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A community-based assessment of the intrinsic value of architectural heritage: an application to Guardia Sanframondi

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Abstract

Purpose – The article aims to contribute to the research challenge of providing appropriate knowledge and operational methods to move the heritage-community relationship from a theoretical discussion to an actionable strategy and provide clear value bases for participatory decision-making in heritage management and conservation.

Design/methodology/approach – It proposes an integrated methodological framework to guide local communities in assessing the intrinsic value of architectural heritage, interpreted as the spatial expression of the relationship between communities and their heritage. The article moves from clarifying the meaning of the intrinsic value and identifying the relevant typologies for its interpretation and assessment. A methodological approach, grounding on the integration of relational and participatory methodologies with a multi-criteria evaluation model, is proposed to define intrinsic value community maps. The proposed framework is applied to a case study: the historical center of Guardia Sanframondi in Italy.

Findings – The test on the case study shows how the methodological framework and its outputs can provide a complementary knowledge perspective to the "expert one" and valuable support for implementing human-centered conservation strategies.

Originality/value – The article contributes to the debate about operationalizing the social dimension of heritage's value and offers a methodological device to bridge divides between the policy domain and place-based practices suitable for application to other territorial contexts.

Keywords Architectural heritage, Intrinsic value, Assessment, Conservation, Local communities

Paper type Research article

1. Introduction

Over recent decades, the need for a broad perspective that acknowledges the co-benefits stemming from local communities' involvement in heritage management (ICCROM, 2015) has led to a rising interest in the relationship between local communities and architectural heritage. Consequently, architectural heritage conservation and management can be interpreted as social practices (Avrami *et al.*, 2000).

Based on this new awareness, the future of architectural heritage depends on the recognition of its values and the role it plays for its « heritage community» (Council of Europe,

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2005), which becomes the focus of a human-centered approach to conservation (Beauregard and Lieto, 2016). The adoption of such an approach, strongly supported by international documents (European Commission, 2019), is even more urgent in marginal territorial contexts, where triggering positive relationships between local communities and their cultural heritage is recognized as a key lever to promote social and spatial justice (Council of Europe, 2021).

The greatest challenge in implementing innovative human-centered approaches to conservation and management (Oteri, 2020) is providing appropriate knowledge and operational devices to move the relationship between local communities and architectural heritage from a theoretical discussion level to the action ground. Such a challenge requires grounding choices on a value recognition process from the local communities' perspective, thus introducing a subjective and perceptive dimension (Vecco, 2020). Indeed, despite the agreement about the role of "bottom-up" approaches for better decisions, value-based heritage management and conservation still find little application (Avrami *et al*., 2019).

The dominant approach to heritage conservation in the 20th century, grounded in the principle of "minimum intervention" and primarily concerned with technical compatibility issues, narrowed the conservation discourse to aesthetic and historical value (Robson, 2023). In recent decades, scholars have sought to integrate the social and economic dimensions of heritage into the conservation discourse, expanding the spectrum of values to consider. However, even these more nuanced conceptualizations are not fully detached from an idea of value as "inherent" in the asset, thus only partially capturing its relational and context-dependent nature (Harrison, 2013). Indeed, the persistence of an approach to heritage "reification" in the West (Taussing, 1992) has led to considering the social dimension of heritage value as something transient and "instrumental," thereby rendering it as less prominent than dimensions recognized as "essential" (Smith, 2012; Avrami and Mason, 2019).

The enduring reference to the "essentialism" of heritage places has represented one of the main arguments underlying the criticism of the value-based approach in the context of cultural heritage conservation (Mason and Avrami, 2002; de la Torre, 2005; Roszczynska-Kurasinska *et al*., 2021). Such criticism is also grounded in the observation that the modern conservation practice has mainly operated by establishing a discontinuity between heritage assets, as belonging to the past, and the social and cultural processes of the present (Ucko, 1994; Jones, 2006), and concentrating most of the decision power on professionals and managing authorities (Poulios, 2010).

These critical points call for identifying appropriate value bases, which effectively account for the continuity of the communities' association with a heritage site (Wijesuriya, 2005). To this aim, the *intrinsic value*, interpreted as the spatial expression of the relationship between communities and their cultural heritage or landscape (Bosone and Ciampa, 2021), can represent the appropriate evaluation key to make the human-centered approach operative and acceptable.

Building on these premises, the research aims to contribute to the ongoing heritage discourse (Winter, 2013) by providing a clear value framework to support participatory decision-making in heritage conservation (Avrami and Mason, 2019). It proposes an integrated methodological approach to guide local communities in assessing the *intrinsic value* of architectural heritage. Such a methodological approach can serve as a tool to consider the complexity of values and to bridge divides between the policy domain and place-based practices (Holden, 2006; Avrami *et al*., 2019). The article moves from clarifying the meaning of architectural heritage's *intrinsic value* by positioning it in the broader value theory and defining the relevant value typologies for its interpretation. It assumes these typologies as the conceptual reference frame for the definition of the methodological approach, which integrates participatory methodologies with a multi-criteria evaluation model and provides *intrinsic value* community maps as the graphical representation of the community-heritage relationship. Finally, the proposed methodological framework implementation to a case

study, represented by the historical center of Guardia Sanframondi, allows to reflect on its opportunities, limits, and future research perspectives.

