The difference between geographical and cultural landscapes consists in the perception that one has of “visual appearance” in the former and “integrated visual appearance” in the latter. When viewed in terms of mere “visual appearance”, landscapes are composed of variegated, diversified human aspects, whereas when perceived in terms of “integrated visual appearance” landscapes are configured as a set of signs which make reference to ideals, values and intellectual experiences. In geographical landscapes, external reality appears as a complex of objective forms which release input to the observer giving rise to perception, representation and, ultimately, knowledge. The representation of cultural landscapes, instead, derives from the observer’s intellectual and spiritual heritage which, in contact with external reality, attributes symbols and meanings to these places: the representation of a landscape becomes a representation of the observer’s projections and is configured as the very core of the strict relationship between the observer and reality (Andreotti, 1996).

The essence of cultural landscapes is enveloped in what might be termed as “com-sense” between the observer and the place; the very etymology of the term provides a definition: *cum-sentire*, that sense of com-participation which gives rise to pathos, participation, emotion and identification thus creating cultural landscapes, that is those places which, through observation, personal experiences or especially historical-artistic-literary cognition, reveals knowledge or is proposed as a tool of enrichment (Andreotti, 2002, p. 102).

Such a train of thought, therefore, leads to recognition of the fact that the mere presence of cultural traces in various landscapes is not sufficient to render these landscapes cultural landscapes, only those steeped in symbolism which give rise to emotions and produce new images of reality may be defined as such.

The Phlegraean Field are an example of a landscape which, in the past, generated emotions filtered by the observer’s intellectual and spiritual knowledge, enriched the souls of those coming into contact with it and produced knowledge which was essentially reported.

The many descriptions and the abundant travel reports written by the numerous visitors who experienced the myth of this places are living testimony, useful for geographical research, because the perception that these past travellers had of the Phlegraean Fields provides a different interpretation of the area inasmuch as it originates in other literary traditions, other viewpoints, other manners of perception capable of rediscovering and recuperating, where possible, long lost environmental and cultural contexts which have been customarily neglected, devastated by anthropic pressure or which have become imperceptible even to those who have lived their entire lives in the Phlegraean area.

The geography of perception provides an explanation as to how the creation of the image of a place is conditioned by “the observer’s direct perception of the place, his cultural formation and complex of pre-existing codified images which contribute to altering the significance of the information coming from the outside” (Scaramellini, 1993, p.38).

For this reason, the image of reality as viewed by one who lives within this reality is very different from the same image as viewed by a visitor. In other words, if subjective interpretation can be considered an instrument of revelation of geographic space, then better research of the cultural and natural ambient is facilitated because acknowledgement is given to the fact that one reality may be perceived in different ways based upon whether the viewer is a local resident or a visitor to the area.

Today, the different perspectives of those who enjoy the territory’s resources - be they insiders or outsiders - have become complementary keys of interpretation, indispensable for any examination of the reality at hand. Thus, a scan of the Phlegraean landscape was undertaken which, in highlighting the natural and cultural heritage of the area, may contribute to identifying the most urgent issues, based upon the degree of the area’s *fame*, the manner in
which fruition takes place and opportunities for preservation. Fame, fruition and preservation are three types of “indicators” useful, in this case, to determine the importance the identifying components have had and continue to have on the structure of the Phlegraean landscape as well as to comprehend if the community has left its own distinguishing marks to characterise the environment and if it has taken root with that “sense of belonging” which allows individuals to identify themselves with a “place” thus perpetuating the continuity of historical identity and the promotion of interesting social and cultural events (Mautone, 1999).

The fame this area enjoyed in the past is very well known. The Phlegraean Fields were an obligatory stop for travellers visiting Naples who felt the fascinating call of ancient times as described by Greek and Latin poets or who were intrigued by the particular volcanic phenomena of the gulf of Pozzuoli or wanted to experience the famous thermal properties of Phlegraean sulphured waters. Some of these areas were favoured by cultured European tourists and became an important cultural stop for Grand Tour travellers (Fino, 1993). Factors which contributed to the diffusion of the Phlegraean myth were, initially, the thriving thermal business and emergence of a large archaeological area – brought to light by the formation of Monte Nuovo in 1538 which resulted in the collapse of the surrounding area -, subsequently, the renewed volcanic activity of Vesuvius, the rediscovery of nearby Paestum, the beginning of the excavations of Herculaneum and Pompeii and, ultimately, romantic sensitivity gloried and meditated upon the exotic views of the Serapide temple, the ancient slaughterhouse, the Amphitheatre, the temples of Venus, Mercury and Diana in Baia, the Lucrino and Averno Lakes.

