

# Local spatial planning versus UNESCO WHL Management Plans: a comparison of two cases in Sicily

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## **Abstract**

This paper aims to investigate the relationship between tourism and planning in UNESCO World Heritage List (WHL) sites, with special reference to the relation between Management Plans and other (local and regional) planning instruments and policies able to influence the promotion of sustainable and responsible development. This will be explored through a confrontation between two important tourist locations in Sicily: Agrigento (the Valley of the Temples) and the Aeolian Islands, which have both been recognized as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. The analysis of these case studies will point out the challenge of integrating different management and planning regimes – which mainly refer to a performative model – in a (still) very conformative planning system. The article will show how supranational policies often lose their efficacy in relation to regional and local planning systems, being in opposition to such systems. The selection of the two Sicilian case studies is particularly appropriate under this perspective, as they represent significant or even extreme examples of the gap between the supranational performative approach of the UNESCO WHL MP model and the conformative nature of the Sicilian planning system; this is due to the different nature and characteristics of the Sicilian planning law and regulations and the UNESCO WHL MP guidelines.

The comparison, proposed in the paper, will explore the influence and mutual relationships between the two UNESCO sites and the planning instruments and policies. The main questions of the paper are: In which way the above mentioned framework of planning instruments takes into account the UNESCO sites? What is the role of planning instruments and policies to facilitate integration and reconciliation? Which are the strategies implemented by the planning system and its regulations in order to manage and improve the tourist flows, according to a sustainable planning approach? On the other hand, does the UNESCO heritage label (and its related policies and management plans) guarantee international and global control over local changes and planning decisions?

The paper will underline how the interrelation among the WHL MP and other (local and regional) plans is on the one hand necessary and on the other hand problematic, due to the diversity of planning systems in each country. Consequently, the paper will consider the legal implications for local planning systems due to the fact that each national and local reality has to spot the most adequate configuration for WHL MP, in the light of existing laws and specific cases. The paper will also show the difficult integration between planning instruments operating in the same area, but managed by different actors, with different time schedules, resources and law effectiveness.

## **1. Introduction**

This article aims to investigate the relationship between tourism and planning in UNESCO World Heritage List (WHL) sites. Its focus is the relationship between WHL Management Plans (MP) and other (local and regional) planning instruments and policies able to influence the promotion of sustainable and responsible development. This will be explored through two case studies of important tourist locations in Sicily: Agrigento (the Valley of the Temples) and the Aeolian Islands. Both have been recognized as World Heritage Sites by UNESCO. The analysis of these case studies will point out the challenge of integrating different management and planning regimes – which mainly refer to a performative model – in a (still) very conformative planning system (these terms

will be explained in the next section of the article). The article will show how supranational policies often lose their efficacy in relation to regional and local planning systems, being in opposition to such systems. The selection of the two Sicilian case studies is particularly appropriate under this perspective, as they represent significant or even extreme examples of the gap between the supranational performative approach of the UNESCO WHL MP model and the conformance nature of the Sicilian planning system; at the same time, the Agrigento Valley of Temples and the Aeolian Islands present differences which are both helpful to highlight difficulties in the use of standard procedures and guidelines for local contexts and specific purposes.

Some introductory remarks on the role and impact of the UNESCO WHL on tourism economy (and its features) are necessary. The aim of UNESCO is not only the preservation of places declared as human heritage sites. The macro-objectives to be achieved by means of the WHL also include international peace and security and the improvement of quality of life (UNESCO, 1972). Within these macro-objectives, sustainable development and sustainable forms of tourism and fruition are the central (Pedersen, 2002; UNESCO, 2005). It remains questionable whether the aims and targets of the UNESCO WHL are automatically, and everywhere, congruent with the workings of the tourism sector.

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (World Heritage Convention), adopted by the General Conference of UNESCO in 1972, established a unique international instrument that recognizes and protects both the cultural and the natural heritage of outstanding universal value (UNESCO, 1972). Through these systems of protection, WHL contributes to sustainable local and regional development (Rössler, 2006). Most nations are certainly interested in promoting monuments and sites for the WHL in order to improve prestige and economic growth in the form of tourism: a country obtaining a place on the WHL can be compared to a restaurant receiving a Michelin star (Brattli, 2009, p. 37). A large literature shows how tourism benefits from the UNESCO WHL label. Yet, simultaneously, UNESCO promotes awareness of world heritage sites and advocates principles of sustainable tourism (Drost, 1996; Evans, 1999; Jones and Munday, 2001; Lyon, 2007). This raises important questions. Yet, the implicit assumption that UNESCO WHL 'automatically' promotes sustainable development and sustainable forms of tourism is questionable.

Brattli (2009) suggests that the use of a common world cultural heritage – in an actor-network context where multiple and even conflictive interests take place – has first and foremost a rhetorical purpose. For example, Di Giovine (2009a) highlights the convergence between a concern for heritage and the concerns of the global tourism industry, linking the obsession with authenticity endemic in tourism with the complex issue of "authentic" heritage site preservation. The rhetorical purpose of the UNESCO label is evident in the 'sustainable' attribution which is often awarded to all the tourist activities which are developed in the UNESCO sites, notwithstanding the nature and impacts of each activity or initiative.

Therefore, if the convergence of the targets of the 1972 UNESCO Convention and the WHL with tourist activities promoted at local or global level are not taken for granted, what is the role of planning instruments and policies to facilitate integration and reconciliation? Which are the strategies implemented by the planning system in order to manage and improve the tourist flows, according to a sustainable planning approach? On the other hand, does the UNESCO heritage label (and its related policies and management plans) guarantee international and global control over local changes and planning decisions?

## **2. Preservation versus (tourism) development: the contested role of the WHL Management Plan**

Potential conflicts between sites' preservation and development have gradually become objects of attention for UNESCO, with an increasing focus on management as a solution (UNESCO, 2002 and 2005). In order to outline the importance of proper heritage management, in 2002 the WH

Committee adopted the Budapest Declaration<sup>1</sup> where Member States are invited to support the protection of heritage, trying to assure a proper balance among preservation, sustainability and development. The general strategy of the Management Plans (MPs) is based on the conservation of listed sites for future generations, thus applying the sustainability principle to the management of cultural heritage. It is compulsory to submit the MP for new sites entering the list. This plan is then extended to all sites, included those already inscribed. The Convention requires the governments to encourage MP preparation for all the WHL sites, including older WHL sites, which had no MP, (Blandford, 2006, p. 356). Such obligation has been strengthened after the negative experiences in some cases, at world level, because of the lack of adequate management systems.

Consequently, the submission of a MP has been a prerequisite of WHL inscription, in order to guarantee an effective and efficient work of goods' protection and management. The MP is intended to specifically reveal how possible conflicts can be solved and how conservation of a candidate site will be managed, administered and monitored in the future (Blandford, 2006, p. 356). The MP is not only involved in the protection of goods\objects, but also in their management as one of the several targets to achieve is the integration of the management of protected goods to the life of the economic and social community they belong to (Solar, 2003).

