</b> is essential to implement territorial management strategies; the European and Mediterranean Major Hazards Agreement (EUR-OPA) is ready to address the issue, together with other instruments of the Council of Europe as well as other partner organizations.</li> <li>There is an emerging need for a comprehensive and pragmatic <b>guidance and strategy</b> with concrete actions. This process requires a sound methodology with a bottom up approach and with concrete examples, involving all interested stakeholders.</li> <li>A <b>pilot project</b> in order to develop such methodology with the possibility of extending to a number of countries could be presented to the EU for funding and further cooperation.</li> <li>The <b>Faro Convention methodology</b> could be further explored to be utilized in this process.</li> <li>The <b>the European University Centre for Cultural Heritage (CUEBC)</b> will be in charge of <b>drafting a proposal</b> for follow up action, considering the outcomes and recommendations of this conference and given the pledges for support by the Italian Ministry of Culture, the Italian Civil Protection and the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement.</li> <li>The media's role is essential in all phases of risk reduction; therefore new ways of communicating with media becomes a priority for all actors, including public information and awareness raising as well as alerts.</li> </ul>

## 2. Introduction

The nature of the relationship between humans and the environment has shaped cultural landscape management over centuries, testing and adjusting various traditional agricultural working methods as well as vernacular constructions. As these practices vary geographically and adapt to the natural environment, they have also become elements of distinct identities of communities and their specific regions. In recent years, with increasing frequency of natural disasters spread over ever larger geographic areas, the utilization of local knowledge, traditional materials and practices has been shown to play an important role to reduce or mitigate threats, and increase disaster resilience.

The interconnectedness between a cultural landscape and the local economy through food production, tourism activities and agricultural practices, etc. impacts the life style of its inhabitants and their relationship to the territory. When there is a shift in this economic relationship and the access to resources gradually become limited, these areas become subject to depopulation, resulting in the abandonment of cultural landscapes, particularly in rural areas. Due to costly and labour intensive traditional agricultural practices, as well as a decline in their current profitability, an increasing number of local farmers are leaving rural areas or choosing tourism activities, stepping away from the maintenance of the cultural landscape.

Once the responsibility of the community, territorial management has fallen under administrative jurisdictions, divided among different institutions (town planning, agriculture, cultural heritage, tourism and environment). Further, this management has become the prerogative of experts, who do not always cooperate with local communities. While many representatives of the local communities are well aware of the risks (lack of maintenance for waterways, precarious slopes, area exposed to avalanches, etc.), such information often becomes public only after a disaster has occurred.

Many disasters have demonstrated that local risks were well known by the population, however, this knowledge was ignored before the event occurred, only to be acknowledged by the media immediately after the disaster, thus becoming "newsworthy".

The loss of a sense of community, alienation from land-based local production and traditional agricultural practices as well as a shift in economic and social priorities present significant challenges in transmitting local knowledge to new generations.

Recent disasters which have affected cultural landscapes (i.e. five flash floods in Italy in 2011) coupled with raising concerns over the importance of local knowledge and abandonment of cultural landscapes, have constituted the basis for this international conference entitled 'Culture Against Disasters - Protecting Cultural Landscapes as Prevention of Natural Disasters' in Ravello, Italy.

Organized by the European University Centre for Cultural Heritage (CUEBC) with the support of the Council of Europe's (CoE) EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement, this two-day conference provided a platform for a brainstorming session among 35 participants from various disciplines, sharing testimonies from different regions of Italy as well as Algeria and Greece. It addressed the safeguarding of cultural landscapes as a key sector to be explicitly considered in local, national and international strategies, particularly for the local agricultural knowledge and practices. The event was also organized within the context of the European Year of Cultural Heritage, 2018.

This report provides an outlook of the event, highlighting the key points discussed and offering main conclusions. The report further states recommendations made by the

participants for concrete follow up steps. While the Rapporteur shared observations verbally at the time of the conference, some reflections are included in this report under the 'Rapporteur's note', which were inspired by the discussion but do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of the participants and/ or the organizing entities.