Following the Second World War, the area underwent further drastic changes and today only a few places retain any semblance of their ancient evocative spirit – Capo Miseno, some areas of Bacoli and Baia, the Averno Lake – which, while bearing isolated witness to a glorious past, remain almost unintelligible owing to the disappearance of their original context.

The mythical natural, almost "lunar" landscape of the Phlegraean Fields (T.C.I., 1976) has significantly changed during the last fifty years: the contained and gradual expansion of the original towns was transformed into a mad race to urbanise, first along the coastline and subsequently within the interior, where settlements of densely concentrated small villas on minimal lots alternate with building complexes, obliterating any trace of the previous ambient. Based upon an analysis of recent demographic data of the four previously cited towns (Bacoli, Monte di Procida, Pozzuoli and Quarto), there has been rapid growth in the number of inhabitants and houses which, in the past few years, has lead to a veritable process of hyper-urbanisation: 161,000 inhabitants are concentrated in a territory of about 75km2 with an increment of 60% as compared to the seventies. The most significant demographic dynamics regard the town of Pozzuoli: considered the core of the entire Phlegraean area, and, especially during the seventies, the “vivacity” of this town was tied to numerous and various events associated with a resurgence of volcanic activity and the subsequent evacuation of the historical centre. As compared to Pozzuoli, the demographic growth of Monte di Procida was much slower, probably owing to the town’s restricted surface, which has gradually become saturated. Quarto is noteworthy inasmuch as, a twofold increase in population during the seventies was followed by an increment of almost 63% in population during the eighties. Although the demographic growth rate has slowed over the past few years, the town is now considered a district of Naples.

Same tendencies are also evident in the data related to settlement pressure, the number of buildings almost doubled in the twenty year period between 1971-1991, from approximately 25,000 in 1971 to almost 48,000 in 1991 with a corresponding increase in population density of 85%.

Therefore, the most recent anthropic expansion not only obstructed any form of revaluation of the Phlegraean area but also inhibited the preservation of its natural and cultural heritage, whose unique tradition made it one of the most priceless heritages in Italy and in the world. On one hand, owing to the frequently illegal construction of buildings primarily intended for tourists, most of whom from Naples, there was no need for certain services and infrastructures which were available in the nearby metropolitan area; this phenomenon not only effectively invalidated any utility that might have derived from the presence of those services in the Phlegraean territory, but also completely blocked the provision of these
services. On the other hand, these same buildings were occupied by families who, choosing to reside permanently in the Phlegraean area, completely halted any sort of initiative which might have been brought forth to awaken dormant interest in the Phlegraean area.

Despite the extraordinary number of emergences in the area, the fruition is absolutely minimal as compared to the strong potential of environmental, cultural, seaside and thermal resources in the area which could take advantage of the echoes of fame and myth praised by poets and writers, intellectuals and travellers. Moreover, the very difficulties encountered in obtaining statistical data, useful to the understanding the degree of fruition of this heritage, eloquently reveal the scarce attention attributed to local resources: the objective complications involved in recording the number of visitors to any given area which is not fenced or controlled at the entrances, and the lack of any tradition in the gathering of data in the tourism sector have resulted in precise statistical inquiries giving way to direct observation and the perception of this area by inhabitants. Over the past five years, there has been a 73% increase in the number of visitors to the Flavius Amphitheatre in Pozzuoli, the archaeological Park of Cuma, the Baths of Baia, and moderate (27%) growth in the number of visitors (125,000/year) to the Solfatara. This increase is not to be attributed to any local tourism re-qualification programme, but rather to a series of locally promoted cultural initiatives sponsored by provincial public agencies and private organisations which have heightened awareness of a local demand. This demand has always been distinguished by excursionary characteristics so much so that, for the most part, the area is generally crowded in the months of April and May, that is in those months generally typified by large numbers of school groups or groups connected to particular initiatives such as “Maggio dei monumenti”, which never directly involve the Phlegraean area.

The other factor of potential development for the Phlegraean area are the thermal resources which few other regions of Italy can boast: however, of the many thermal resources located in Agnano, Bagnoli, Pozzuoli and Bacoli, only three are active thermal resorts, different in terms of typology and accommodation capacity (Terme Puteolane; Terme of Ager; “Stufe di Nerone”). The majority of these thermal springs lack supporting infrastructure which could contribute to enhancing development and transforming what is, at present, an exclusively therapeutic use into therapeutic use and tourism. However, even in this situation, it was impossible to gather data related to use of thermal resources because, within a territorial context characterized by so many landscape and cultural emergences, it is difficult to distinguish the supply and the demand of general tourism from that specifically related to thermal use.