When the good is not protected or managed according to the established terms and when the state does not have to solve a problem or cannot solve a problem, the Convention establishes the possibility to remove such item from the List, depriving it of the title of Outstanding Universal Value (OUV); to this end, there are provisions regarding regular inspections<sup>2</sup>. The UNESCO World Heritage Committee, in considering site nominations, has put increasing emphasis on the requirement for MPs as a "vital long-term framework for the ongoing management and conservation of the OUV of sites" (Blandford, 2006, p. 356). Thus, UNESCO avoids a position where countries which do not take their responsibilities seriously can undermine the system itself.

Starting from the values which led to the inscription on the UNESCO's WHL, the MP arranges a management system that carries out an integrated analysis of the site status, spots the changes in action, assesses future scenarios that can be reached through targets and possible interventions and also assesses their impact on the locality. It also chooses the strategies to attain prefixed goals and verifies their achievement using indicators which are monitored systematically. Consequently, a strategic MP leads to the formulation of projects that are incorporated into the annual work programme; many of these measures can be found in the development plans covering the sites (Lyon, 2007). The two fundamental elements in a MP are thus its strategic aspects and its operating features. The MP, as Palo (2007) states, should not be intended only as an instrument of protection and preservation as an end in itself, but should establish an effective management model for historical, cultural and natural resources. This model should also be able to address the choices on urban and economic planning for the development and enhancement of a wide area. Within this perspective, the MP represents the connection between different planning instruments and policies in order to: a. preserve over time the integrity of values leading to the registration within UNESCO's WHL; b. combine the protection and preservation through the integrated development of local economic resources such as tourism; c. involve numerous actors (even those having opposing interests) in a common and local decision-making process (Feilden and Jokilehto, 1998;

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<sup>1</sup> <http://whc.unesco.org/en/decisions/1217/>

<sup>2</sup> The basic principles representing the reference foundations for the MP in order to define its contents are: concepts of universal value, cultural and landscape system, methods of deliberative democracy, assessment and peculiar features of cultural values, model of endogenous development, local culture and its development, local tourism, collective property rights, risk analysis and integrated management. The management of a WHL site is based on a detailed analysis of its significance, which has in turn been part of the nomination procedure (Turnpenny, 2004; Lyon, 2007).

UNESCO, 2005; Blandford, 2006); for example, the MPs can address issues arising when visitor numbers and conservation demands are in conflict (Evans, 1999).

This aspect underlines how the interrelation among the MP and other (local and regional) plans is on the one hand necessary and on the other hand problematic, due to the diversity of planning systems in each country. This is also the reason why the UNESCO World Heritage Committee does not submit a single model of MP. Each national and local reality has to spot the most adequate configuration for this instrument, in the light of existing laws and specific cases (Wheatley, 1997; Pedersen, 2002; UNESCO, 2005). In our experience, this difficult relationship between supranational and local levels is to be ascribed primarily to the different, and even opposing, nature of planning models, that is performative versus conformative. Mastop and Faludi (1997, p. 820) borrowed from Barrett and Fudge (1981) the distinction between performance and conformance: “Conformance means concurrence between the original plan and changes in the outside world. Performance has to do with the way in which a strategic plan holds its own during the deliberations which follow its adoption.”

In some European countries (Italy included), plans and policies at a broader level – Provincial or Regional – treat local implementation in terms of ‘conformance’ meaning that plans (or even projects) at a local level must conform to the broader strategy of the ‘general’ plan. The main ‘nature’ of the plan is, consequently, regulatory, usually through a land-use zoning design. As stated in Janin (2008, p. 170) “in conforming planning, the capacity of shaping spatial development is indeed pursued by the attempt to impose a ‘correspondence in form, manner or character’ to development projects, and implementation is intended as ‘an action in accordance with the standards’ established by the authority”; in practice, implementation often does not occur, as shown below. This cultural, political and administrative approach is quite often extended to other super-national levels, as in the case of EU policies or in the case of UNESCO MPs. Scholarly literature (Alexander and Faludi, 1989; Mastop and Faludi, 1997; Faludi, 2000) as well as many examples highlight the limits of conforming planning. This is mainly to do with the difficulty of plan implementation in the context of ‘putting together’ (in a conforming, top-down approach) multi-level collective strategies within a growing plurality of local visions, ideas or projects of spatial development. On the other hand, the EU – and also UNESCO – has developed territorial (spatial) governance processes based on a principle of ‘performance’. In this approach, “the capacity of shaping spatial development passes rather through the opportunity of obtaining from specific projects ‘the fulfilment of what claimed, promised or requested’ by the plan. Thus implementation looks primarily at the ‘achievement’ or ‘accomplishment’ and at ‘carrying into execution’ the aims of the plan” (Janin, 2008). According to Faludi (2000, p. 300), if plans “improve the understanding of decision makers of present and futures problems they face” and help them in making sense of their situations, plans may be said to perform their role.

### **3. The WHL Management Plan and the planning system: universal versus local?**

In the case studies we will analyse, the gap between performative and conformative approach is at the base of the difficulties in the implementation of WHL management plans. However, there are also other sources of conflict, notably the general conflict between conservation and development (Tunbridge and Ashworth, 1996). This can be intertwined with the relation (potentially controversial) between universal criteria and local actions. Recent literature has shown the limits of a global perspective imposed by the UNESCO WHL criteria and procedures (Di Giovine, 2009a). Yet, the member states have to adapt their requests to the UNESCO criteria, if they want to have any chance of seeing their monuments/sites placed in the WHL. The World Heritage List and the World Heritage Committee can control and define the nature of heritage on the one hand and the limits to development on the other hand.

However, if such international regulation guarantees a global control to spot and preserve sites of extraordinary value through strict standard procedures, this “universal” control has limits. For

instance, Labadi (2007) highlights that the criteria for assessing the sites' OUV and their authenticity, have been conceptualized, explained and understood from a European perspective; analogous consideration are also pointed out by Di Giovine (2009b). Silverman and Ruggles (2007) state that universality still is subject of a complex debate, as non-Western countries have objected to the idea of universal standards externally imposed because they consider these standards as reflecting Western, rather than universal, values<sup>3</sup>.

Consider, too, the relations between procedures and contents of the WHL MP and those of local and regional planning systems. The status of World Heritage Site is a material factor in planning policy and development, and it is also material in the decision making process on planning applications affecting the sites (Lyon, 2007). But these factors are differently considered in each national context. In the UK, for instance, Blandford (2006) highlights that, although the UK planning system through designations to the WHS Tentative List acknowledges some conservation needs, these are not specific to World Heritage Sites' criteria; at the same time, there have been no specific statutory planning controls that apply to WHS. In general terms, the WHL MP is based on a model of continuous and coordinated planning where different instruments integrate and contribute to the building and sharing of choices. In different states not all planning systems comply with this model. In Italy, the National Ministry for Cultural Activities and Heritage, during the Conference held in Paestum (May 25\26, 2004), has developed and submitted a MP model<sup>4</sup> in order to show local authorities how to connect it to the reality of managing their actual sites. The Italian Law introduced the MPs of UNESCO sites through the Law February 20, 2006, n. 77 "Special measures for the protection and the fruition of Italian cultural, landscape and natural sites, inscribed on the "World Heritage List", under the protection of UNESCO". This law identifies the Advisory Commission for the management plans of UNESCO sites and local tourist systems, established at the Ministry for Cultural Activities and Heritage. The Commission approves the MPs for the WH Italian sites and ensures the contents of the different MPs proposed in relation to the sites. In reality, the MPs differ in their site nature and in their internal structure and dialogue ability with other plans.

