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The role of intangible aspects in conservation and promotion strategies of Matera and its surrounding territory

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In the past, only material structures were considered as heritage. Recently, thanks to the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) this concept – previously considered, even if not explicitly developed, in the Nara Document of Authenticity (1994) - enlarged its scope to include the intangible heritage. Thus, also the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills – as well as the instruments, objects, artifacts and cultural spaces associated - start to be defined and protected as heritage. According to these issues, what is the role of the intangible in the growing recognition of the values of a Site? How does it affect the definition of new boundaries of Cultural Sites? The paper aims at developing these issues through the case study of the Sassi of Matera, in Southern Italy, declared UNESCO site in 1993 for its unique urban environment in which people used to live in almost total symbiosis with nature, taking advantage of every possible resource in a smart and sustainable manner. Furthermore, the city of Matera, has been recently appointed as European Capital of Culture for 2019. Presenting the last initiatives on conservation and promotion of heritage, in preparation of the 2019 event, it will be outlined the relationship between the tangible and intangible aspects in the value assessment of this heritage site. Through a series of examples, it will be presented how cultural spaces as well as intangible aspects play a key role in the broadening of heritage's boundaries and, as a consequence, in the conservation and promotion initiatives.