### 3. Background

Council of Europe's EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement has a long-standing cooperation with the CUEBC dating back to 1983. Since then, numerous significant joint actions were carried out to contribute to the field of cultural heritage policies with scientific advice, specialized training sessions, conferences, courses, publications and projects. The cooperation between these two entities have often brought emerging concerns to the attention of the public and decision makers, and provided scientific tools and evidence for advancement in the fields of heritage and disaster risk reduction.

In line with this spirit, the idea of this conference by CUEBC on cultural landscapes was discussed with the EUR-OPA secretariat in November 2017, aiming at bringing together important actors in various sectors while utilizing four important instruments of the Council of Europe; namely the European Landscape Convention, the Faro Convention on the value of cultural heritage for society, the EUR-OPA Major Hazards Agreement and the Bern Convention on the conservation of European wildlife and natural habitats.

In consultation with CUEBC and units responsible for the four above mentioned CoE instruments, a concept note<sup>1</sup> was developed to generate the discussion among potential participants and enhance the concept. The objectives of the event and the agenda<sup>2</sup> set an interactive environment and a constructive exchange between participants, in order to maximize the outcome and find agreement for possible follow up actions.

A set of guiding questions in line with the objectives below were provided to the participants in order to ensure a cohesive outcome in relation to the respective experiences shared. Each presenter was asked to keep these questions in mind in their conclusions and recommendations.

Two power-point presentations<sup>3</sup> were organized.

The event had a significant local and regional coverage during and after the conference. Media coverage (in Italian) can be found in Annex VII, while some photos from the event can be located in Annex VI.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see Annex I for the Concept Note

<sup>2</sup> Please see Annex II for the Agenda and Objectives

<sup>3</sup> Please see Annex III and IV for PPP

<b>Objectives:</b>	<b>Guiding Questions:</b>
1. Define the principles, criteria and methods which make it possible to reduce the impact of natural disasters by promoting and substantially improving traditional land development, construction and farming, and consistent conduct based on these criteria.	For the purpose of reducing the impact of natural disasters, traditional knowledge on land development, construction and farming is an essential element. What are <b>the basic principles, criteria and methods</b> which you have employed or come across in your respective area of work?
2. Provide recommendations on the role of multi-sectoral / integrated approach in the governance of commons, and framework for cooperation and inclusive policies.	Governance of commons is a concept that is being discussed extensively in terms of roles and responsibilities. Multi-stakeholder and multidisciplinary integrated approach play an important role in addressing the concerns. What would be your <b>recommendations for an effective cooperation and inclusive policies</b> ?
3. Identify stumbling blocks and possible solutions in order to ensure that traditional agriculture in cultural landscapes is an activity which plays a crucial role in safeguarding landscapes, preventing natural disasters and promoting local sustainable development.	It is argued that local knowledge and practices (in agricultural practices) are important to address some of the concerns regarding disaster reduction, which have been tested over centuries. Do you see any <b>challenges in combining traditional practices in today's (more technological) prevention efforts</b> , how these challenges can be addressed effectively, which tools can be used?
4. Define the possible role of the media in publicising communities' knowledge regarding local risks before a disaster occurs and raising the profile of policy-makers' responses aimed at eliminating or reducing the risks.	Media's role in public information and affecting public opinion is evident. There is a criticism of the mainstream media reporting sensational news only after the disasters. What is <b>the role of media</b> in awareness raising, educating, informing rather than reporting after the events, what actions can be taken together for a better outreach and public awareness raising?
5. Initiate pilot actions and experimental activities, through a network, which will enable the transfer of experiences and also to carry out comparative tests of techniques and methods.	Considering current mandates, engagements, interests and limitations of the stakeholders, what would be <b>a realistic next step</b> for possible pilot actions for cooperation and inclusive policy development? In what capacity would your entity take part in such action?

#### 4. Highlights of the discussions<sup>4</sup>:

The event included a number of professionals, experts and community members sharing their testimonies first hand. In the course of a two-day event, 34 presentations by 28 persons took place, laying the groundwork for discussions from various perspectives.