2. The intrinsic value of architectural heritage: a literature review

The meaning and operative implications of architectural heritage's *intrinsic value* can be fully understood only by placing it in the broader theory of value, which stems from the advancements of the economic value theory concerning unique and intangible goods (Hamilton, 1953; Fusco Girard and Vecco, 2019).

In this context, the *Total Economic Value* (TEV) represents a relevant attempt to embed the complexity and social nature of value (Pearce and Turner, 1990). However, this theory has drawn criticism for its inability to fully evaluate the viewpoints of future generations and consider the role played by a heritage asset in a specific social context (Throsby, 2013).

Fusco Girard and Nijkamp took a step forward to overcome this limit by proposing a broader value concept than the TEV through the *Complex Social Value* theory (Fusco Girard, 1987; Fusco Girard and Nijkamp, 2009). Following Forte's approach to economics (Forte, 2018), this theory conceives cultural properties' value as the combination of a *use-value* and a *use-independent value.*

The *use-independent value* component includes an *intrinsic value,* reflecting cultural heritage's symbolic significance and capacity to trigger a community feeling and requiring the existence of a close link between properties and social capital. From this perspective, it is a "subjective" value, which can be established as the foundation for human-centered conservation (Fusco Girard *et al*., 2019; Roszczynska-Kurasinska *et al*., 2021; Fusco Girard and Vecco, 2021).

Addressing the *intrinsic value* as the result of a process of collective meaning-making (Francis-Lindsay, 2009; Vecco, 2020), can bring value-based heritage practice closer to the positions developed within critical heritage studies. Based on shifting away from a structuralist and functionalist perspective on culture (Fabian, 1998), critical heritage studies recognize heritage as contested and socially constructed (Byrne, 2008). According to this perspective, thus, heritage is created as the result of the cultural sedimentation and accumulation of various traces (Thomas, 2004). Concerning its value, instead, it must be necessarily recognized in the "lived world" of ordinary people and must be considered as fluid and transient (Byrne *et al*., 2003).

Interpreting the *intrinsic value* as the spatial expression of the relationship between communities and their cultural asset (Bosone and Ciampa, 2021), related to a subjective experience dimension, provides a theoretical conceptualization consistent with the outlined critical perspective. However, to date, such a conceptualization does not find a comprehensive framework to be taken as a reference for assessment. Indeed, the complexity stemming from the existence of different perspectives toward the heritage value themes has hindered scholarly efforts to establish a shared conceptual framework.

The different theories dealing with cultural asset evaluation have produced several value typologies that reflect different perspectives and make their integration hard (Vecco, 2020; Mason, 2008).

Among these value typologies, it is appropriate to identify the most relevant ones as *intrinsic value*'s fundamental components that, while accounting for the heritage-community relationship, can provide a conceptual frame to guide a community-based assessment process.

In this context, David Throsby's reflections on the concept of *cultural capital* can represent a useful starting point for this research task (Throsby, 1999), because he «tries to break down a nebulous concept into more manageable terms expressed in everyday language» (Holden, 2004). Throsby proposes a conceptual characterization of cultural heritage's value through different typologies traceable to two major categories: the *economic value* and the *cultural value* (Throsby, 2012) (Table 1). The *cultural value* component is disaggregated into several dimensions, expressing a subjective connection between local communities' members and

Table 1. Conceptual characterization of cultural heritage's value categories and typologies

	VALUE categories	
	Cultural values	Economic values
Value typologies	Aesthetic value	Use value
	Spiritual value	Active use
	Historical value	Passive use
	Social value	Non-use value
	Symbolic value	Existence value
	Authenticity value	Option value
	Scientific value	Bequest value

Source(s): Authors' own work

their cultural heritage. For this reason, these dimensions can be assumed as constituent elements of *intrinsic value*.

However, their relevance and exhaustivity to build up a conceptual frame toward fully "capturing" an asset's *intrinsic value* can be understood by looking at their connection with the disciplinary positions that have dealt with the social dimension of architectural heritage: the official international debate, the debate about architectural heritage conservation and socio-anthropological studies. If scholars have already investigated the contaminations and contributions of the first two disciplines (Mason, 2002, 2008), the perspective provided by socio-anthropological studies is quite unexplored and often dismissed in value-based theories. The complexity and extent of production in the sociology and anthropology domain call for narrowing the investigation field to contributions focusing on the socio-territorial dimension of small villages under depopulation, where the relationship between built heritage and local communities becomes crucial for the future of these territories (Figure 1).

Understanding the relevance and broad coverage of the value typologies identified within the *cultural value* category requires careful analysis.

Starting from the *aesthetic value*, Throsby's interpretation, overcoming the reference to abstract categories of beauty, reveals conceptual connections with the positions of the two fathers of the modern conservation theory, John Ruskin and Alois Riegl. Indeed, the *aesthetic value*'s variability and contingency are reflected by John Ruskin's considerations about the connections between architectural assets' beauty and their influence on life (Ruskin, 1880), as

Figure 1. Investigated disciplinary positions contributing to the cultural heritage value theory. Source: Authors' own work

well as by Alois Riegl's recognition of an art value related to a contingent *Kunstwollen* (Riegl, 1982).

The second typology, identified in *spiritual value*, is defined as the heritage asset's capacity to provide communities with a sense of belonging and cultural confidence (Mason, 2002). From such a perspective, the *spiritual value* finds a primary place in the discourse about architectural heritage's social dimension both in the *Burra Charter* (ICOMOS Australia, 1979) and in the evolution of the conservation debate. Furthermore, the theme of connections between past and present experiences can be seen as the meeting point with some anthropological studies (Teti, 2004).

