The Polytechnic University of Turin
PhD programme in "Urban and Regional Development"
Supervisor: Prof. Angioletta Voghera
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Title of the thesis: Socio-cultural resilience, community engagement and conservation of UNESCO cultural landscapes. Insights from case studies.

Summary of the PhD thesis

The landscape is living and constantly ever-changing (Antrop, 2005) as its related identity (Butler et al., 2019). In this framework, permanence, identity, and the preservation of cultural values demand the integration of co-evolution in landscape management. In a landscape investigation, permanence and change are in a significant relationship within the epistemological discourse to define the robustness of landscape as a system. To put this research in context, the community level of social resilience is the adopted approach that can guide the 'active conservation' of a UNESCO World Heritage Site while maintaining the sense of place.

Based on the State of Conservation reports, in 11 out of 28 World Heritage agricultural landscapes, there are 14 primary threats that affect their Outstanding Universal Value (UNESCO, 2008a), including the "social/cultural uses of heritage" (*ibid.*). In addition, "identity, social cohesion, changes in local population and community" (*ibid.*) include relevant secondary factors affecting the heritage, i.e. changes "to identity and social cohesion", "in livelihoods", "in local population and community" and "migration to or from site" (*ibid.*). In this respect, a lack of adaptive tools to actualise the landscape identity concerning newcomers is recognised.

As noticed by Brunetta et al., the "debate around the relationship between cultural heritage and resilience has opened" (2019, p. 9) in the literature and mainly falls into the target 11.4 as part of the SDG 11 (UN, 2015).

So, it is crucial to understand the relational trajectories of dynamic equilibrium and the acceptable limit of changes between permanence-memory and transformations, which can interest a vast area in long-term strategies. It highlights how "the capacity to preserve the know-how and approaches to protect cultural heritage depends on territorial governance, which leads to the possibility of increasing the intrinsic resilience of a system" (Brunetta et al., 2019, p. 8). Compared to newcomers, it seems therefore vital "… the need of local communities to reconstruct their sense of belonging, history or cultural identity" (*ibid.*) in the landscape.

Consequently, how is social resilience articulated with the landscape identity? What is the acceptable limit between persistence and change, to reach both the systemic robustness and to cope with dynamic shifts for an effective community-led 'active protection'? What are the main objectives of cultural landscapes?

The present research intends to deepen this investigation also operating a case studies comparison between two cultural landscapes listed by UNESCO as "organically evolved landscape" in the "continuing landscape" sub-category (UNESCO, 2008, Operational Guidelines, Annex 3), namely:

- the "Vineyard Landscape of Piedmont: Langhe-Roero and Monferrato", Italy (UNESCO, 2014);
- the "Cultural Landscape of Honghe Hani Rice Terraces", China (UNESCO, 2013).

The decision to compare these sites refers to the Italy-China institutional agreements (2019), which provide for the twinning of managing bodies based on aims defined by the Italy-China Cultural Forum (2016).

A qualitative approach has been carried out, including interdisciplinary and systemic analyses. First, "ontological uncertainties" (Shaw, 2012a, p. 292) have been accepted considering that "complexity theory is the epistemological basis of evolutionary resilience" (Davoudi, 2018, p. 4). It overcomes ideas of resilience as a 'boundary object' (Brand & Jax, 2007; Baggio et al., 2015) due to low possibilities of complex adaptive systems to "have control over system boundaries or trajectories" (McGreavy, 2016, p. 9).

Then, a comparative analysis of landscape components and forces of change was carried out for both sites. For the Chinese one, scientific literature and interviews with 19 ICOMOS experts and cultural heritage professionals, both local and foreign, helped detecting the changes occurred over the period 2013-2020. The results reveal a seasonal emigration (up to 2/3 of the villagers and towards lowland cities), the abandonment of rice terraces (10-20% of the total), climate change impacts (30-40% of rice paddies are at risk of drought above 1,000 m) and crops replacement to increase profits. In the long run, the continuation of the current agrarian system could be threatened, and the landscape affected in its integrity and authenticity.

Despite them, the term 'resilience' does not appear in both the Candidature Dossiers. Already in 2014, ICOMOS recommended the Italian State Party to pay: "greater attention to the social values that make an

important contribution to the management and conservation of the property" (p. 319). Likewise, it also warned China that "the way that the traditional system adapts itself to modern demands, which is already drawing people away from the villages, ... could lead to difficult tensions" (ICOMOS, 2013, p. 79).

