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Editorial

Landscapes at Risk: Social Capital Assets in the COVID-Scape Climate

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1. Introduction

Up until the current pandemic, the terms "urban-scape" and "human-scape" have been meant, assumed, and practised as parallel dimensions of in territorial analysis, marginalising our knowledge about and evaluation of landscape risk [1–12]. This has always been associated, and often confused, with diverse forms of environmental risk, despite the fact that they both represent some of the most important components of risk, but not its essence [13,14].

The relationship between social capital and landscape deserves to be examined and represented in its entirety: as a matter of fact, while social capital has mainly been considered in terms of its material, functional, economic [15–20], and ethical dimensions, landscapes have been examined in terms of their perceptual, psychological, cultural, and aesthetic dimensions [21–28].

Significant attempts to define the strong relationship between capital and landscape have been conducted in the field of the "real estate-scape"—the asset of real estate capital, indeed, shows the relationship between a monetary measurement (price) and an articulated and complex qualitative essence, which represents all of the attributes the market price is associated with [29–34].

Sudden and widespread environmental fluctuations, such as the one created by the current pandemic, significantly influence the relationship between the two main existential dimensions of settled communities—social capital and landscape—and their possible representations by means of their economic–monetary dimension as well [35–38].

In view of a possible renewal of the relationship between people and the city-landscape system, highly differentiated scenarios of new territorial arrangements could unfold.

The ultimate aim of this territory renewal process, by virtue of the territory's institutional dimension, is to resolve the traditional opposition between our social system and the environment, according to Luhmann's macrosystemic approach [39].

From this perspective, this process should favour a renewed relationship between territorial attractors (dense areas and major cities) and environmental hindrances—the neglected parts of rural and state-owned territory, which are the main cause of environmental threats.

2. The Special Issue—Landscapes at Risk: Social Capital Assets in the COVID-Scape Climate

This volume presents studies on the nature of the conflict between some specific functions of the economic sub-system and landscape quality and the possibility of overcoming this conflict, with specific references to the main criticalities already present before the pandemic and to the possibility—prefigured by new restraints—of rebuilding the two sides' connections in order to reduce landscape risk. However its aspects may be articulated (natural/artificial, geological, agricultural, urban, industrial, archaeological, etc.), the landscape has an essential matrix built upon it being the "shape of the territory" and, as such, a "recognisable essence in the sphere of intentional perception". Therefore, landscape risk

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consists of the possible loosening or dissolution of this structural unity, due to the driving force of a non-integrated development of the territory.

The topic of landscape risk has been investigated at the territorial and urban scale. On a territorial scale, research has been conducted that pursues different aims: the identification of thematic maps and indices, as in the case of the Italian inland areas of Sicily, in Trovato and Nasca (List of Contribution, 1), and Sardinia, in Monsù Scolaro and Cappello (List of Contribution, 2); the identification of tools to support analyses and evaluations carried out for the planning of interventions to combat the progressive spread of buildings in rural areas, as in the case of Noto (Italy), with the identification of an index to assess Sicily's performance in terms of economic, social, and environmental sustainability, in Minioto et al. (List of Contribution, 3); the relative risk of COVID-19, considered using an integrated assessment method based on the Choquet Integral (CI) mathematical framework and on a Multi-Attribute Ideal-Real Comparative Analysis (MAIRCA), in Sica et al. (List of Contribution, 4); an analysis of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and the Russian–Ukrainian conflict on the agricultural sector and land uses in the European Union, in Pereira Domingues Martinho (List of Contribution, 5); the construction of a participatory decision-making approach for the selection of shared valorisation strategies for the terraced cultural landscapes of the Costa Viola (Italy), in Della Spina et al. (List of Contribution, 6); the creation of an integrated tool, the Heuristic Planning Support System (HPSS), aimed at exploring green–blue strategies for the historical neighbourhood of the Borgata di Santa Lucia in Syracuse (Italy), in Trovato and Cappello (List of Contribution, 7); the identification of a methodological approach to support public administrators and private investors, based on an optimization algorithm intended to reduce the gap between the costs estimated by technical experts and actual costs, in Tajani et al. (List of Contribution, 8). On an urban scale, landscape risk has been used in research proposals to promote innovation in the planning processes established to mitigate the effects of the pandemic and to reduce peoples' exposure to future risks.

Interesting research by Han et al. (List of Contribution, 9) analysed the processes of "gentrification" and "degentrification" in the Itaewon area in South Korea by means of a semantic network analysis. A literature review on the importance of the human landscape, highlighting how human, social capital, and liveability issues can guide the debate on urban development prospects in the post COVID-19 era, is presented in Cilliers et al. (List of Contribution, 10).

Some scholars have proposed tactical urbanism interventions as a tool for urban regeneration, as in Rossitti et al. (List of Contribution, 11); others have established new key indicators of digitization to enable the measurement of digital transition sustainability in urban planning, as in the paper of Canesi and Marella (List of Contribution, 12).

Furthermore, on an urban scale, Gabrielli et al. have measured the effects of the pandemic and the Russian–Ukrainian conflict on the housing market in Northern Italy using a random forest feature importance analysis and a multivariate regression (List of Contribution, 13), while Castro Noblejas et al. have measured the economic impact of the perceived landscape on the prices of single-family houses in an urban Spanish Mediterranean area (Marbella) (List of Contribution, 14).

The topic of landscape risk was also analysed from the perspective of the financial measures implemented by governments to overcome the crises of the pandemic, the Russian–Ukrainian conflict, and climate change. From this perspective, Gotta et al. have proposed an approach that uses economic and energy assessments as a tool for evaluating policies from public and private perspectives in the context of the funding package "Superbonus 110%", established by the Italian government for energy retrofitting (List of Contribution, 15). Barbaro and Napoli proposed a comparative analysis between Italy and Spain on their adoption of European standards within their energy communities and financial tools (List of Contribution, 16). Pereira Domingues Martinho analysed the effects of external shocks on financing to promote GDP (gross domestic product) convergence based on panel data approaches and convergence theory (List of Contribution, 17).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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