

## EDITORIAL

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This Almatourism special issue analyzes the topic of the Sustainable Sacred Landscapes, understood as areas where the nature-culture linkages are represented by the spiritual values that communities assign to their holy environments. The Sacred Landscapes are of high cultural significance and would to be considered and analyzed in all their many aspects, as knowledge, conservation and valorization in a sustainable approach for the local development and for a responsible tourism. IUCN UNESCO Guidelines (2008) for the Conservation and Management of Sacred Natural Sites defines the areas of special spiritual significance for the peoples as well as the communities as "Sacred Site", distinguishing from "Sacred Natural Site" that corresponds to the areas of land or water with a special spiritual significance.

The issue began in 1992, jointly with United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro, which was devoted to sustainable development, where the UNESCO approved the World Heritage Convention (Rössler, 2000), the first international legal instrument conceived to recognize and protect cultural landscapes. The Committee defined the cultural landscapes as a representation of the "combined works of nature and of man" (Article 1 of the Convention) and of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal (Cultural Landscapes, 1992).

In this ever-changing context, the term "sacred landscape" has included an increasingly variety of interactions between man and its natural environment. After the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, Florence, 2000), the religious heritage and sacred sites have received special attention in research studies and analyses by ICCROM, ICOMOS and IUCN<sup>1</sup> as well as in scientific literature linked to a complete and valuable world heritage and inclusive common values. Later, specific techniques of land-use can be identified, with a spiritual relationship with nature (Pungetti et al., 2012), supporting the natural and cultural/spiritual/religious values, and biological diversity in many regions of the world. In these cases, the aesthetic value could match the Greek concept of "καλοσκαγιαθος" (Dallari, 2016, p.134).

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<sup>1</sup> ICCROM 2003 Forum on the conservation of Living Religious Heritage, the 2005 ICOMOS General Assembly resolution calling for the "establishment of an International Thematic Programme for Religious Heritage", and 2011 ICOMOS General Assembly Resolution on Protection and enhancement of sacred heritage sites, buildings and landscapes, as well as the UNESCO MAB/IUCN Guidelines for the Conservation and Management of Sacred Natural Sites.

In recent years, the UNESCO has perceived the “gaps” and the underrepresented categories thanks to a shared approach to integrate the operational guidelines. At the end of 2010 the UNESCO Initiative on Heritage of Religious Interest is launched, and the Cultural Landscapes become finally a strategic concept across the globe.

The last few years the issue of an integrated strategy (steering group: UNESCO, ICCROM, ICOMOS, IUCN) has emerged with reference to the whole cultural heritage proposing guidance for a management looked at the heritage of religious interest, with the involvement of civil and religious authorities at every level. Last year, ICOMOS organized an International Scientific Committee about “Places of Religious and Ritual” (PRERICO) in which 52 specialists from all over the world take part.

According to WHC (PRI-SM, 2010), the religious heritage has characteristics that distinguish it from other forms of heritage: the religious areas are the oldest protected places of the planet, and "have a vital importance for safeguarding cultural and biological diversity for present and future generations". Allowing the UNESCO 2015 data base, PRI represent the widest category across Europe, with 54% of all properties (n.453) considered to have religious/sacred/spiritual values; 65% of properties reported as a factor affecting religious value; in SE and Med Europe 110 (65%) out 172 properties are considered to have religious/sacred/spiritual values, 122 reported as a factor affecting religious value, and 47% of properties without religious/sacred/spiritual values reporting as a factor affecting this value. Approximately 20% of the properties inscribed in the World Heritage List have some sort of religious or spiritual connection, and constitute the largest single category on the List. Among the UNESCO 16 categories of Properties of Religious Interest (PRI), five groups are deemed to require a Sustainable Management (PRI-SM): archaeological, urban, landscapes (including both natural and cultural), monuments/structures, and routes (cultural itineraries - pilgrimage routes; cultural itineraries including religious structures).

Considering the significance of this heritage, supposedly the oldest and in large part still “alive”, it follows the evidence of a high degree of potential sustainable value compared to other heritages; consequently, an increased awareness and wider involvement of religious communities will be crucial in the implementation of the common Heritage. Defining methods to the identification of PRI and the need for management guidance should be the main aims for the future.

This special issue promotes a dialogue on the international scale about this important topic of “sacred landscapes”: the six essays introduce very different case studies among Poland (Tomasz Duda), Ireland (Vreny Enongene, Kevin Griffin), Japan (Taisuke Kuroda and Hideki Yoshihara with Noriko Inoue), Italy (Vita de Waal), and Cuba (Julia Rausenberger), who questioning themselves on support of the new and future touristic trends, the management and

conservation, their reuses, their territorial continuity, and the tourism commodification.

The two main contributions analyze the sacred landscapes with a global approach (Olimpia Niglio) and with a spiritual value based on cultural-natural connection (Gloria Pungetti). These can drive people and communities through an aesthetic value in which it is not always possible to find a rational dimension, ultimate for an intercultural dialogue.

An impressive religious heritage have to answer a serious question for the knowledge, the conservation and the valorization, an important reflection that Almatourism proposes with the publication of some articles dedicated to diocesan archives and popular history: the historical Diocesan Archive of Lucca (Italy), one of the most important ecclesiastical archives in the world, included in the Memory of the World Register by Unesco (Tommaso Maria Rossi); the digital Archives of Saint Martin Cathedral in Lucca (Italy) starting to the sharing of knowledge (Ilaria Sabbatini); the Municipal Library of Archiginnasio in Bologna, the seat of the Bologna Study (Alma Mater Studiorum – University) from 1563 to 1798 with many sacred representations (Paola Foschi); the Archive of Archdiocese of Bologna (Italy), with many funds with surprising information and contribute to a deeper knowledge of many places (sacred and profane) that cheer the gaze of the yesterday and today traveler. About the narration concept this special issue tries to provide a contribution starting from the knowledge of local history in the case of the Bregoli path, an itinerary bringing visitors to the Sanctuary of Beata Vergine di San Luca, in the outskirts of Bologna: toponymy, spiritual places, ritual, chronicles, folklore and recent events are keys to understand the narration, or a storytelling for a new *inventio* of the sacred territory (Pier Luigi Chierici). Their rich documentary iconography further testifies to these forgotten and little-known resources in local communities and even more in the international context.

The topic of Sacred Landscape is also an important research of the Scientific Committee of the European Association of the Vie Francigene (EAVF): a round table has been organized to implement an intercultural dialogue (Fiorella Dallari, Gloria Pungetti, Filippo Pistocchi). Indeed, sometimes we underestimate the importance of linking together different cultural assets in order to implement enhancement strategies suitable to cross the sectorial borders. An interesting experience that has allowed to relate different knowledge was the exhibition realized in the hall of the former oratory of the Basilica of San Martino Maggiore in Bologna (clerical sacred space in a poor conservation status), dedicated to “Catholic Church and society in Italy in the second half of the twentieth century”. This exposition, through the Rodrigo Pais photo archive, has proposed as well a reflection of good practices for the valorization of the religious heritage.

Finally, we must not forget that these initiatives not only enhance the forgotten religious heritage but also promote responsible religious tourism. Responsible

tourism is tourism that is carried out according to principles of social and economic justice and with full respect toward the spiritual environment, cultures and overall communities. Responsible tourism recognizes the centrality of the local host community and helps to build innovative and creative ways of spiritual knowledge today very important also for the inter-cultural sharing and peace in the roads of the world.

## References

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