The *social value*, intended as a heritage asset's contribution to enabling social connections and ensuring social cohesion (Throsby, 2001), is reflected in several international documents (Council of Europe, 1975; Congress on the European Architectural Heritage, 1975) and in the evolution of the conservation debate (Di Stefano, 2003; Scarocchia, 2018). Again, it represents a constant reflection point in critical heritage and anthropological studies. The theoretical positions mentioned meet in recognizing heritage assets' capacity to be active in communities' life schemes.

The *historical value*, which can be considered an asset's capacity to provide «a connectedness with the past» (Throsby, 2001), is found in the conservation debate, as well as in Vito Teti's reflections (Teti, 2017). The *leitmotif* bringing these reflections closer can be identified in their looking at heritage assets as bridging and witnessing elements in the past-present relationship.

The *symbolic value*, referring to « those shared meanings [. . .] that are not, strictly speaking, historic» and to an asset's ability to help «the community [. . .] to assert its cultural personality» (Throsby, 2001) stands as a value dimension of interest for socio-anthropological studies reflecting on the feeling sphere from a community perspective (Teti, 2017).

The *authenticity value* represents the integrity of the heritage asset, variously defined according to different circumstances (Throsby, 2001). Such a definition immediately hints at its cultural background in the *Nara Document on Authenticity* (Unesco, 1994).

The *scientific value*, defined as an asset's content or relevance for scholarly studies (Throsby, 2001), does not seem relevant in other disciplines' debates. However, its reference to heritage assets as reserves of knowledge hints at integrating it into another value typology: *educational value*. Indeed, the *educational value*, which can be interpreted as the heritage's capacity to participate in young people's education (Greffe, 1998), is a common and recurring theme in international official documents and the conservation debate.

Besides these typologies, the critical investigation of socio-anthropological studies provides three further value typologies, which can "capture" aspects of the heritage-community relationship: the *reference value*, the *safety value*, and the *memory value* (Rossitti *et al.*, 2025). The *reference value* and the *safety value*, expressing specific assets' capacity to stand as a spatial and cultural reference for people and to provide them with a feeling of hazard absence, find their cultural reference in Ernesto De Martino's anthropological research (De Martino, 2002). The *memory value*, which differs from the *historical value* since it interprets heritage's role in connecting with the past through a private and deep dimension, also emerges as a relevant value dimension.

Thus, these three value typologies, in addition to the fundamental components of heritage's *cultural value*, provide a conceptual frame to interpret the *intrinsic value* and deal with the challenge of moving its assessment issue from a theoretical to an operative level (Figure 2).

3. An integrated methodological approach

3.1 Prologue

The challenge to move the assessment of architectural heritage's *intrinsic value* from a theoretical to a practical level is a complex research and evaluation task. Such complexity can be detected right in the built-up conceptual reference frame for the *intrinsic value* (Figure 2).

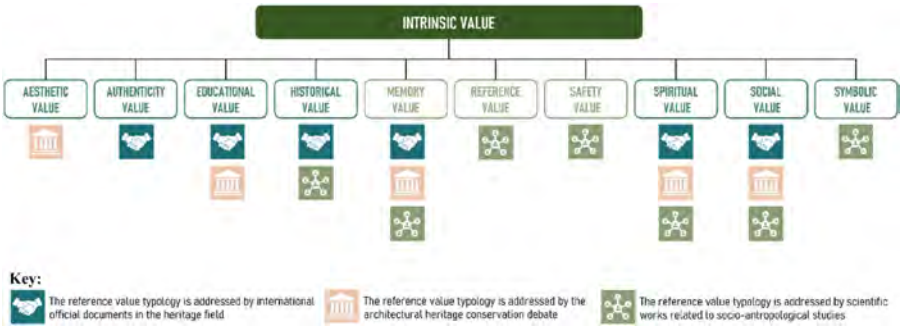

Figure 2. *Intrinsic value* conceptualization into fundamental value typologies based on the integration of different disciplinary contributions to the architectural heritage's value theory. Source: Authors' own work

Furthermore, the necessary reference to the community dimension enriches the evaluation task of a further complexity level related to local community involvement. In this light, the operative challenges of assessing architectural heritage's *intrinsic value* call for defining an integrated methodological approach to deal with the outlined complexity levels (Figure 3).

Firstly, involving local communities' perspectives in the assessment process requires resorting to highly dialogic and relational methodologies (Corbetta, 2003). Among these methodologies, structured questionnaires better convey local communities' perspectives into an evaluation model, especially when dealing with a large territorial scale. For this reason, the integrated methodological framework starts with defining a basic knowledge frame about the *intrinsic value*, as recognized in architectural heritage assets, by structuring a questionnaire, based on the proposed *intrinsic value*'s conceptualization into value typologies, and handing it to local community members.