The scarce use of Phlegraean resources, whether owing to unsuccessful attempts or because the initiatives were blocked, should be interpreted as a doleful renunciation to enjoy a territory rich in natural and landscape attractions which make the Phlegraean Fields a veritable “outdoor museum”. Today, however, these resources are only partially intelligible because they have been obscured by problems tied to savage and devastating construction on one hand and pollution of the sea and lake waters on the other. Above all, management of the remaining resources has been complicated by the chaotic expansion of the modern towns which occurred over the past fifty years: the creation of industrial areas along the Phlegraean coastline, weak controls over the realisation and search for new spaces dedicated to the expansion of the near Neapolitan metropolis have allowed that settlements, lacking in primary services and irrationally distributed on the territory, frequently occupied, in an unlawful manner, the bottoms of craters and agricultural lands.

This wide-spread urban texture has almost completely supplanted the robust weave of cultural resources and bears relevant witness to the loss of place identity on the part of local communities. No longer having a sense of self recognition, these communities now have a darkened perception of this exceptional heritage which prohibits them from taking advantage of this opportunity for social and economic growth. This inability to identify themselves in this precious natural and cultural heritage, which bears witness to a collective historical memory, has led the local communities to display a generalised, weak interest in this heritage as well as creating numerous shortfalls in the use of these resources: the Archaeological Museum of the Phlegraean Fields located in the Aragon Castle of Baia is the area’s only active museum, and even this is only partially active; the Acropolis of Cuma, and the Temple of Neptune are some of the cultural sites unavailable to the public because they are, in part or
totally, private property; the Roman Crypt, Cocceio’s Grotto and the underground network of tunnels extending between Pozzuoli and Cuma are continually inaccessible as is Apollo’s Temple on the Averno Lake owing to an extended period of restoration; the submerged archaeological area of Baia has never been sufficiently appreciated. Rare and precious exceptions are, apart from the Astroni and Solfatara craters both of which are enclosed areas with controlled admittance, the Montenuovo Oasis now a natural oasis, and the monumental Park of Baia which, after years, has once again opened to the public as a protected WWF oasis.

The lack of awareness of instruments useful to re-evaluating the territory and the scarce interest of the local administrations, which do not enjoy state support, have prevented local communities from preserving the fame of these places and favouring utilisation of this patrimony. More telling still, the Phlegraean area has no need to “invent” a tourist area built on the exploitation of a one and only resource with a complex of infrastructures and services in order to provide a vocation of tourism – as has occurred in other places. In order to give new life to emotions made dormant by years of a weak, or total absence of attention to the historical memory of the Phlegraean landscape, it would suffice simply to confer an “evocative force”, that is a capacity to awaken the attention of individuals (Tommasini, 1994). Because the primary role of emotion is to guide the individual to perception, the identification and comprehension of symbols which constitute the landscape in order to subsequently understand the significance and hence acquire the underlying values.

This is one of the objectives that the recent landscape tutelage or preservation policies seem to privilege, based upon a three point system of society, space and time and the ensuing production of signs, symbols and values which, if well imprinted upon the territory, could become an important capital to invest, (Mautone, 1999). This requires fundamental interventions of development and capitalization, the result of a concerted effort of intellectual and operative forces aimed at a common objective of transmitting the historical memory of the community through tutelage of the landscape.

In the complexity of the Phlegraean area, the precious cultural background of historical relational sedimentation transpires in which numerous cultural stratifications, the dynamism and the fluidity of relations rooted in the territory, the intensive use of which has been perpetuated during the course of history, render this patrimony of values all the more complex (Frallicciardi, Mautone, 1999) and the implementation of a valid policy of tutelage and promotion all the more urgent. From this prospective, the creation of the regional Park of the Phlegraean Fields certainly constituted a big step forward in the pursuit, on a regional and national level, of some of the objectives of the sustainability -as the preservation and re-qualification of natural resources, the rational use of the heritage of environmental and cultural resources, tutelage of the memory of these places-, all the more praise worthy if consideration is given to the fact that this initiative was undertaken within the territorial context of the Naples metropolitan area which, by definition, is absolutely unfavourable and “untenable”. What should be highlighted is that the institution of this protected area, in addition to facilitating the overall development and capitalisation of the articulated Phlegraean territory, currently also represents an opportunity to exalt components present in the landscape, so renown in the past and presently characterised by low levels of utilisation.

