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**ANCIENT WATER MILLS IN CENTRAL SICILY.
MUSEALIZATION HYPOTHESIS FOR THE RECOVERY AND THE CONSERVATION**

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Track a. *Conservation and transformations of dynamic landscapes.*

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The contemporary peri-urban and extra-urban landscape, deeply marked by widespread conditions of vagueness and instability, testifies today the imprudent management and the carelessness assigned to significant and delicate river resources. Based on the accurate analysis of an area dotted by elements that have marked the history from the anthropogenic and natural point of views, this case study focuses on the recognition of the cultural value of the river landscape of Central Sicily, considered a valuable component of an identitarian heritage that needs to be protected and enhanced.

Towards a collective idea that associates inland Sicily with a land barren and burned by the sun, the territory of Piazza Armerina and Aidone (Enna), requires a distinction: here the abundant presence of water is an exception that has characterized the anthropic and natural landscape. In these areas, the presence of streams full of water, for some traits even navigable in the classical era, allowed since the 14th century, a significant production cycle mainly related to the wheat grinder. The mills sprung up along the basins of small rivers of torrential nature, intercepted ancient routes in the Sicilian valleys, so demonstrating a respectful and conscious anthropic role in relation to available resources.

These ancient productive realities, by now little studied and generally abandoned, testimony the Sicilian pre-industrial society, whose memory deserves to be saved. Due to some difficulties to be attained, their limited knowledge and precarious state of conservation, they are threatened with oblivion. Yet, if properly recovered, many of these places and architectural artifacts may be appropriate to accommodate essential polarities of a path of discovery and cultural recovery, so becoming precious instruments of active protection of the area that would consequently be redeveloped as a museum of itself

Moving from the assumption that for the purpose of conservation, the reading of the landscape cannot be limited to only visual features but, widening the analysis to the physical, natural and man-made environment, it must consider its historical evolution, the planning act have to boost the dialogue between the memory of the river - today profoundly altered - and the current perception.

This paper, therefore, addresses the issues of conservative restoration, refunctionalization and enhancement of a significant rural heritage, aiming to recognize and define the homogeneous features and characters resulting from the interrelations of nature and human history in the area of the high valley of the river Gela.

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