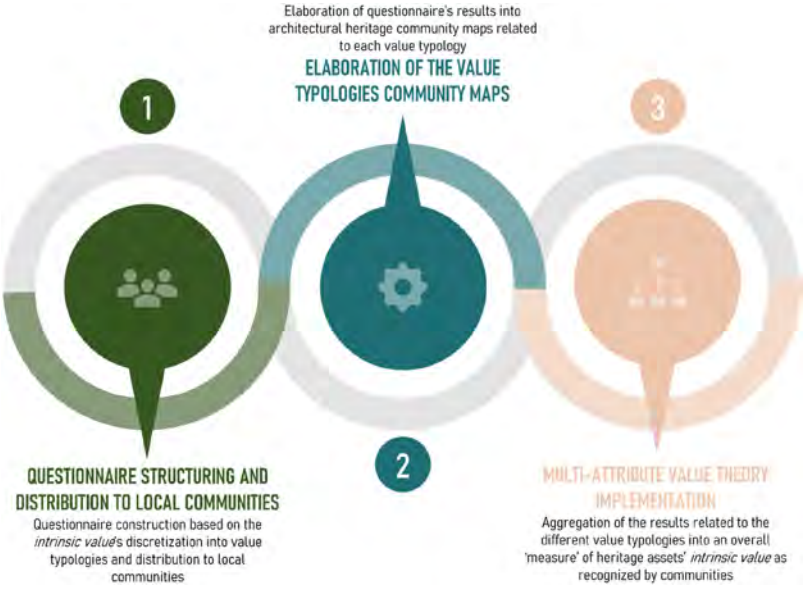

Figure 3. Integrated methodological framework toward assessing architectural heritage's *intrinsic value* . Source: Authors' own work

The results from the questionnaires represent the input for the second step in the integrated methodological framework. It addresses another level of complexity concerning the assessment task: the opportunity to express the relationship between the community and its architectural heritage in spatial terms. To this aim, the results from the questionnaire are used as reference data for building up community maps related to each considered value typology, which contributes to *intrinsic value* recognition.

Finally, the willingness to obtain a comprehensive assessment of heritage assets' *intrinsic value* calls for aggregating the results related to the different value typologies in an overall value "measure." In this perspective, the third phase of the methodological framework deals with implementing a Multi-Criteria Decision Analysis (MCDA) to obtain a comprehensive "measure" of heritage assets' *intrinsic value*, which is spatially rendered into an overall community map. The following sub-sections briefly describe the different steps in the proposed methodological path.

3.2 The questionnaire for local communities

The questionnaire aims to collect the basic information for the assessment task. It is structured regarding the different value typologies identified as fundamental components of the *intrinsic value* of architectural heritage. However, the need to trigger fruitful interaction with local communities has required, in this preliminary proposal, to rationalize the conceptual frame structure by focusing on those typologies that are more easily interpretable from a local community's perspective: the *aesthetic value*, the *social value*, the *historical value*, the *reference value*, the *safety value* and the *memory value*. Furthermore, the need to directly interact with local communities has also required extending this rationalization and calibration effort to the question's language and form. Based on these premises, the questionnaire for local community members is structured into three sections (Figure 4):

(1) Section 1: *Information part*. This section aims to contextualize the participants' answers with basic information and understand their connection with the territorial context under study.

(2) Section 2: *Place/buildings*. This section aims to understand the participants' perception of their built environment and preliminarily identify "valuable" assets.

(3) Section 3: *The meaning of places/buildings*. This section delves into the preliminary identification of "valuable" assets from the community's perspective by understanding the reasons for the respondents' choice: questions are built on the selected value typologies.

3.3 The elaboration of the value typologies community maps

The second step in the methodological framework deals with elaborating the results from the questionnaires in community maps related to each of the selected value typologies. Thus, this phase aims to spatially represent the heritage-community relationship from a value recognition perspective, thus pushing forward the knowledge-framing process toward assessing *intrinsic value*.

The choice to adopt the community mapping technique lies in its nature as a narrative and participatory tool to express the connections between people and places through drawing (Torrieri *et al*., 2021). Based on the newfound attention to spatiality in critical social theory (Avrami, 2019), this methodology has been widely used to support local values recognition exercises (van der Wal *et al*., 2014; Longley and Duxbury, 2016). Indeed, it is recognized as a vehicle to involve communities in a value-based dialogue and, thus, create more effective approaches to heritage conservation through negotiated outcomes (Guilfoyle and Myles, 2015).