The MP represents, within the Italian law, a flexible instrument able to create a dialogue with plans of different nature (local and regional, regulative and strategic) to guarantee the site protection and its development as a cultural and tourist resource. However, some problematic aspects emerge. The first is that the competent Ministry is the Ministry for Cultural Activities and Heritage which, in Italy, is not in charge of the land use planning. The second problem is that MPs have been basically implemented in Italy as established by UNESCO, without any compliance with the Italian planning and protection system. In fact, Italian MPs – apart from dealing with sites which widely differ in features, size and issues - are forced to tackle a planning system that is highly fragmented because of the competences and the plurality of regional planning laws. In Italy, regional planning laws are very different from each other and do not often present the flexibility required to comply with the MPs needs, as they still refer to regulatory policies and instruments and as they are far away from a more strategic, development-led approach. In such contexts, the limits of conforming, statutory planning regard the disappointing results in implementation due to the difficulty in reconciling multi-level collective strategies to a plurality of local plans or projects of spatial development (Janin, 2008, p. 168).

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<sup>3</sup> For example, Brattli (2009, p. 30) shows that "both the WHL and the World Heritage Committee function as an obligatory passage point which defines the character of the physical remains from the past (...). One has either to accept a given definition of the past and cultural heritage or to perish." Despite this, there are significant differences in the way heritage is perceived and managed.

<sup>4</sup> According to the Italian law, the MP serves two functions: guaranteeing an adequate site protection and promoting cultural activities regarding the site. The MP, in compliance with the guidelines established by the Ministry for Cultural Activities and Heritage, faces a five-year time horizon.

#### 4. Two WHL sites in Sicily

The 1978 Sicilian planning law is a blatant example of this situation. The Sicilian planning law is the earliest planning law in Italy. It basically implements the 1942 Italian legislation and structures the planning instruments governing the region with great emphasis accorded to the Master Plan, in a statutory, conformance approach. The Master Plan essentially regulates land use, focuses on the communal domain and is effective for 20 years.

The Sicilian regional planning law is inadequate as a vehicle for engaging with supranational, multi-level planning instruments whose action is rapid and flexible. Within this framework, it is difficult for UNESCO MPs to work as effective instruments of promotion and preservation. Under such conditions, the WHL MPs do not either work as guidelines for the master plan or become instruments able to structure what is developed and decided in other plans. Thus, the gap – as described in the previous paragraphs – between different plans and planning levels, and the consequent difficulties of getting agencies responsible for different kinds of plans to work together, does often occur.

Sicily includes five sites inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List:

- The Archaeological Area of Agrigento (1997)
- Villa Romana del Casale, Piazza Armerina (1997)
- The Aeolian Islands (2000)
- The Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto (2002)
- Syracuse and the Rocky Necropolis of Pantalica (2005)

The sites widely differ in their nature, territorial extension and institutions involved in the management of the site inscribed on the WHL; such a phenomenon does not only concern Sicily, since during the 1990s the interpretation of World Heritage has evolved to a great extent. Consequently, a series of places, sites and landscapes have been included on the UNESCO WHL (Rössler, 2006). Thus in Sicily we find: single monuments such as the Villa Romana del Casale in Piazza Armerina; complex and widespread urban systems, such as the Baroque Towns of the Val di Noto; large sites of extraordinary environmental value, such as the archipelago of the Aeolian Islands; sites of historical and archaeological value such as Syracuse and the Rocky Necropolis of Pantalica as well as the Archaeological Area of Agrigento.

In order to highlight the technical, political and structural factors which make the implementation of WHL MPs problematic in their local application, we will mainly focus on two regional sites: the Aeolian Islands and the Valley of the Temples of Agrigento. The reasons behind this choice are numerous and based on three fundamental issues:

- The timing and status of the two MPs
- The significance and peculiarities of the two tourist areas
- The different features of the two UNESCO sites

With regard to the first aspect, the two chosen sites are the only ones in Sicily to present an approved and operating MP for a long enough period to allow an analysis of the effective impacts of this instrument on the same sites and on tourism within them.

As far as the second aspect is concerned, the two areas are considerably different, but, at the same time, need to address the flows and the tourist offer towards sustainable and responsible tourism. The Aeolian Islands represent a landmark for regional tourism; despite the efforts made to “extend the season”, the archipelago is still marked by a huge summer presence and a high offer that, even if well-structured and of good quality, threatens its valuable environmental system. On the other hand, although it is one of the most visited, the tourist area of the “Valley of the Temples” is among those less seasonally adjusted in the region and registers a weak hotel-booking demand that is under the regional average. Finally, both the sites are places where the conflict between preservation and development is very strong and even dramatic.

The third reason behind the choice is based on the considerable structural difference between the two sites: the first is an archipelago inscribed on the WHL for its unique natural and environmental

features; the second is an archaeological site of world importance. Clearly, two sites so different need preservation and promotion strategies that are different, but both aim to increase and change tourism as well as the conflict between preservation and development. At the end, the choice of two such different cases allows us to address various issues and aspects of the implementation of WHL MP in scenarios of potential conflicts such as:

- The Aeolian archipelago and the conflict between mass tourism and sustainability of site;
- The “Valley of Temples” of Agrigento and the conflicts between development and the preservation of heritage landscape.

Despite these differences, both cases show a remarkable gap between the performative model at the core of the WHL MP and the conformative model of the local and regional planning systems in implementing a sustainable policy for tourism development. Such a gap is not just peculiar to the Sicilian region, but can be easily identifiable – in a worldwide review – in other contexts. Currently, this entails that the MPs become passive instruments, only able to implement the actions promoted by other planning instruments; when this occurs, their role in promoting sustainable tourism development is weak if not questionable.

## **5. The Valley of the Temples of Agrigento**

In 1997 UNESCO acknowledged the value of the “Valley of the Temples” and declared it as “heritage of Humanity”. UNESCO explained its choice by stating that the area is universally acknowledged for its historical value and it also highlighted that the area is a tangible evidence of a lost civilization thanks to its buildings and the agricultural landscape in which it is inserted<sup>5</sup>. At the time of the site inscription on the WHL, the MP was not compulsory, so the site has been exclusively regulated until 2005 by the Archaeological and Landscape Park Plan of the “Valley of the Temples” (FIG. 1).