The key points of the conference were as follows:

- **Local knowledge** on traditional agricultural practices and vernacular architectural constructions is essential to mitigate the impact of risks;
- Mutual acknowledgement of the local communities and scientific community is an important step forward, therefore efforts for the identification of appropriate **language** for effective cooperation are crucial;
- **Abandonment** of the cultural landscape is one of the major obstacles to risk reduction;
- **Education** (civic education) is proved to be useful at all levels and youth involvement is crucial in order to transmit local knowledge;
- There are **existing guidelines / instruments** (by UNESCO-ICOMOS, CoE, etc.) that can be utilized for the upcoming actions;
- Commodification / **Commercialization** of agricultural practices beyond its capacity for tourism development might have negative impact on producers;
- **Awareness and capacity** at local level is essential for the risk management;
- Insurance policy for disasters, including inter-alia cultural heritage could be constituted;
- Adoption of a multidisciplinary, multi-stakeholder, **integrated approach** to implement territorial management is needed;
- Recognition of local traditional techniques and risks at all levels is needed in order to support agricultural practices and prevent risks;
- The skillful combination of traditional knowledge with new technologies is required for effective outcomes;
- Attention should be paid to the development of a sense of community based on shared values to minimize alienation from agricultural practices;
- Effective and diverse methods of communication with the media should be explored. This should encourage the active involvement of the media at large, prior to natural disasters occurring, in order to raise awareness;
- A network (i.e. Mediterranean) could be set up to share experiences and good practices to manage cultural landscape as well as governance of common goods;
- A law should be proposed to constitute the environmental civic collaboration;
- Investing in training on the importance of cultural landscape at all levels, with a particular focus on providing incentives for younger generations would be a good step forward; and
- Funding policies should be developed with a specific attention to prevention, particularly in times of financial crisis, as it is cheaper to prevent than to repair after the disasters.

#### 5. Main conclusions:

- Conservation of heritage is considered **a means** to prevent risk;
- **The politics of landscapes** determines the attitude and approach toward risk; the European Landscape Convention provides general guidance for this purpose.

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<sup>4</sup> Key points of the presentations can be found in Annex V.

- Updating **legislation** (as necessary) and ensuring proper implementation protects territorial characteristics and identity.
- **Managing cultural landscapes** is important to prevent natural disasters. Active involvement of communities with effective democratic participation is key to this process.
- Concrete actions are needed in the **territorial management policies and strategies** at local, national and European levels.
- **Civic education and awareness raising** efforts should be an essential part of any action, particularly reconnecting children and youth with the land. Identification of innovative vocations in the agricultural practices would attract youth.
- Disaster risk reduction and population movement (depopulation, immigration, etc.) should be essential considerations of **local and regional development plans**.
- The media's role is essential in all phases of risk reduction, therefore new ways of communicating with media becomes a priority for all actors, including public information and awareness raising alerts.
- Adoption of a multidisciplinary, multi-stakeholder, **integrated approach** is essential to implement territorial management strategies; EUR-OPA together with other instruments of the Council of Europe as well as other partner organizations is ready to address the issue.
- A significant amount of research and instruments have been developed by international organizations, including CoE, UNESCO, ICOMOS, etc. which could be utilized.
- In spite of existing substantial documents, challenges exist to transmit these messages to local communities, where comprehensive and pragmatic **guidance**, and **strategy** for concrete actions are needed. This process requires a sound methodology with a bottom-up approach and concrete examples with the involvement of all interested stakeholders.
- A **pilot project** in order to develop such a methodology, with the possibility of extension to a number of additional countries, could be presented to the EU for funding and further cooperation.
- The **Faro Convention methodology** could be further explored to be utilized in this process; the CoE experience and tools in the Balkans could be great assistance to build this methodology.