In the tutelage programs, one third of the selected “indicators” denote the degree of identification of the natural and cultural aspects of the Phlegraean Fields; consideration should be given to the fact that in addition to its natural attributes, this park is also endowed with a noteworthy cultural heritage represented by manifestations that bear witness to the historical relationship between man and nature. The ensuing milieu is the projection of a specific and complex identity, expression of the various forms and manners in which the territory was used - centres, ways of life, social structures, the organisation of work – which were stratified over time and may perhaps be more easily interpreted within the limits of tutelage. Here, the roots of heritage and identity, although obscured, have nonetheless been maintained in an almost unaltered state, from which the force necessary to confer upon the local milieu innovative potential capable of projection beyond its own framework in order to achieve the objectives of sustainability.

In addition to being part of the final objectives, the safeguarding and conservation of the cultural, historical, archaeological and landscape heritage of the park area are also among the
instituting principals of the European community and the primary objective of all the programme documents from the IV Action Programme for EU Environment to the European Landscape Convention signed in Florence in 2000. The subject of conservation of environmental, historical and cultural heritage constitutes the strategic objective towards which it is necessary to strive in order to guarantee sustainable management of the territory’s resources which serve as catalysts for reinforcing cultural identity and social cohesion, and, concurrently, as a resource for cultural and economic development.

The great potential of the conspicuous natural and cultural heritage of the Phlegraean Fields is such that, especially over the past few years, this area has been included in tutelage and development programs, which have been implemented in various manners and have had diverse degrees of effectiveness. The “Territorial Landscape Plans” have been frequently contested by administrations as well as by citizens with the accusation of having produced, over time, an ambiguous distinction between the areas subjected to legal restrictions. The “Territorial Agreements”, approved by the town councils of Bacoli, Monte di Procida, Pozzuoli and Quarto, were established in order to promote harmonious development of natural and human resources and to place the Phlegraean territory within a global setting in the market economy. These agreements opened a timid phase of co-operation which utilise available local resources, binding and committing the operations of all the political and social forces involved to the achievement of common objectives; the premises upon which these agreements are based range from a focus on the social needs of the territory to the development of local environmental vocations and includes a commitment, at least on paper, to transform, in accordance with appropriate choices, elements of the various areas into factors of growth and resources. The will to take action regarding the needs of the local populace, while rendering the populace active and not merely assisted, is in itself a tool of cohesion with the endogenous forces and was indicated as the focal point of the intervention strategy called for in the Territorial Agreements. Today, the possibility of involving local subjects in control policies, intervention and tutelage of territory translates into modern programs of governance, and a concerted effort of endogenous forces and integrated management directed at safeguarding and intervention in specific areas but always within the context of a vaster program of territorial and landscape planning.

Even the European Landscape Convention is squarely placed within this perspective: this marks an important cultural passage in the evolution of the concept of town wellbeing, because it involves overall attention to the territory and those values closely tied to the contribution deriving from human activities which have characterised the territory in space and time and place central emphasis on man with his environment of life and landscape. The Convention promotes innovative processes for tutelage as well as some recommendations aimed legal recognition of the landscape as the context within which the life of the population is conducted and as an expression of the cultural heritage and foundation of identity; to start procedures of participation of the public, local and regional authorities, and all other parties involved in the various aspects in landscape planning: to integrate the landscape in territorial and urban transformation policies as well as those of a cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic character, and in other policies which might have a direct or indirect incidence on the landscape.

In accordance with the Convention, multidisciplinary actions experimented as of early 2002 with the Regional Operational Plan (ROP) which, in light of a gradual modernisation of programming cycles and territorial management, aims to involve the local population in assuming responsibility for the environment in which they live has been extended to a regional scale. The ROP strategy towards Axis II Cultural Resources, which include 6 “Great Attractions”- the Phlegraean Fields, the Certosa of Padula, the city of Naples, Paestum and Velia, Pompeii and Herculaneum, and the Royal Palace of Caserta -, is finalized at the development of a vast cultural and environmental regional heritage in order to attain objectives of economic and productive development in the sectors of recuperation, restoration, local craft work, services and tourism. Specifically, the reference development model is aimed at creating those conditions which will have permanent effects on the territory in terms of heritage management, employment and industrial development, and also calls for the participation of private capital in order to ensure the safeguarding and development of the local assets. The ROP favours integrated projecting as a tool of involvement of a vast
in institutional partnership with the aim of realising a complex of articulated interventions needed to develop, over the course of time, cultural heritage in interaction with other developing ROP such as the ecological net, tourism and the city axis.

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