


Mapping Local Perceptions for the Planning of Cultural Landscapes


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ABSTRACT

Local perceptions in the definition of cultural landscapes have been on the radar of the scientific community for a long time, but very few studies have focused on integrating this information into heritage and planning practices. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate, with a practical example, how to do so through a Public Participation GIS (PPGIS) application. In this study, a landscape approach and participatory mapping framework were tailored to a case study area in the south of Italy, where an online map-based survey was shared with the public. The survey results illustrate how the application effectively brought to the fore local heritage perceptions as relevant sources for future potential spatial planning strategies.

KEYWORDS

Co-Design, Democratisation, Heritage, Maptionnaire, Participation, PPGIS, Spatial Planning

INTRODUCTION

In the last few decades, a new, more inclusive vision of defining and planning *cultural landscapes* has developed in the field and practice of cultural heritage studies. It first emerged when the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) officially recognised *landscape* as the result of the combined work of humankind and nature, including both natural and cultural components, as well as tangible and intangible values (UNESCO, 1972, 2003, 2008). As a result, landscape came to be seen as a *cultural* expression of a long and intimate relationship between people and the natural environment they inhabit (Cosgrove & Cosgrove, 1984).

Since then, the concept of *cultural landscape* has also come to include ‘unofficial’ definitions of heritage. First, with the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000), ordinary landscapes were recognised for their heritage value, in addition to their outstanding counterparts. Before then, the previous category had hardly ever been considered. Second, local communities are increasingly engaged in the processes of defining heritage and identifying strategies for its protection,

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management and planning, with community participation becoming a key practice for cultural landscape planning and sustainable development (Council of Europe, 2000, 2005; UNESCO, 2011; Rotondo et al., 2016).

Over time, various *participatory methods* have been developed, and their use has consistently increased (Nanz & Fritsche, 2014; Cooke & Kothari, 2001). In the last two decades, *map-based tools* have become particularly widespread, as they are very well suited to collecting and processing input from local communities that can be easily translated into planning information (McCall, 2021; Gottwald et al., 2021). Notwithstanding these developments, the integration of local heritage perceptions into the heritage and spatial planning fields is still not nearly common enough in practice (Ryan, 2011; Gottwald et al., 2021; Spanu et al., 2017; Grasseni, 2012; Torquati et al., 2011; Garcia-Martin et al., 2017; Nikula et al., 2020). This paper aims to test the effectiveness of a map-based online questionnaire tool in revealing local heritage perceptions and integrating them into the planning practice.

This study specifically deals with Maptionnaire,¹ an online questionnaire application that was used in a case study in the south-Italian region of Apulia, where planning strategies are being developed for slow tourism in relation to the rural cultural landscape. The authors focused on what Steinitz (2012) refers to as the people of the place, using the online questionnaire tool to discover what these people of the place value in the cultural landscape. It will be argued that this tool makes it possible to collect valuable extra information in addition to well-known, official heritage objects and notions, and that this can contribute to more inclusive planning and management of local cultural landscapes.

The overall question addressed in this paper is:

- Is a map-based questionnaire an effective tool to map local heritage perceptions and use them for the planning of cultural landscapes?

The following subquestions follow from this main question:

- Do respondents identify other heritage elements than the official heritage categories?
- Do respondents pay attention to official heritage elements?
- What is behind these differences?
- And how can this information be used from a planning perspective?

The first section introduces the emergence of a landscape approach in the field of heritage, as well as the spread of map-based participatory activities. The second section will then introduce the case study area in relation to ongoing local spatial transformations and planning strategies. This is followed by a methodology section that presents the tool used, the design and dissemination of the questionnaire, as well as detailing how the data were processed. The results section will address the outcomes of the questionnaire, with an emphasis on the criteria that were used to evaluate the effectiveness of the tool: the number and diversity of participants, the quantity and quality of the mapping data, and the other collected information. More specific criteria to evaluate the tool are directly related to the subquestions: first, whether it could give insights into perceptions and data other than the 'official heritage' mapped by the authorities; second, whether the tool helped the respondents in identifying official heritage; and third, whether it helps in identifying a relation between different groups of the population and their inputs. The final section discusses the last criterion to evaluate the tool, that is, to what degree this information can be used for planning purposes.

The questionnaire results presented in this paper were used in a later phase of the research (during four co-design workshops), where citizens and other stakeholders were invited to develop design proposals focused on cultural landscape valorisation and slow tourism development (Ducci et al., in press).

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