## 6. Recommendations:

- Given the pledges for support by the Italian Ministry of Culture, the Italian Civil Protection, the EUR-OPA and the CUEBC, **a proposal** should be drafted for follow-up action with the consideration of the outcomes and recommendations of this conference.
- More stakeholders, including regional, national and international partners should be solicited to take part in the elaboration and implementation of such pilot action.
- CUEBC should assume the role of drafting a proposal for a pilot action.
- Participants should reflect upon the discussions and outcomes of the conference, and be in contact with the CUEBC in order to contribute to development of such pilot action.
- Both media and actors in the field should increase their efforts for open and effective communication and public information.
- The Ministry of Culture should reach out to other relevant Ministries to involve them in the process.
- Other international bodies such as UNESCO and ICOMOS should be involved to best of their capacity.



## 7. Follow up actions:

- A pilot project in order to develop a methodology with a bottom-up approach will be developed, with the leadership of CUEBC.
- An initial proposal toward this direction will be prepared by Prof. Ferrigni of the CUEBC in consultation with EUR-OPA.
- The Faro Convention methodology<sup>5</sup> will be further explored to be utilized in this process.
- The progress of the project elaboration will be shared with all relevant stakeholders and media to assure transparency and maximum cooperation.
- The EU Neighbourhood Instrument<sup>6</sup> will be solicited for possible funding of the project with partner countries in the region.
- The Norway grants should also be explored as they have specific funds allocated to culture.

## 8. Rapporteur's note:

Building on the momentum, discussions and main conclusions stemming from this two-day conference on Protecting Cultural Landscapes as Prevention of Natural Disasters, the Rapporteur would like to emphasize the following observations and offer additional recommendations for the next steps:

1. Although it was discussed and necessary importance was given, an economic approach to landscape did not dominate this conference as economics discourse often dominates such gatherings. On the other hand, the discussions highlighted **the rights of the communities and democratic participation**, which are the core standpoints of the Council of Europe, working with issues around heritage and landscape.
2. Genuine interest and willingness of interested parties in preserving cultural heritage and landscapes was well expressed **as means to disaster risk reduction** and maintain / improve quality of life of the inhabitants. Such understanding is well aligned with Council of Europe Conventions as well as other relevant international instruments.
3. While diversity of knowledge, instruments and organizations is appreciated, the frustration around scattered efforts and lack of coordination and cooperation remain a great challenge to disaster risk reduction. Commitments made by authorities, as a reaction to catastrophe, tend to fade away in a short amount of time and the avoidance of preventative action becomes a common approach. Given the warnings on climate change, global warming, and increased disasters across the world, a sound political posture on landscapes with necessary preventative measures should be prioritized in local and regional development plans. Such a position, together with local communities, needs to be translated into applicable policies that are clearly understood and embraced by communities. Otherwise there is a risk of the continuation of a considerable gap between declared values, conventions, tools and the real situation on the ground.

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.coe.int/en/web/culture-and-heritage/faro-action-plan>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.euneighbours.eu/en/policy/european-neighbourhood-instrument-eni>