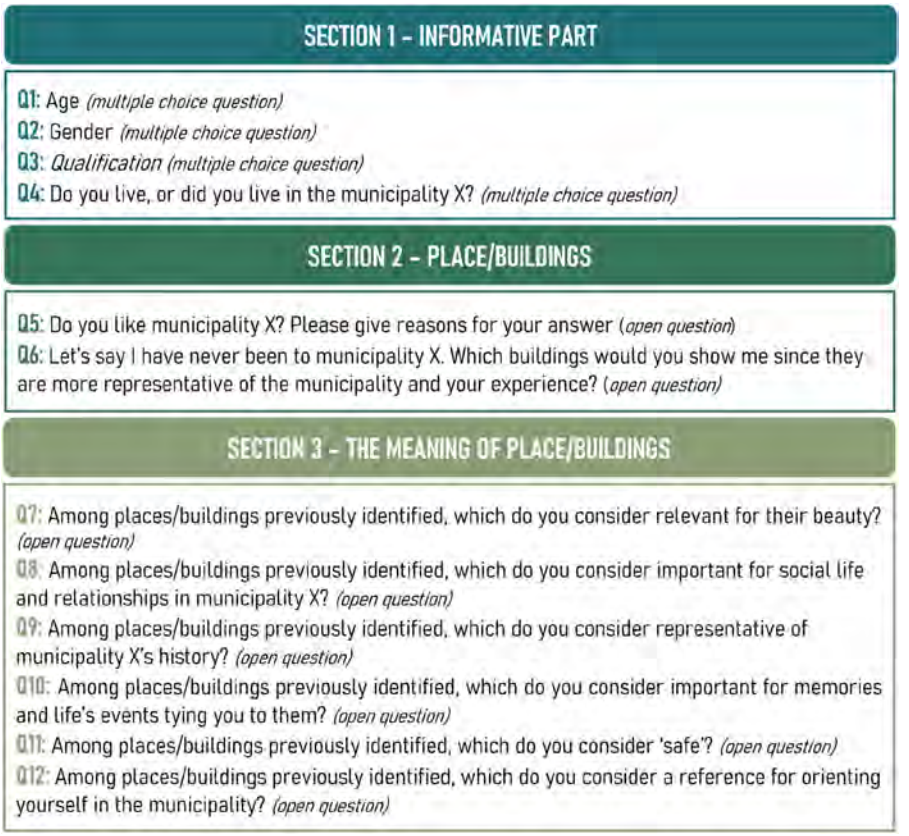

Figure 4. Questionnaire's structure. Source: Authors' own work

The elaboration of community maps usually occurs within participatory workshops. Considering the research issue, the community mapping exercise is addressed as an elaboration in graphical terms of local communities' answers to the questionnaire about their value dimensions. This choice, which can be seen as a weakening of implementing a human-centered approach, is motivated by the territorial investigation scale, which requires dealing with many assets, and by the easier integration with other tools adopted within the framework. Furthermore, to improve their communicability and comprehension, community maps are built by rendering the questionnaires' results in a GIS environment.

The proposed approach consists of producing a map for each selected value typology based on the answers to questions in *Section 3* of the questionnaire. For each built heritage asset in the territorial context of reference, the value recognized concerning a specific value typology can be represented by graphically rendering the number of times the asset is mentioned as relevant for that value typology through a color scale.

3.4 The Multi-Attribute Value Theory (MAVT) implementation

The community maps related to each value typology represent the graphical and information input for the third step in the integrated framework, which deals with implementing an MCDA methodology. This step aims to aggregate the questionnaire's results related to each value typology into a comprehensive measure of *intrinsic value*. The choice of adopting an MCDA

methodology stems from the *intrinsic value*'s outlined multi-dimensional nature. Among the available MCDA methodologies, the MAVT is well-suited to the evaluation task's specificities:

(1) The presence of a huge number of alternatives (all the architectural assets in a specific territorial context) and a small number of criteria (the six selected value typologies).

(2) The presence of quantitative indicators, since the value recognized for a specific value typology is "measured" by adopting as a proxy the number of times it is mentioned by respondents to the questionnaire.

(3) The adoption of a *full aggregation* approach, which meets the need to aggregate communities' judgments into a comprehensive measure.

MAVT is an MCDA method based on a single-criterion approach to evaluation, which attempts to convert different attributes into one single attribute (De Montis *et al*., 2004). It is grounded on the assumption that, in each decision issue, it is possible to identify value functions expressing the stakeholders' preferences. Eliciting these value functions enables to turn the alternatives' evaluation related to the considered attributes into a single value (Herwijnen, 1999). The MAVT's implementation goes through the following steps (Oppio *et al*., 2015):

(1) *Definition of the alternatives.*

(2) *Definition of the fundamental objective and related attributes.*

(3) *Assessment of the alternatives' performances related to each attribute.*

(4) *Elicitation of value functions related to different attributes and assessment of their weights.* Value functions transform the alternatives' performances related to an attribute into a value score expressing the extent to which a specific objective, represented by that attribute, is achieved (Beinat, 1997). Another crucial step lies in assessing weights to express the relative importance of the different attributes (Choo *et al*., 1999).

(5) *Generating the ranking of the alternatives.* This last step requires aggregating the value of the alternatives related to each attribute by adopting a multi-attribute value function. Among the aggregation possibilities provided by scientific literature, the simplest and widely used is the additive model, according to which an alternative's overall value V_a is equal to:

$$V_a = \sum \omega_i \cdot v_i(a) \tag{1}$$

where $v_i(a)$ is the single attribute value expressing the performance of an alternative a for the attribute i, and ω_i is the weight assigned to the attribute i, expressing its formal importance if compared to other attributes.

Thus, the MAVT implementation returns a comprehensive "measure" of the heritage assets' *intrinsic value* from a local community perspective.

4. A case study on the historical center of Guardia Sanframondi municipality (Italy)

4.1 Introduction

The proposed methodological framework is tested on a case study, represented by the historical center of Guardia Sanframondi municipality in the Campania Region, Italy. It is a small municipality with a resident population of about 4,600 units that has undergone a steady demographic shrinking phenomenon in recent decades. The municipality is included in the

National Strategy for Inner Areas (NSIA) (European Commission, 2024). This strategy aims to tackle marginalization and demographic shrinking phenomena in Italian marginal areas and identifies the enhancement of cultural capital as one of the key sectors to promote local development (Forte *et al*., 2020). The NSIA reveals several linkages with other policies at the European and global level, leveraging cultural resources to foster regional development and improve the well-being of marginalized communities (Kouřilová and Pělucha, 2017; Duxbury, 2020).