The areas identified by UNESCO are relative to the Core area that coincides with the A zone, the most protected in the Archaeological and Landscape Park of the “Valley of the Temples” which manages the site. This area extends over 1,440 hectares and is characterized by the presence of anthropic and infrastructural structures representing the heritage of a period (from the ‘50s up to the ‘80s) when the building industry has strongly affected the development of Agrigento (FIG. 2a and 2b) destroying its original bond with the archaeological site and the landscape (Rossi Doria, 2002). The history of the city of Agrigento and its development models have become paradigmatic for the history of Italian urban planning in particular because of the clash between property speculation and heritage of the Greek settlement situated at the edge of the modern built-up area. The contrast became evident and even dramatic with the 1966 landslide at Agrigento, representing a sort of divide in the environmental sensibility of Italian urban planning (Martuscelli, 1966). In an attempt to stop the massive land speculation and the urban sprawl, around the Core area, and to testify to the importance of the Valley of the Temples, a wide Buffer Zone was established; it coincides, once again, with the perimeter of the Archaeological and Landscape Park of the Valley of the Temples (Campioni & Ferrara, 2005).

### **5.1 Main features and problems of tourism in the area**

The Valley of the Temples is one of the most popular destinations of the Sicilian tourist offer. In recent years, the site has registered a presence of about 600,000 visitors (an average of 632,539 between 2003 and 2009) and it is the second in the whole region in relation to revenue: about

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<sup>5</sup> In particular these temples are among the most impressive and best preserved of the Greek world. Agrigento has a special place among the classical sites because of the way it has preserved the original imposing site – so typical of Greek colonial settlements – very substantial remains of a group of buildings from an early period, not overlaid by later structures or converted to suit later tastes and cults (Lo Piccolo, Schilleci, Marotta, 2008).

2,500,000,00 € per year<sup>6</sup>. An analysis of the tourist presence in the decade 1999-2009 (FIG. 3) shows a considerable jump between 2001 and 2002, a year when visits more than doubled, increasing from 319,776 (2001) to 683,066 (2002). This is mainly due to a change in the area subjected to a fee payment, that was extended to the whole site<sup>7</sup>. Tourism in Agrigento is less affected by the typical problems related to fluctuations throughout the year which generally marks the tourist activities of the Sicilian region; however, there are still variations: the most busy month for the sites is August (89,592 visitors in 2009) with a daily average of 2,890 visitors, while the least crowded month is January (7,964 visitors in 2009)<sup>8</sup>. So, despite being less evident than in other places, the problem of the seasonal adjustment of tourist flows also affects Agrigento.

Data analysis of the hotel accommodation capacity shows the difficulties of getting visitors to stay in the area. The most interesting data, arising from the analysis, concern an average guests' stay, which is 2.3 days (ISTAT, Italian central statistics institute). Visitors tend to pass through Agrigento; consequently, in Agrigento, the offer of accommodation in hotels is 2,233 beds. The daily average presence, in the Valley of the Temples alone is about 1,750 tourists, with a great discontinuity during the year. Therefore, from an overall data analysis, it is evident that the tourist offer is unable to preserve tourist flows through an offer differentiation. Moreover, the presence of quality tourist facilities is very scarce: there are no five-star hotels in Agrigento, as most of them are just three-star accommodation facilities.

The main issue, arising from the analysis of tourism in Agrigento, surely concerns the low levels of take up of accommodation in the city as well as in the province (Giambalvo, 2007). In order to address this, it is necessary to carry out three convergent strategies: the improvement of general accessibility, the increase and differentiation of tourist offers in a wider area, which is rich of environmental and leisure resources<sup>9</sup>, as well as the general improvement of tourist services. Analyzing the trend of arrivals, departures and stays in Agrigento, we observe that the site has reached its maturity i.e. tourist flows tend not to increase; however, the operators' perception is that the site is largely underused (Bazzanella, 2007). The life cycle model of tourist destinations (Butler, 1980 & 2006) identifies the start up, development, maturity and finally stabilization or falling phases. This site has followed the phases of the offer's start up and consolidation; however, such process has not been guided, so it has not fully develop in proportion to its potential. The shortcomings accord with the lack of both a regional and local tourist strategy (Callea, 2007). Also significant is the conflictual relationship that the city of Agrigento has developed with the Valley of the Temples, so that, instead of being considered as a development source, it is seen as a limitation to voracious development and speculation. In fact, "The Valley of the Temples" has not always been recognized, not even by its inhabitants, as an opportunity and a development resource. The inscription on the WHL surely ratifies and certifies the exceptional nature of the site, also defining its economic role in the tourism development of the area. Yet no efficient policy has been undertaken in order to pursue this declaration, which then serves simply a rhetorical purpose.

Moreover, in Sicily, most tourism economies spill over into adjacent areas because of the incapacity of the local tourist system to keep tourists *in loco*. In Agrigento most of the visitors take organized

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<sup>6</sup> According to the data elaborated by the Department of Cultural Heritage and Environment of the Region of Sicily

<sup>7</sup> A great increase between 2001 and 2002 is due to the fact that in 2001 only the entrance to the Temple of Zeus was considered (the only one subjected to a fee payment until 2002), while starting from 2002 the whole site was taken into account.

<sup>8</sup> Data source: the Archaeological and Landscape Park of Agrigento

<sup>9</sup> With this purpose, the Sicilian Regional Law 10/2005 "Regulations on tourism development in Sicily and urgent financial measures" have been addressed to a tourist system based on "relationality" and forms of alternative accommodation, in order to add new values to the tourist offer. In Agrigento, the regional law considerably affected the redistribution of tourist flows towards extra-hotel accommodation facilities.

tours arriving by bus and leaving the same day. The “informal” tourism, despite its being less detectable than the case of the Aeolian Islands, is noticeable and considerable. Regional studies state that informal tourism in the province of Agrigento reaches a presence equal to 76,6% of the entire provincial tourism presence (Regione siciliana, 2001). The two phenomena of unauthorized building and second homes, particularly evident in this area, have allowed the offer of unofficial tourist facilities which cannot structurally increase the tourist offer, creating unfair competition if compared to regulated structures (Giambalvo, 2007).

The WHL MP, though dating back to 2005, carries out a detailed analysis of tourism in Agrigento testifying to what is said above. The MP defines as the main problem of local tourism the improvement of the general tourist offer, in order to increase the average length of stay in days. The UNESCO site’s MP also gives its opinion on the services related directly to the site, which are defined as “insufficient and qualitatively scarce”.

### 5.2 The WHL MP and its interaction with the local planning system

The analysis provided by the WHL MP pictures a situation where an important item of cultural heritage, despite attracting huge tourist flows (it is the second largest in Sicily), is not able to create tangible economic benefit for the area. The MP elaborates a SWOT analysis where some specific issues on tourism are identified:

<p><b>Strengths</b> Offer potential represented by several historical, art, cultural and natural resources in the area.</p>	<p><b>Weaknesses</b> Short average stay time and visits limited to the Temples areas. Tourists flows relatively concentrated in the summer. Current weak offer of accommodation facilities and tourism services. Low number of enterprises working in tourism.</p>
<p><b>Opportunities</b> Satisfying tourism demand on each expenditure level, increasing tourist flows within a sustainable perspective. Guaranteeing a minimum quality standard in accommodation facilities as well as in other services. Structuring a network of quality services connected to the Site attraction and able to meet the demand including toilet services, elderly and handicapped assistance, resting facilities, gadgets and souvenirs, parkings, etc. Creation of proper urban services able to support attendance peaks and guarantee a minimum level of guests assistance.</p>	<p><b>Threats</b> Impoverishment of the Valley landscape and deterioration of the preservation status of cultural heritage. Lack of integration with other tourist circuits and regional tourist offer.</p>

The MP defines, starting from the SWOT analysis, its *vision* for the Valley of the Temples, taking into particular account the Plan of the Archaeological and Landscape Park “Valley of the Temples”, approved in 2008.