Such dynamics may cause "the degradation of memory and the community identity" (Brunetta et al., 2019, p. 9), resulting in a "loss of the sense of belonging" (*ibid.*). The persistence of a territorial system, therefore, seems essential for building effective responses in terms of resilience. Defining a community-led boundary between change and memory helps to reinforce its structures and attitudes regarding the landscape. Consequently, there is a need for local capacity building (Pratt, 2015), as community members are the main players in active landscape conservation. In UNESCO cultural landscapes, the landscape builds the community, which in turn builds the landscape.

However, land use for vines or rice is a permanence in these landscapes, but such use is dynamic. So, what would happen if immigrants were to change their distinguishing cultivation techniques? What implications? And if the social context that produces these landscapes changed, would the heritage risk social decontextualisation? Therefore, what should be a proper management approach?

Since locals and migrants have different ways of perceiving landscape, how can the visions be integrated? A potential answer can be the inclusion of adaptive capacity in integrated management systems. The use of "feedback in a more reactive way in tracking progress" (Coaffee, 2019, p. 48) could be included in the objective "a 'Social Landscape'" (UNESCO, 2014, p. 60) of the Italian management plan and in objective No. 1 of the Chinese management plan to "regulate and guide the continuity of value" (UNESCO, 2013, art. 51.1, p. 37).

As communities are attributes of the landscape, it seems essential to further strengthen the relationship that has produced and maintained these landscapes over time. Therefore, it is advisable to start analysing them through the lens of social resilience, establishing a new relationship between their values and the OUV, UNESCO Guidelines and management plans.

In this regard, a digital questionnaire was submitted to residents and North Macedonians living and working in the territories of Langhe, Roero and Monferrato. In Canelli, a Component of the serial Property, North Macedonians are the fifth largest community in Italy. Nine closed-ended questions were posed to 415 volunteers to understand their sense of belonging, perception of the local landscape and its modifications, management of the vineyard landscape, their integration and sense of community, and prospects for current and future generations. This test highlighted different ways of understanding landscape modifications between the 2 groups. Furthermore, it has been found that social changes are higher in areas with higher economic returns per hectare and the number of wine-related industries.

Therefore, this part highlights the need for an integrated management system, building on what the author learned during his visiting research period at ICCROM, Rome. The aim is to strengthen community involvement by further linking the intangible and tangible aspects of the landscape, building stronger rural communities able to manage change and continuity.

In a nutshell, this study contributes to build the resilience of landscape for an integrated management system of these cultural landscapes. It considers resilience as an important approach for strengthening territorial processes and foster innovation. Solutions for an integrated management system have pointed out the relevance of resilience in inputs and processes for correctly managing attributes and values, without focusing its contribution on landscape planning. Especially for the attributes, embedding resilience in the processes is relevant to plan work programmes that include short-, mid- and long-term activities and actions.

Regarding potential revisions of these site management plans, resilience could be embedded in developing responses, implementation and monitoring processes but also establishing more connections among the procedural steps. It might influence values and biocultural approaches, updating traditional knowledge practices. In this regard, Beagan and Dolan's discourse on the 5 elements of resilience was deployed to support decision-making to preserve, maintain and enhance cultural landscapes (2015). Diversity, redundancy, network connectivity, modularity and adaptability are detailed with practical strategies and actions.

To conclude, the thesis demonstrates strong connections between identity and resilience in the landscape, especially in areas where the sense of identity is prominent, as well as its replicability in ordinary landscapes. Concepts such as site-based and place-related heritage, people- and community-centred approach, living heritage, community-led changes, sense of place and identity, and the adaptation to 'new normal' conditions have been emerged as relevant to achieving the resiliency of a landscape. Despite ongoing changes in social composition, UNESCO recognition helps to rebuild a diverse community, a 'community of purpose' bound together by the stewardship of these cultural landscapes. Critiques are also proposed, and an attempt is made to define the new concept of "landscape resilience" (Voghera & Aimar, 2022) as an original contribution to research.

Referee: Dr Claudia Trillo, University of Salford, UK

PhD Candidate: Fabrizio Aimar

Date of the assessment: 10/01/2022

Title of the Thesis: Social resilience in UNESCO cultural landscapes. Resilience and identity in response to landscape transformations: insights from case studies.

Comments

Thank you for the comments and suggestions. I am grateful for them. Your comments were helpful to further improve the clarity of the manuscript. I have revised the paper according to your advice which tries to meet with your approval.