For this reason, focusing on one of the intervention areas of this policy can provide insights about the opportunities of adopting a value-based and human-centered approach to culture-based strategies (Rossitti and Torrieri, 2022), which can inform other international policies addressing similar challenges.

Guardia Sanframondi is an example of a medieval fortified village that has kept its architectural peculiarities, where boundary houses work as defensive walls (Carafa, 1996). The birth of its fortified center can be contextualized within the Norman *incastellamento* phenomenon (De Blasio, 1961). Thanks to its expansion in the 1500s, the historical centers came to a consolidated fan shape, crossed in the north-south direction by orthogonal step stairways that, together with urban doors, represent distinctive features in the urban environment.

Furthermore, the municipality has gained high recognition worldwide thanks to the religious *Riti Settennali di Penitenza*, a one-week-long event involving all the residents, which takes place every seven years and finds one of its relevant moments in the exit of the *battenti* from the local sanctuary (Esposito, 2015). The connection between a peculiar built environment and a local community still linked to local traditions makes Guardia Sanframondi's historical center a privileged territorial dimension to reflect on the possibilities of capturing the heritage–community relationship through the *intrinsic value* assessment.

4.2 The application of the methodological framework

The integrated methodological framework application (Figure 3) first required handling the questionnaire to the local community through the municipality's administration and third-sector entities' communication channels and tourism promotion websites. The 90 obtained answers allowed for framing the respondents' sample, which shows a good representative level, thus helping to approach the architectural heritage's intrinsic value from different and complementary perspectives (Figure 5). To the aim of detecting any bias in the data collection, the answers to the questionnaires were submitted to a sample consistency check through semi-structured interviews to respondents that, at the end of the questionnaire, expressed their availability to be contacted for further research tasks. This consistency check allowed to verify the level of understanding of the questions in the questionnaire and the respondents' interpretation of the different value typologies addressed.

Figure 5. Respondents' sample analysis. Source: Authors' own work

However, the number of respondents is not entirely satisfactory, and hence, the sample size indicates that this investigation may only be seen as a preliminary and experimental approach toward assessing the *intrinsic value*, which is a scope for improvement in future research developments.

The results from the questionnaire are then rendered in a GIS environment for elaborating community maps. More in detail, a community map is produced for each selected value category by graphically rendering the number of times the asset is mentioned as relevant for that specific category through color intensity. Based on the number of mentions received in the questionnaire, the assets are grouped in 8 classes based on a natural interval (jenk) algorithm: thanks to it, the resulting classes will exhibit maximum variance between them and minimal variance within each individual class. An increasing color intensity is assigned to each class, proportional to the ascending order of the numerical intervals. In this sense, a higher color intensity for an asset in the map expresses the asset's higher significance from the local community's perspective.

Implementing this second step allows for a multi-layer and deeper reading of the modes in which the people-heritage relationship unfolds in the value recognition process.

In the third step's the results obtained for the different value typology had been aggregated into an overall *intrinsic value* "measure" by applying the MAVT, thus obtaining a possible comprehensive expression of the local community's recognition of each asset.

Focusing on the formal hypothesis behind MAVT implementation, the steps can be summarized as follows:

(1) *Alternatives* are represented by the historical center's buildings or places.

(2) *Attributes* are identified in the selected value typologies.

(3) *Alternatives' performances* are measured for each value category by counting the number of times the asset is mentioned as relevant for that specific category.

(4) *Value functions* are assumed to be linear by placing the worst possible performance equal to 0 and the best performance equal to the whole number of respondents to the questionnaire. Moreover, this first application adopts an indifferent system of weights, thus meaning that all attributes equally contribute to the overall *intrinsic value* judgment. Both these assumptions find their reason in the willingness to keep the method implementation's transparency and comprehensibility as high as possible, but of course, they stand as simplistic hypotheses to work on in the research's further developments.

(5) Each asset's overall *intrinsic value* is obtained by aggregating the values for the different attributes through an additive model. Thus, the aggregation is performed in a GIS environment using the QGis plugin *VectorMCDA* (Massei, 2018) and taking values behind the different community maps' elaboration as data input.

The MAVT implementation, thus, allows aggregating the recognized values related to the different typologies into overall *intrinsic value* "measures." The results are then elaborated into an overall *intrinsic value* community map, which can be considered a comprehensive picture of the recognized value of architectural heritage assets.

4.3 Empirical evidence

The implementation of the methodology provides evidence of the value of architectural heritage, as recognized by the local community of Guardia Sanframondi. The *aesthetic value* and *historical value* maps (Figure 6) reveal that the local community recognizes a higher value to the most relevant heritage assets, traditionally considered as monuments.

Indeed, based on these two attributes, the feudal castle stands out as the most relevant asset from the local community's perspective, along with the complex of the *Santuario-Basilica dell'Assunta, San Rocco* Church, and some stately buildings located in the historical center.

Figure 6. *Aesthetic value* community map for the historical center of Guardia Sanframondi. Source: Authors' own work on the Campania Region's Technical Map, 2004

The *memory value* community map brings a complementary perspective to the leading one based on a stronger recognition of the most relevant assets' value (Figure 7).