The three priority targets set in the WHL MP are:

- Protection and enhancement of cultural and human heritage in an ‘extended area’ approach;
- Site usability in order to improve the accessibility and interrelation with other tourism circuits;

- The Valley of the Temples considered as a driving force of the area's economic development.

Such targets involve seven axes:

- Protection and enhancement of archaeological, historical and architectural heritage, landscape and nature;
- Site accessibility and usability promotion;
- Development of sustainable tourism;
- Promotion and communication of the site image;
- Development of other related economic activities;
- "Cultural re-appropriation" and local community involvement;
- Adaptation of knowledge, monitoring and interaction with other planning instruments.

Of particular interest is the "sustainable tourism development" axis; with regard to this, the WHL MP identifies certain indicators in order to assess the effectiveness of the actions adopted. The proposed indicators are:

- Average tourist stay (from Italy\abroad)
- Percentage of visitors' presence between October and March in relation to the whole year
- Number of current cultural itineraries
- Number of activated training courses for weaving factory operators
- Number of integrated tourist packages offered

If we look at the first two indicators, data on the average tourists' stay and the percentage of visitors' presence between October and March do not show any significant improvement in recent years, showing a low efficacy of the WHL MP in the promotion and development of tourism activities. Although most of the axes of the WHL MP relate to the tourism economy, if we look at the proposed measures, they do really appear as a series or collection of actions which were already formulated in other pre-existing planning instruments rather than as a coherent system of innovative policies. This weakness is mainly due to two factors. Firstly, the clash between the performative model of the WHL MP and the conformative nature of local plans and regulations, whose consequence is to have the WHL MP as a recipient of other plans' actions and provisions. This, paradoxically, gives as a result an 'inverse', and totally inefficient, process of conformity, which is that of the WHL MP in comparison with other local, pre-existing plans. Secondly, MPs – at least in Sicily and thus far – have not been able to generate and/or distribute economic resources as, for example, local development partnership programmes did (Lo Piccolo & Schilleci, 2005), being consequently considered as just a 'second rate' or minor opportunity in the local political agenda.

If we look at the management system and at the number and type of the various agencies involved, the WHL MP of the Agrigento Valley of the Temples works as an integration instrument of the Plan of the Archaeological and Landscape Park of the Valley of the Temples (approved in 2008), established by the regional law 20/2000. With this purpose, the Park authority is also responsible for the management of the UNESCO site.

At the same time, within the Sicilian planning system, the master plan, based on a strictly conformative model, mainly deals with land use. The time which passed between the final editing of the Master Plan (2004) and its approval (2009) represents a further problem in relation to the Management Plan (MP) role. The Management Plan should have a 5-year time horizon, but has to face a Master Plan started in 1997, completed in 2004 (one year before the MP) and effective from 2009 (one year before the MP's horizon).

In addition, even in its contents the Master Plan clashes against some principles of preservation and sustainability. For example, although around the "Park A area", area of maximum protection, we can find a Buffer Zone where the city Master Plan establishes only activities supporting agriculture, in the Park A area of the Valley of the Temples the city Master Plan establishes new roads which contrast to the Park Plan regulating the same area protected by UNESCO (Cannarozzo, 2009). Moreover, the Master Plan ignores the boundaries of the Archaeological Park A area. In this regard,

we notice a contradiction related to the UNESCO area: on the one hand, the Master Plan states that the archaeological area is one of the major resources of the region, yet on the other hand, it shows its inability to enter a dialogue with the body responsible for the site management.

Although the Master Plan agrees with some general principles of the WHL MP, it does not effectively implement any real action or policy. In fact, as said before, in the Sicilian planning system the Master Plan mainly concerns and regulates land use, leaving the action and intervention phase to other planning instruments, which are forced to conform to its guidelines and provisions. For this reason, the Master Plan has a weak interaction with the WHL MP.

For instance, in the general report, the Agrigento Master Plan aims at reducing the vehicular traffic which burdens the Valley of the Temples because of the tourist buses. In this regard, the Master Plan provides a reorganization of parking and access areas, establishing shuttle buses services to get access to the Valley of the Temples; however, the Master Plan does not provide specific answers to questions regarding the reorganization of tourist buses as well as their parking and possible integration with other tourist services. To this end, the plan includes two strategies: on the one hand, it attempts to separate the Valley of the Temples from heavy traffic flows; however, on the other hand, it does not provide a new organization of the access system, with provisions that guarantee neither the sustainability principle nor the target to develop a tourist circuit beyond the visit to the archaeological site.

The UNESCO WHL MP also has to deal with other instruments affecting the site area:

- The guidelines of the landscape territorial plan
- The general town planning scheme (Master Plan) of Agrigento
- The PIT n. 34 “Valley of the Temples” (a local development partnership programme)
- The Agrigento Area Contract (another local development partnership programme)
- Special protection systems
- The Plan for the Archaeological and Landscape Park of the Valley of the Temples

In particular, the WHL MP faces (or even clashes with) instruments of different nature as some are instruments addressed to landscape protection and others are instruments addressed to economic planning and investments distribution. This is in a context where economic planning has often a prominent role which overwhelms spatial planning, thus becoming an instrument working against the contents of regulatory land-use plans (Lo Piccolo and Schilleci, 2005).

At the same time, the WHL MP, elaborated in 2005, cannot take into account a series of instruments established after that time:

- The Strategic Plan for the city of Agrigento
- The landscape plan of the environmental context n.10: Sicilian central-southern hills

The increase in the number of planning instruments working with different aims and times does not allow the MP to elaborate effective interventions and actions. Basically, the MP has to dialogue through instruments regulating the land use and instruments offering investment strategies. However, it is neither able to address choices on the land use nor to address economic activities. Therefore, the MP has to accept and implement what has been elaborated by other planning instruments and programmes. Thus, the promotion and protection system of the UNESCO sites runs the risk of becoming another constraint for the area, without representing an added value for local economies. Moreover, it reinforces a tendency to randomly ‘cut and paste’ elements and strategies included in other plans rather than an integration among several levels and instruments starting from clear, shared and infeasible targets.

In general terms, the WHL MP recognizes in several plans a shared attitude towards the UNESCO site of the Valley of the Temples. In detail, both the Master Plan and the PIT (integrated land-use planning, which is a sort of local development partnership programme) aim to consider environmental qualities as the fundamental basis for promoting development in Agrigento; they also seek to build a system of rules and occasions to strengthen the usability and to allow the preservation and enhancement of attractions. However, beyond this statement of principle, the plans in force in the Agrigento area work in a dramatic environmental situation: the massive urban

development (legal and illegal) surrounding the Valley of the Temples (FIG. 4). Therefore, today, although the government instruments promote a protection policy, they do not propose any strategy or action able to heal the serious situation afflicting the Valley of the Temples area which has become, since the Agrigento landslide (Martuscelli, 1966) an example of the ruin caused by the Italian building sector.