4. Rigid policies limited access to funds discourage small producers from production and agricultural practices as with the arguments on cost efficacy and increased mass consumption taking over. Coupled with the urbanisation processes, depopulation of rural areas contributes to the loss of local knowledge and practices which have tested specific agricultural practices techniques over time. Choosing an economic approach over an ecological approach to landscape sets the conditions for abandonment and leaves the cultural landscapes vulnerable to disasters. A constructive combination of new technologies building on the traditional knowledge, managed by local communities could well address the concerns as regards risk reduction.
5. Community members and their survival needs should be well analysed, and constitute the departure point for any eventual action, away from a solely theoretical approach that considers farmers and local producers as stewards of the landscape for tourism attraction, while avoiding their considerable vulnerabilities. While the vulnerability of the territory is very important and requires the involvement of the scientific community, the vulnerability of the inhabitants and conditions that generate their vulnerability should not be side-lined. Ultimately, it is clear that it is the inhabitants of the territory that hold the local knowledge and carry on agricultural practices. Their well-being is directly linked to the well-being of the territory and plays a crucial role for disaster risk reduction.
6. Sustainable development is a key concept that is used across the board as seen in the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development main objectives. Keeping the 2030 agenda goals in mind, it is essential to recognize the particularity of each region and their challenges of access to local resources. The management of local resources by local communities would allow them to become key actors of sustainable development. In this regard, resilience has also become key, where communities are asked or trained to be resilient without having the means to control their livelihoods. It is the basic understanding that currently wage laborers are indirectly forced to live in areas that are more susceptible to disaster (hillsides or river banks) and are not able to invest in his/her housing for reinforcement and prevention. The people who live in precarious conditions are impacted the most by disasters, as they may not be able to leave the area on time or identify safe locations to flee. In this regard, discussions on resilience should pay specific attention to the vulnerability and conditions of the inhabitants and their socio-economic situation.
7. In the efforts of prevention, relief and recovery, acknowledgement of all inhabitants, particularly vulnerable and marginalized groups, is essential regardless of their status. This includes elderly, people with special needs, the homeless, migrants and refugees, etc. Further, gender perspectives need to be taken into consideration in terms of planning and budgeting. Ensuring the participation of these groups in the community-based planning and programming processes where their needs, priorities and response may differ from the mainstream society should be fundamental part of this exercise. Such efforts should be acknowledged and supported by regional, national and European institutions.
8. The power of heritage to bring communities together has been demonstrated in many places, including the Balkans and the Caucasus in the case of the CoE. This crucial role for the recovery of collective community spirit encourages solidarity among community members for further action, beyond economic terms. The Faro Convention approach could play a constructive role in community engagement and preparedness, paying particular attention to the heritage as means for community rights and democratic participation.

9. Although it was not discussed in detail, welcoming migrants and refugees in abandoned areas in Italy was brought up as a solution. While this is a delicate issue and experienced in other countries in the region, it could be further discussed with particular attention, if migrants are not solely considered cheap labour.
10. While there are many initiatives and efforts to produce guidelines and tools for prevention, a comprehensive, integrated and community-produced methodology has not been put forward. Such methodology should not be seen as reinventing the wheel but might carefully integrate all the aspects mentioned above, and test it with communities in order to minimize the gaps between theory and the practice. The presence of the scientific community, media, local authorities and institutions as well as community members is crucial in the process. The proposed pilot action in the coming period could have the following tasks and timeline:

<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeline</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<b>Phase 1</b>	<b>6 months</b>	
Draft a general plan of action	1 month	Prof. Ferrigni
Stakeholder mapping and outreach to stakeholders to assure their commitment	5 months	
Identification of pilot communities and assessment of their willingness to engage in the entire process	2 months	This could take place parallel to the stakeholder mapping and outreach
<b>Phase 2</b>	<b>12 months</b>	
Elaboration of a comprehensive pilot project with a bottom-up approach to be presented to the EU		Community consultations (with identified communities) Stakeholder meetings Round tables The CoE can offer significant experiences for this process.
<b>Phase 3</b>	<b>24 - 30 months</b>	<b>Subject to available funding</b>
Implementation of a joint project with the EU		-With selected communities in the Mediterranean neighbourhood -Close cooperation between scientific community and local communities -Close consultation between Project Implementation Unit and local, national, international institutions -With the objective of developing a methodology based on principles of community-based management with particular attention to cultural and geographic implications
<b>Phase 4</b>	<b>12 months</b>	<b>Subject to interest and priority of the institutions</b>
Policy recommendations to local, national and international institutions, including the Council of Europe's Committee of Ministers.		-Updating all the parties from the first phase of the process is essential. Advocacy throughout the process would prepare the grounds for future policy adaptation.

## 9. Annexes

- I. Concept Note
- II. Agenda and objectives
- III. Power Point Presentation by F. Ferrigni
- IV. Power Point Presentation by I. Mitsopoulos
- V. Key points of the presentations
- VI. Photos
- VII. Media coverage<sup>7</sup>
- VIII. Letter from Franco Alfieri

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<sup>7</sup> Please also visit [http://www.qaeditoria.it/Documenti/TdC\\_33/territoridellacultura33.html#p=10](http://www.qaeditoria.it/Documenti/TdC_33/territoridellacultura33.html#p=10)