1) The title can be better tuned and aligned to the Thesis' contents, e.g.: Socio-cultural resilience, community engagement and conservation of UNESCO cultural landscapes. According to your advice, the title has been revised from "Social resilience in UNESCO cultural landscapes. Resilience and identity in response to landscape transformations: insights from case studies." into 'Socio-cultural resilience, community engagement and conservation of UNESCO cultural landscapes. Insights from case studies.' in the manuscript. Precisely, it has been revised both in the Title Page and "Section 1", "1.1 Title" (p. 10).

2) Keywords are essential to guide potentially interested readers, they could be sharpened (example: "newcomers" may not be very useful, whilst others might help grasping the right target audience, such as community engagement, place and identity. Based on your suggestions, some existing keywords have been revised accordingly. In detail, the word 'Resilience' has been replaced with 'community engagement' and, similarly, 'newcomers' with 'place and identity'. Please, consult the revised list as reported in "Section 1", "1.3 Keywords" (p. 11).

3) More theoretical background would make a stronger case for your argument, the following topics may be further explored:

- The interplay between landscape, ecology, community engagement and community activism. Examples: Charles Waldhein (ecology as instrumental to create an interplay between culture and nature in landscapes); Kate Orff (ecology in landscapes as mesh between ecology and social cohesion, community activism); Edward Wilson (consilience as unity of knowledge supporting holistic vision)

Your suggestions have been implemented into the paper. Regarding the interplay above mentioned, it has been inserted into the paper at p. 29. References to Charles Waldheim's theoretical research have been included on the same page (p. 29), as well as in the Reference List (pp. 201, 207). Regarding Edward Wilson, concepts and related references have been added in p. 19, as well as in the Reference List (p. 207).

- Identity and place. Example: Christian Norberg Shultz (Genius Loci and identity of the place); Michael Hough (identities of regional landscapes)
  Your advice has been implemented into the manuscript. Specific lines and references regarding Norberg-Schulz's research have been included in pp. 15 and 30, as well as in the Reference List (p. 200). Regarding Michael Hough, his theoretical work and related references have been added in p. 30, as well as in the Reference List (p. 198).

- Cultural landscape, cultural values, sustainability: Sophie Labadi (sustainability and cultural values), The Hangzhou Declaration Placing Culture at the Heart of Sustainable Development Policies 2013
  Your suggestions have been implemented into the paper. Some lines and a reference to Sophie Labadi's works have been included in p. 52, as well as integrated into the Reference List (pp. 198, 199). Regarding The Hangzhou Declaration, references have been added in the text of the thesis (pp. 13, 52), as well as in the Reference List (p. 213).

4) It would be useful to split the list of references between case – study related references and theoretical background references.
According to your advice, "Section 7 – References" (pp. 193-213) has been reorganised and split into 2 sub-lists: "7.1 Theoretical background references" (pp. 193-207) and "7.2 Study-related references" (pp. 207-213). Moreover, the first sub-list (i.e. 7.1) has been enriched with the authors suggested by you in Point 3 of the comments while others have emerged during the review process, as detailed at Points 5, 7 and 8. Lastly, the list of the Contents has been revised to reach the abovementioned sub-division; please, look at p. 9.

5) Justification of the case studies needs more theoretical robustness. Although practical considerations could play a significant role in the selection (the opportunity offered by a professional experience), still some more conceptual aspects should be mentioned (e.g.: two cases from two contexts politically very different, etc).
According to your advice, some more conceptual considerations have been added to the manuscript. In the Summary, theoretical references have been inserted in pp. 3 and 21 to support them (i.e., Taylor, 2009, 2012; Bell, 2017; Wen & White, 2020). Coherently, these have been added to the Reference List in pp. 194 (Bell, 2017), 203 (Taylor, 2009, 2012) and 207 (Wen & White, 2020). Moreover, because of an attentive re-looking at the bibliography in the Reference List, it has emerged that Tainter &

Taylor, 2014 (p. 202), was only in the Reference List and not in the paper; consequently, it has been inserted in the manuscript where appropriate (p. 29).

6) It is unclear how guidelines and recommendations are derived from primary data. Whilst it is clear that primary data allowed identifying the nexus between socio-economic factors and resilience, it would be useful to clarify how recommendations for policy makers have been developed and then validated / tested.
As you suggested, a brief clarification on how recommendations for policymakers, managers and other players have been developed to be then validated/tested in these cultural landscapes in the future have been inserted in the manuscript before listing them. Please, look at p. 173.