In this context, most of the actions promoted by the WHL MP are the result of the systematization of actions coming from other planning instruments, in a difficult interaction between the performative attitude of the WHL MP and the non conformity of outcomes and the non implementation of local plans which are – legally and procedurally – based on a conformative model.

## **6. The Aeolian Islands Archipelago**

The Aeolian Islands were inscribed on the World Heritage List in December 2000<sup>10</sup> as natural heritage item. According to the justification for inscription on the WHL, the islands' volcanic landforms represent classic features in the studies of evolution of vulcanology world-wide<sup>11</sup>. The Aeolian archipelago represents the top of the emergent volcanic apparatus (partially active) of a submarine magmatic arc in evolution; thanks to this, the archipelago is considered as a source of primary interest by Earth Sciences.

Its natural beauties, vulcanological and geological features as well as its history witnessed by ancient writers and poets, need effective protection and heritage preservation and also policies able to conserve the integrity of the values for which the Aeolian Islands were inscribed on the WHL. The Aeolian Islands' UNESCO MP analyzes the archipelago's natural beauties and the action programmes addressed to prevent the tourist flow from undermining environmental resources in order to guarantee their long-term preservation and enhancement (FIG. 5). In other words, it aims to be considered as a project for the islands' revitalization pointing at the stimulation of sustainable development, through innovative planning. Moreover, within this perspective, we should consider certain site management actions started before the WHL MP's drafting, such as the interruption of pumice mining activities to preserve the local identity.

### ***6.1 Main features and problems of the tourist system***

The recent evolution of both economy and production show that the Aeolian Islands, based on primary industry in the past, are now connected to tourism activities. Agriculture has largely lost its economic value; with the exception of vineyards, capers and some olive groves, trees groves have been largely abandoned<sup>12</sup>. With regard to fishing, the Aeolian Islands boast a great tradition. The Aeolian fishing trawler fleet consists of about 150 boats. This allows ten fishermen cooperatives and many family units to earn their living.

The Aeolian economy is strongly based on tourism. Activities related to trade and other services represent a good source of employment. However, they are activities subjected to seasonal demand, producing critical effects on the local reception system and services. Trade, hotels and restaurants represent 45.6% of local entrepreneurship, in terms of local units' number. This is the reason why a balanced and sustainable development of the Aeolian local economy should be supported by

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<sup>10</sup> The deliberation of UNESCO was undertaken on December 2nd, 2002 in Cairns, Australia, after six years of inquiry.

<sup>11</sup> The Aeolian Islands, representing an outstanding example of ongoing volcanic activities, with their scientific study from at least the 18th Century, have provided two types of eruptions (Vulcanian and Strombolian) to vulcanology and so have featured prominently in the education of all geoscientists for over 200 years.

<sup>12</sup> The situation is different in the island of Salina, where agriculture is still present along with Malvasia wine production, which has a national and international reputation.

policies of territorial marketing aiming at the seasonal adjustment of tourist flows.

Despite an increase higher than 30% in the number of local units in these sectors, from 2003 to 2006 their relative influence, compared to the overall economic structure of the Aeolian islands, dropped in trade by 33.5% to 31.9% and in hotels and restaurants by 14.8% to 13.6% (Ruggieri, 2008). Moreover, the rate of accommodation capacity (ratio between available bed-places and resident population per 100 inhabitants) shows alarming data as from 2004 to 2005 a drop of 13 points has been registered. If in 2004 there were 38.95 bed-places available for 100 inhabitants, that in 2005 became 25.94. It is evident that the offer related to the official accommodation capacity is falling. According to Cooper et al. (2005), this shows that the tourist product has reached its maturity stage that will probably be followed by either a decline or renewal.

However, the Aeolian tourism market boasts highly respectable figures both at provincial and regional level. According to AST (Azienda di Soggiorno e Turismo - Stay and Tourism enterprise), the Aeolian Islands cover 10% of arrivals and presences registered in 2005 in the province of Messina and 2-3% of those identified at regional level the same year.

AST data do not offer an adequate description of the Aeolian tourist flows as they do not consider unofficial arrivals and presences, known as the so-called "informal" tourism. According to a recent study on 2003 tourist flows (Scaletta & Siracusa, 2004), that year the total of unregistered presences reaches 234,056, about 60% of the official figure. The calculation of the number of bed-places available daily in the market is not official (4,800) and provides a figure similar to the official one (4,870), as it would require to double the official estimates in order to reach a more realistic assessment of presences (TAB. 1). Moreover, if estimates are made of electrical energy consumption and solid urban wastes production, we observe an increase in "the quantification of the informal" with peaks at 10 times higher than official figures - an overall presence higher than one million in August 2003 in the municipality of Lipari (Parroco & Vaccina, 2005). We can also consider data concerning the number of pleasure craft units. The phenomenon is highly developed and considerably affect Aeolian tourism. From recent research, it emerges that for each official resident tourist there corresponds approximately one nautical tourist between April and September (Mendola & Ruggieri, 2005). According to the data provided by OTIE<sup>13</sup> analyzing 2007 flows, the total nautical presences are 90,720 of which 76,073 are Italian and 14,648 are foreign. This implies that the estimate of tourists grows to include approximately another 360,000 units, on the basis of an average of 4 guests per pleasure craft unit. With regard to the profile of the average tourist (official plus nautical presences), 93% is Italian, with a high prevalence of people coming from Sicily (32.18%) and Southern regions (42.4%) rather than Northern regions (almost 20%), while only 6% comes from foreign countries.

The monthly distribution of arrivals and presences shows the seasonality of tourist flows. According to Parroco & Vaccina (2005), 60% of arrivals and presences per year is concentrated in the summer months, 40% is distributed over the two intermediate seasons, while winter months show values almost close to zero. The seasonality of tourism demand in the Aeolian Islands is considerably stronger among Italian tourists than foreign tourists. Thus, the definition of a tourist offer that is seasonally adjusted and addressed especially to the attraction of foreigners would help to limit the high seasonality of Aeolian tourism as well as its impact and overload effects.

The different instruments and studies operating within the archipelago area show how the current pattern of tourism, marked by a high concentration of visitors in certain months of the year, creates many problems of environmental impact (Parroco & Vaccina, 2005; Ruggieri, 2008). Another issue which arises concerns the significant quantity of "informal activities" in the tourist system, that is the informal accommodation of guests subject to payment (Volo, 2004). This category of tourists strongly affects the environment (one only needs to think of the increase in water consumption) without paying taxes. The condition allowing this particular form of tourism is the

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<sup>13</sup> OTIE (Observatory on Tourism in the European Islands), (2007), Flows of nautical tourism, the Aeolian Islands, [www.otie.org](http://www.otie.org)

presence of a huge building capacity that is not utilized, due to the 70s master plans and the unauthorised building, which is still fairly widespread in the archipelago (FIG. 6).