This community map presents the emergence of the castle and the *Santuario-B. dell'Assunta*, thus hinting at a possible ongoing convergence process between the past–

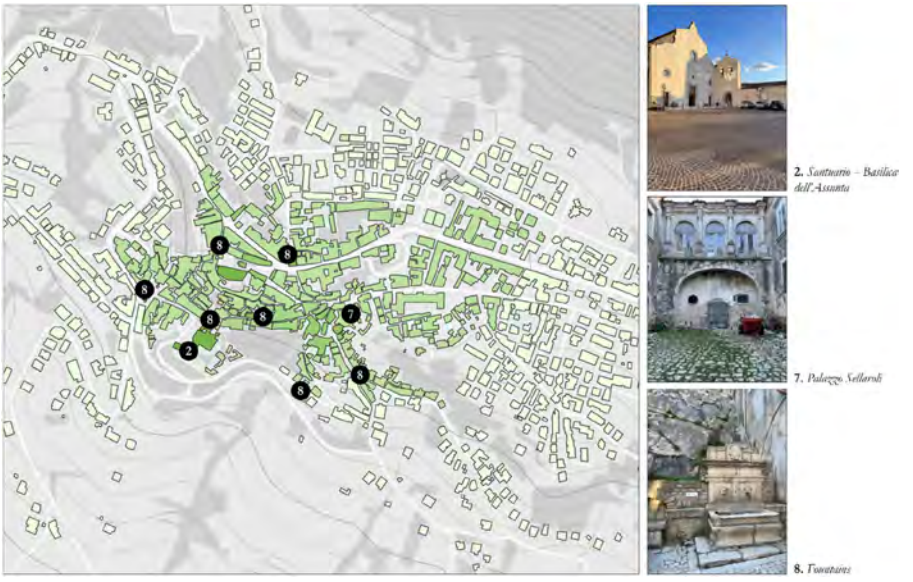

Figure 7. *Memory value* community map for the historical center of Guardia Sanframondi. Source: Authors' own work on the Campania Region's Technical Map, 2004

present relationship in its broader dimension, represented by history, and in its private and intimate one, represented by memory. Along with it, however, the *memory value* map brings out the social value recognition of specific built environments set around public spaces (i.e. *Croce* Square). In this sense, this value category investigation hints at a community's recognition of the peculiar configuration and distinctive elements of historical centers' public spaces stemming from the relationship between the built environment and the site's morphology.

This focus on areas featured by the interaction between built assets and public spaces can also be found in the *social value* community map. Furthermore, this map brings out different assets, accounting for the essential relationship between local economic dynamics, based on a solid agricultural vocation and territorial development: wineries and oil mills.

The *reference value* community map strengthens the value recognition of some assets already emerging as relevant by focusing on other value typologies. Among them, the castle and *San Sebastiano* Church are worth mentioning as unique architectural assets, and the *Fontana del Popolo* as an expression of public spaces' distinctive features. Together with them, the *safety value* community map highlights other distinctive assets in the urban environment's configuration, standing as ordering elements to its historical expansion modalities: urban doors. Furthermore, the focus on this value category reveals a new area in the historical center, running along *Via Dietro gli Orti* (Figure 8) and including the built environment working as the defensive wall enclosure in the Middle Ages, as socially significant.

Focusing on the overall *intrinsic value* community map obtained through the MAVT implementation allows for the parallel reading of several findings about heritage assets' value (Figure 9).

First, the strong recognition of the value of the historical center is noteworthy. Within it, together with the most relevant and unique assets, the map brings out as meaningful from the local community's perspective some specific historical centers' areas stemming from the peculiar relationship between built heritage assets and public spaces (i.e. *Via F.M. Guidi*).

Figure 8. *Safety value* community map for the historical center of Guardia Sanframondi. Source: Authors' own work on the Campania Region's Technical Map, 2004