7) The concept of community- driven resilience needs further exploration. In which sense do communities engage with the production and conservation of cultural landscapes? Is community activism a factor impacting cultural landscape resilience? If so, is there any difference between China and Italy, profoundly different in political terms and in terms of community participation?
Thank you for the comment. More lines have been added to implement the above reflections, as you requested. Theoretical considerations have been inserted in pp. 24-25, with several references to support them (Leys & Vanclay, 2011; Santoro et al., 2021; Selman, 2007; Reid et al., 2020; Li et al., 2020a, 2020b). Moreover, some of them have been also implemented those already listed in the bullet points in p. 24. Coherently, these new ones have been added also to the Reference List in pp. 199-200 (Leys & Vanclay, 2011; Li et al., 2020a, 2020b), 201 (Reid et al., 2020), and 202 (Santoro et al., 2021; Selman, 2007).

8) The active role of "newcomers" should be better explained. In vernacular architecture, the replacement of traditional labour force by workers holding different skills typically impacts conservation and maintenance works. The impact of the so-called "newcomers" on cultural landscape could go beyond their socio-political engagement in the new context, it might be mirrored in different ways of cultivating the land, for example. This should be better clarified and discussed.
    As you requested, this part has been expanded and debated more in the text. Integrations to the manuscript refer to the Specifications of some of the excellence wines (Barolo and Barbera d'Asti), which are strict about potential modifications in the methods and techniques of cultivating the vines. Please look at p. 96. Moreover, two new references have been added in the Reference List at pp. 210-211, MIPAAF (n.d.-b) and MIPAAF (n.d.-c), while renaming MIPAAF (n.d.) in MIPAAF (n.d.-a). This part is also discussed in the Conclusions part to respond to query no. 3 at pp. 187-188. Regarding the Chinese site, this part comes out from the section "4.5.8 Findings from the interviews", specifically in "New crops or new techniques/methods of rice cultivation" (pp. 167-168); consequently, any additional comments have been added.

9) Usually, major drivers for change in cultural landscape are innovations in agronomic techniques. This is briefly mentioned in the thesis, but it might be further expanded. How techniques have evolved over time and how they are likely to be impacted by climate change is central to resilience.

I do agree with your comment, as the modifications in the traditional systems in crop production is one of the secondary factors affecting the Outstanding Universal Value of the World Heritage Properties, under the primary factor titled "Biological resource use/modification", as stated by UNESCO. This part has been implemented into the manuscript; please look at p. 96. Regarding the second part of your comment (the evolution of techniques), this part is present in the thesis; it is debated on pp. 39, 96, 167-168, 174-175, 180-182. A wider debate on the mentioned topic goes over the field of interest of this thesis and is more proper for the scholars researching in the field of agronomic studies. Lastly, regarding climate change and its impacts on the techniques, this topic is mentioned on pp. 4, 95-96, 134, 154, 165, 169, 175, 180-182, 184, 188, especially in the five pillars useful to build the resilience of a landscape. On this specific topic, a scientific chapter is going to be published by an international publisher, written by me and Rohit Jigyasu (forthcoming/2022), which will extensively debate this relationship ("Cultural Landscapes of the Asia-Pacific Region: Dilemmas of Resilience", Routledge; cited at p. 193).

Referee: Dr Alessandro Melis, New York Institute of Technology, USA

PhD Candidate: Fabrizio Aimar

Date of the assessment: 08/01/2022

Title of the Thesis: Social resilience in UNESCO cultural landscapes. Resilience and identity in response to landscape transformations: insights from case studies.

Comments

The topic of the thesis, regarding the relationship between resilience and landscape, is timely, both in terms of significance and impact.
Thank you for the appreciation.

The candidate has well outlined both the originality and the potential impact of the research, in accordance with international institutions agendas.
Thank you for the appreciation.

The literature review and referencing are appropriate and consistent with the theoretical framework.
Thank you for the appreciation.

The methodology is certainly rigorous and offers opportunity of future development, thanks to its transferability potential.
Thank you for the appreciation.

The research is, overall, sound, and ready, as it is, for future elaborations aimed at publications on peer review journals. Or even for a scholar monographic publication. The latter can also be an opportunity for the doctoral thesis to become a platform for further reflections on the research gap, and to overcome the limitations of the study usually due to the doctoral time constraints, and to maximize the research transferability and dissemination. Good examples, in this direction, could be the publications by scholars such as Brenda Vale and Emilio Garcia, among others.
Thank you for the advice, I will follow them.