### **6.2 The WHL MP and its interaction with the local planning system**

The MP of the Aeolian Islands (Angelini, 2008) is divided in seven parts: the first part represents the preparatory phase for the MP and presents the criteria which merited the inscription of the islands on the WHL, the methodology adopted and the responsible subjects; in the second part we find the analysis of the Aeolian heritage; the third part deals with the rich biotic and geovulcanological heritage and offers an analysis of the structuring aspects of the socio-economic system (economy, tourism, etc.), of the urban system, landscape, transport, and services (water, electric energy and wastes); the fourth part goes into matters related to protection and risks; in the fifth part some intervention strategies are proposed in order to preserve, enhance tangible and intangible resources and in order to guarantee a sustainable and environment-friendly development of the archipelago; the sixth part outlines control and monitoring strategies for these intervention proposals; in the last part, the position of the Aeolian Islands in the WHL is strengthened, establishing further merit criteria related to the site seen as a natural good and also proposing a new candidature of the site as cultural heritage.

In order to achieve a high level of efficacy in the implementation, it would be prior and crucial to reach a collaboration and effective involvement of institutions and local actors in the site protection and preservation programs. This leads to the involvement of *stakeholders* having specific and general interests in the implementation of the area revitalisation in order to achieve sustainable development policies.

The prior targets identified by the Aeolian Islands' WHL MP are the following:

- Establishment of a body responsible for the management of the site inscribed on the Unesco WHL
- Effective identification of the *mission* in the promotion of socio-economic development and recognition processes for the population of the "Outstanding Universal Value" of the area.
- Conversion of strategic policies into management targets, coherent and integrated, in relation to: historic and art heritage conservation; urban and landscape conservation; economic and tourism development; social ability to allow a person to identify him\herself in his\her own cultural heritage.
- Ability to assess and readdress the policies carried out through a dynamic and cyclic control and monitoring system.
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The WHL MP identifies some specific targets in relation to the tourist system:

- Stimulation of responsible and deseasonalized tourism
- Conservation and enhancement of natural ecosystems
- Conversion of the management model for services and resources towards autonomy and sustainability
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In order to obtain an overall analysis of the endogenous and exogenous factors, crucial for Aeolian tourism, the WHL MP elaborates a SWOT analysis where some specific issues on tourism are identified (Ruggieri, 2008):

<i>Strengths</i>	<i>Weaknesses</i>
Presence of fishing traditions Specialization in services-producing sector Environmental and landscape constraints Natural resources of particular value Archaeological resources Museums and itineraries Typical wine and food products Traditional architecture Wide offer of apartments	Condition of insularity Ineffective transport system and consequent tourists' need of external services Considerable seasonality in tourism Mass tourism Strong presence of "informal" accommodation structures Strong seasonality and impact of pleasure craft tourism
<i>Threats</i>	<i>Opportunities</i>
Instability of tourism demand Lack of control over tourist flows Imbalance of other economic activities Impact of mass tourism on environment and services	Possible access to Community and regional funds Use of UNESCO logo Environmental protection and naturalistic usability Increasing tourism demand related to natural phenomena Good quality product

If we look at the local administrative system, the Aeolian Islands archipelago consists of seven islands divided into four administrative divisions (municipalities). The biggest municipality is Lipari, including the small islands of Vulcano, Panarea, Stromboli, Alicudi and Filicudi. The other island composing the archipelago is Salina that is further divided into the administrative divisions of Malfa, Santa Marina di Salina and Leni. Consequently, the Aeolian Islands are regulated by several planning instruments that, over time, have assured the area management and preservation against invasive and not eco-friendly anthropic uses.

The fundamental protection instrument is the Landscape Territorial Plan for the Aeolian Islands, in force since 2001. The plan covers the whole archipelago, deploying a complex series of analyses also studied in the drafting of the UNESCO MP. The overall analysis led to a protection regime which considers cultural and landscape goods as a synergistic whole. This instrument, elaborated since the end of the 1970s, has largely contributed to the protection of the Aeolian Islands, in accordance with a regulation banning new building constructions. Alongside the Landscape Plan acting within the same domain of the UNESCO MP, we recently find (2006) the Provincial Plan of Messina that, compared to the Landscape Plan, regulates a wider area. The Plan sets the minor islands within the domain of the central Tyrrhenian cities.

Numerous actions and instruments adopted in the area have differently involved the archipelago: the PIT n.12 (Eolo, Scilla and Cariddi), the GAL (Gruppo d'Azione Locale - Group of Local Action) for the Aeolian Islands and the Territorial Pact for the Aeolian Islands. These last three instruments are local development partnership programmes collecting economic resources; despite their limits, they are crucial for the renovation and management of the local contexts (Lo Piccolo & Schilleci, 2005) and they should be integrated in the management system proposed for the UNESCO site. In this respect, the PIT of the Minor Islands just identifies a series of actions able to increase tourist offer especially in relation to archaeological sites' usability.

The Communal regulatory planning system, considering the administrative borders, consists of four distinct domains:

- Malfa, with a Building Program (the earliest version of the Master Plan) effective since 1992;

- Leni, with a Master Plan Scheme (which is a document preliminary to the Master Plan) effective since 1991;
- Santa Marina di Salina, with a Building Program effective since 1981;
- Lipari, with a Master Plan Scheme effective since 2010.

The Lipari Master Plan is the only one among the instruments just listed that could have been able to effectively interact with the WHL MP. However both the drafting and the approval of the Lipari Master plan have been protracted for about twenty years, with high level of inefficacy. Despite this, some targets and provisions included in the Master plan are consistent with the WHL MP and its purposes. In detail, the Lipari master plan identifies the archaeological areas and several other interesting tourist sites and defines as an historic centre any anthropic settlement of the Minor Islands. This seriously reduces the areas allocated to the construction of new residential buildings, in order to promote sustainable development and to stop or to reduce the excessive number of houses that are seasonally utilized and serve to boost “informal tourism” (FIG. 7). The master plan, according to general regional planning strategies (Regional Law 10/2005), proposes some small rewards based on volume in order to convert existing structures into hotel and extra-hotel accommodations facilities. The area of former pumice quarries, whose closure is underlined as essential to keep the site in the WHL, is the biggest available area to increase the tourist offer by setting-up a museum related to the pumice stone. This action, promoted by several bodies such as the *Soprintendenza* (Provincial Department of National Heritage) and the PUMEX (former mining company), is meant to increase deseasonalization.

The analysis of the instruments’ chronology and nature shows how difficult it is to integrate the local planning system with the WHL MP which, also because of the lack of management authorities, run the risk of becoming an instrument only able to reassert the constraints already imposed by other instruments. The issues just underlined highlight how it is structurally impossible, in the current situation, to support an effective integration of plans regulating land use and instruments for the management of UNESCO sites.

## 7. Conclusions

In the analysis conducted by Blandford (2006) on the criteria and guidelines for WHL MPs in the UK, it is evident that one of the key-issues is the use of the WHL MP in order to boost chance in the nomination process rather than in the following phases of management and plan implementation. Thus, it is confirmed the significance of “join the club” as the main target rather than the importance of the following stages (once the target of being inscribed and labelled in the WHL is reached). The object of this article is the analysis of what comes after the target of the inscription on the WHL has been attained, focusing the attention on the improvement of the tourism offer and management.