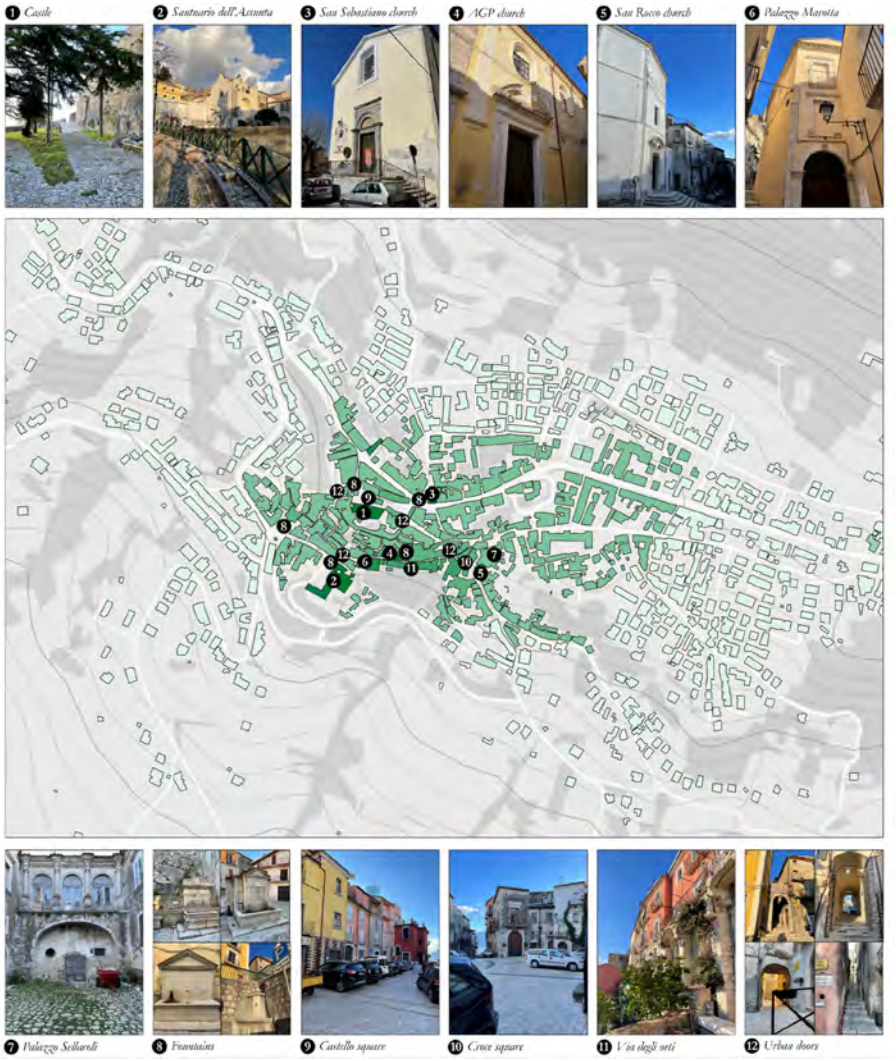

Figure 9. *Intrinsic value* community map for the historical center of Guardia Sanframondi. Source: Authors' own work on the Campania Region's Technical Map, 2004

Furthermore, the picture of meaningful elements in the historical center is completed by specific assets, standing as peculiar elements in the urban configuration and as typical traces of the local building tradition: urban doors and public fountains. Moving to the edges of the historical center, the *intrinsic value* map illustrates the recognition of architectural assets accounting for the relationship between the municipality's economic vocation and its building production: wineries, oil mills and rural houses.

5. Discussion and conclusion

The article deals with the planning and research challenge of approaching architectural heritage conservation from a human-centered perspective. To this aim, it focuses on the

intrinsic value concept, emerging as the value dimension accounting for the relationship between communities and their cultural heritage or landscape, and provides a conceptual frame as a reference for its understanding and assessment.

Furthermore, it seeks to contribute to the debate about operationalizing the social dimension of heritage's value and to move the issue of assessing architectural heritage's *intrinsic value* from a theoretical to an operative level by proposing an integrated methodological framework. Such a framework can represent a device to bridge divides between the policy domain and place-based practices. In this sense, the *intrinsic value* community maps, as outputs of the framework's implementation, must not be considered as exhaustive in expressing the plural and dynamic nature of the value discourse or, on the contrary, as an attempt to reduce its complexity. Rather, they must be considered as a supporting tool to establish a connection between the social perspective's complexity and the rigidity of policy tools and a platform to base richer qualitative reflections.

The test on a case study – Guardia Sanframondi's historical center – highlights the proposed methodology's opportunities for conservation decisions and policy-making both at the national and international levels. Indeed, as highlighted by its inclusion in the territorial scope of the National Strategy for Inner Areas (NSIA), which shows many links with other international policies, the issue of heritage conservation in marginal and under depopulation contexts stands as a national and international challenge, which necessarily requires addressing the relationship between heritage resources and local communities.

The analysis of Guardia Sanframondi case study also shows how the community maps produced for each value category and the overall *intrinsic value* community map can provide a complementary perspective to the "expert" one about heritage value by highlighting assets and portions of the built environments exceeding what is traditionally considered as a "monument." Indeed, they reveal specific areas of the historical center, rendering the relationship between the local community and its life space, and some interesting connections between the assets' value recognition and the territorial economic vocation.

From this perspective, the *intrinsic value* map can be considered a relevant information layer to be integrated into a comprehensive knowledge-building process toward implementing human-centered conservation strategies. Such an aspect makes the framework suitable for application to other territorial contexts and the integration of its output into planning tools, partially overcoming their limited vision of architectural heritage's complexity. However, the willingness to broaden the implementation scope of the proposed framework requires addressing some limits, which can be taken as starting points for future research perspectives.

The application to other territorial contexts and the recognized subjective and situational nature of value judgments (Rogers, 2019) require properly considering the context's peculiarities in the evaluation model. To this aim, the value function structuring and the weighting assignment steps in the MAVT implementation can be crucial. Indeed, these two steps stand as the core ones to effectively bring the local community's perspective into the value judgment by providing a catered formalization of the specific relationship with its heritage while keeping methodological robustness. More in detail, if the value function elicitation step allows engaging with the formalization of the level of recognition for a single value attribute, the assignment of weights, as the expression of the relative importance of the considered attributes, can further unfold the situational and subjective nature of the *intrinsic value.*

Furthermore, the context-aware and community-aware perspective on the methodological framework can be pushed back to structuring its reference conceptual frame based on disaggregating the *intrinsic value* into fundamental value typologies. In this sense, the value typologies selection, currently based on a literature review process, can be revised or integrated through the direct involvement of the reference community, and this involvement can be extended to the construction of a shared meaning for them. Such a research effort, while better aligning the *intrinsic value* judgment to the investigated communities' specificities, can also offer a different knowledge perspective toward conceptualizing heritage assets'

significance and, if applied to various territorial contexts and local communities, identifying similarities and differences in the related meaning-making processes.

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