The inscription on the WHL is generally considered a factor which contributes to an increase in the site popularity, in its “appeal” and consequently in tourism promotion. In our experience, however, this is just a rhetorical assumption, as data do not confirm this. In the Agrigento case, the analysis of trends in the tourist flow and hotel occupation in and around the site does not show any significant increase after the promulgation of the WHL MP. With regard to the trends in tourist arrivals in hotels, we do not observe any particular increase: the only encouraging data concern guest average stay going from 2.37 days in 2004 to 2.71 in 2007. In relation to extra-hotel structures, we register a steeply increasing trend boosted by regional policies: however the trend does not show jumps or discontinuity that can be related to the WHL MP. The comparison of tourism trends with the MP targets shows its real ineffectiveness, which is to be essentially ascribed to its structurally scarce integration with other plans and planning policies. In the case of the Aeolian islands, the historical series 2000-2009 of tourists’ presence has not shown a progressive trend starting from the

inscription of the Islands on the WHL. This datum<sup>14</sup> proves that the inscription on the WHL does not seem to have affected Aeolian tourism. Moreover, the strong decrease in the average stay (ratio between the number of nights spent to the number of customers) has declined from 4.52 (2000) to 3.9 (2009). The trend surely confirms that one of the main targets of the UNESCO MP for the Aeolian Islands has not been reached and has even been neglected.

In the analysis of the two Sicilian case studies, our first questions were: how much do the WHL and the Management Plan influence the tourist offer, shifting it towards a “sustainable” approach? and how does the MP orient or collaborate with other planning instruments/systems (and vice versa) in order to enhance more effective and sustainable tourism policies? According to our analysis, the WHL MPs have a slight influence on those tourism policies addressed to increasing and qualifying demand. In fact, the qualification of the tourism demand should be reached through:

- a. deseasonalization (The Aeolian Islands);
- b. long and medium term cultural tourism (The Aeolian Islands and Agrigento);
- c. tourism spread over the whole reference area (The Aeolian Islands and Agrigento);
- d. emerging activities and “informal tourism” (The Aeolian Islands and Agrigento);
- e. responsible tourism (The Aeolian Islands and Agrigento).

These actions have not been implemented yet, as the natural and simple effect of the UNESCO WHL logo is not able to stimulate, by itself, the implementation of the above mentioned strategies, without a systemic supranational planning policy integrated with other local planning systems and strategies.

Blandford (2006, p. 360) highlights that UK MPs have used a multidisciplinary, performative approach to assess the wide range of pressures that have and will influence change in the WHL sites, achieving a balance between conservation, tourism and public access, contribution to local communities, and contribution to sustainable economic growth. However, this does not occur in many other national and regional contexts, such as Sicily according to the case analyzed thus far, where the local very conformative planning regimes clashes with the performative approach of the WHL MP model. In fact, the latter applies in practice through the promotion of non-binding spatial policy programmes and the consequent promotion of initiatives and projects which prove themselves capable to ‘perform’ (Alexander and Faludi, 1989; Faludi, 2000) an agreed collective strategy, while local planning systems and instruments are still based on a conforming approach and a (formal) regulatory tradition.

If the ‘implementation gap’ between plans and interventions in the real world are inevitably endemic (Mastop, 1997), a conformative approach in the implementation of supranational guidelines and plans in local contexts is destined to fail. The reason is that local plans will look at a plan such the UNESCO WHL MP as a statutory plan, and here all the differences at the normative level arise, impeding any real fulfilment. On the contrary, in a performative approach “the prime concern should not be with whether or not the plan is followed, but with whether the plan plays a role in those decision situations in which it was meant to be used” (Mastop and Faludi, 1997, p. 820). In fact, how much a WHL MP can coordinate existing planning instruments in national contexts depends on two main issues: 1. how much the WHL MP is also identified as a declaration of principles as well as an operative framework through which responsible authorities and national and local communities are engaged in an active protection, in an adequate preservation activity as well as in a compatible enhancement able to comply with the identity and cultural needs of the protected area; 2. how much it is integrated at a normative level with local laws regarding land use planning. The paradoxical result, in our experience, is that in the Aeolian Islands as well as in the Valley of the Temples, the MPs – instead of assuming a ‘leading role’ in promoting innovative strategies and actions – become a ‘collection’ of objectives and measures which derive from other (already adopted) planning instruments and programmes, in an ‘inverse’ process of conformity.

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<sup>14</sup> Source: OTIE (Observatory on Tourism in the European Islands), 2010, Historical series of tourist flow in the Aeolian Islands (2000-2009), [www.otie.org](http://www.otie.org).

Blandford (2006, p. 360) underlines that – whilst recognizing the primacy of conservation – in the WHL MP it is important that other “drivers” and “agendas” are fully understood by interfacing with all stakeholders. However, in our cases, the MP is more effective on preservation and conservation rather than on the promotion of effective actions aimed to increase local economies and sustainable development. Moreover, the actions for site promotion fall within the competence of other programs and policies and the MPs are engaged in their implementation and “sponsorship”. In both cases (Agrigento and Aeolian islands), the MPs are slightly connected to the Master Plans, whose choices and management have (negatively) affected the tourist system, favouring for instance the “informal” dimension of this economic sector, through a great presence of second homes and illegal buildings. Actually, in both cases the issues related to the tourist system stem from the peculiarities of the anthropic settlement and from the recent urban development processes: second home and illegal buildings that on the one hand threaten environmental resources and on the other hand increase negative factors in the tourist offer, whose main problem is “informal” tourism. This aspect is not covered by the MP and is only partially faced by regulative plans. Once again, the interaction between the MP and other plans and planning policies is weak but necessary for the immediate future in order to achieve the desirable changes identified earlier in this paper, including sustainability in tourism.

This is a technical, but also political, problematic aspect, which underlies a substantial anomaly: on the one hand, the WHL MPs have to manage sites that differ in nature and size and that are built according to a single (performative) model; on the other hand, the fragmentation of local (regional) urban planning laws establishes a series of different processes, procedures and time-horizons<sup>15</sup>, based on a regulatory and conformative tradition. It is evident that a higher and more effective coordination or integration between the two approaches is difficult but necessary. If the inscription on the WHL puts the site (and respective national and local governments) under the international spotlight, this ‘observation’ process has two consequences: the increase of the image promotion and the increase of protection and related policies in order to promote sustainable development, which works as a deterrent (representing the threat of being removed from the WHL). For this reason, the monitoring process should not just take into account the preservation initiatives (as happens up to now), but also the level of interaction between the WHL MP and the other local plans, in order to ‘bridge the gap’ between the performative nature of the former and the conformative tradition of the latter, which could be re-oriented towards a more performative approach in their implementation, under the guide (and eventually the threats) of the UNESCO policy.

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<sup>15</sup> Thus far, it is not considered that each Italian region has its own planning law with specific times, methods and arrangements that do not easily combine with a WHL MP which should address choices and actions.

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