



Réseau des
Grands Sites
de France

EU POLICIES FOR THE RESTORATION AND MANAGEMENT OF CULTURAL LANDSCAPES: THE CASE OF THE GRANDS SITES DE FRANCE

"Cultural heritage and the EU-2020 strategy - towards an integrated approach"
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I. Introduction

"Grands Sites de France" Network is a French national association, which brings together elected local authorities responsible for both day-to-day operations and long term evolution, conservation and presentation of cultural landscapes and other natural and cultural heritage sites, protected for their landscape value.

40 sites and 32 million visitors annually, these two figures mean very strong tourism pressures, and some major challenges for their managers: How to find and maintain a balance between the need to protect our heritage and its undeniable tourist potential? How to develop it in a sustainable manner? Our answer is via integrated management.

Le Réseau des Grands Sites de France

Septembre 2013

40 sites, près de 32 millions de visiteurs

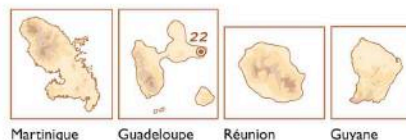
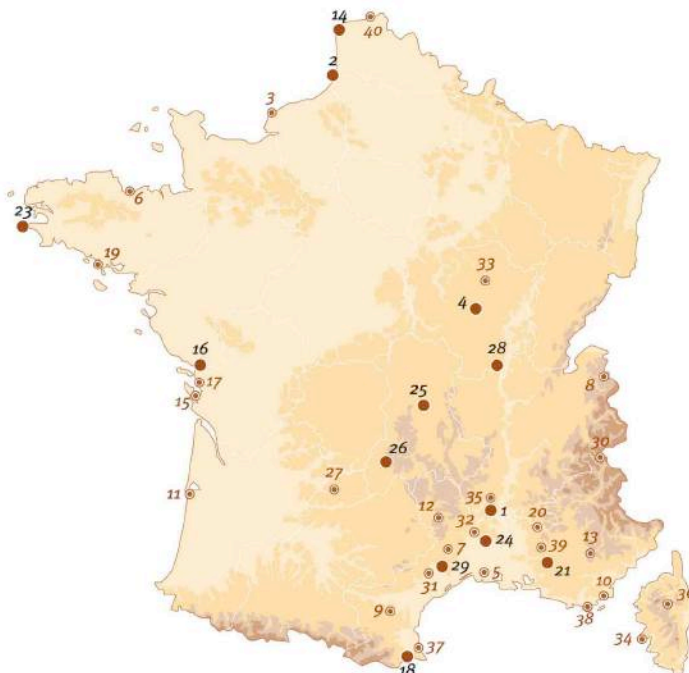
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* site du patrimoine mondial UNESCO  
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 *** site du patrimoine mondial UNESCO au titre des Causses et des Cévennes,
 paysage culturel de l'agropastoralisme méditerranéen

- Sites labellisés Grand Site de France
- ⊙ Sites engagés dans une démarche visant la labellisation

Le label Grand Site de France est décerné par l'État, au gestionnaire du Grand Site, pour six ans. Il vient reconnaître que son action est conforme aux principes du développement durable.



The Grand Site de France case is being presented in the parallel session n°1 - European Environment Policy and Cultural Heritage during the European Conference "Cultural heritage and the EU-2020 strategy - towards an integrated approach". As its name states, the goal of the conference is to come up with ideas for an integrated approach for cultural heritage. Grands Sites de France are a perfect example for that, they are the epitome of an integrated approach, of integrated management. Their case easily fits in all three of the parallel sessions taking place during the conference. Grand Sites de France are cultural landscapes where environment, cohesion and agriculture policies are all implemented at once and cannot be dissociated. UNESCO defines cultural landscapes as follows "combined works of nature and humankind, they express a long and intimate relationship between peoples and their natural

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environment."¹ Landscapes, as we know them in France and in the greater part of Europe, are therefore cultural heritage.

In France, the national policy of Grands Sites de France is currently carried out by the Ministry of Environment, in cooperation with local authorities to manage sites with respect for their cultural and/or natural values, the *genius loci* and local populations. The policy aims at creating local development in cooperation with local populations linked to the sites' values without damaging them. The responsibility for managing the Grands Sites in France has for many years been very centralized.

Nowadays, local authorities, in agreement with state administration, are the main driving force in implementing this strategy of sustainable management of heritage sites and their surroundings.

State administration guarantees legal protection of the Grands Sites, decides on their classification and issues authorisations for restoration or modifications within their protected areas. But with the exception of a few major monuments, which remain managed directly by the State, local bodies created and directed by elected local authorities are now responsible for the management of the Grands Sites.

The Grand Sites are more than places of outstanding beauty and immense value, they are more than just the monument or protected area in their centre, they are cultural landscapes, territories where people live and work, they comprise fields, pastures, economic activities etc. and site managers integrate this reality into their management. Heritage Sites cannot be apprehended only as sites for tourists, but also as living spaces and the fact that populations are taking part in the Grands Sites' actions is essential for it brings better understanding and pride to the inhabitants, better preservation and a better base for sustainable development. We always need to think of a site in its environment.

A vast majority of Grands Sites de France are rural heritage sites, they represent what "rural landscape" means in France.

As mentioned above, the Grands Sites de France policy is a policy of the French Ministry of Environment. It is an environmental policy for landscape heritage that has natural as well as cultural and built dimensions and values. This policy is a heritage sites policy with funding from different sources. Since Grands Sites de France aim at the integrated management approach, their funding is very diverse. Regarding the European policies and funds, the Grands Sites de France do financial crossovers. Funds that are among commonly used are related to Life+, Natura2000, ESF, ERDF, Leader and EAFRD, Interreg IIIa and IVa.

Grands Sites de France are projects for local sustainable development, protecting heritage which is the heart of their areas and using it as leverage for sustainable development. This is what we call integrated management, a holistic and integrated vision for a cultural landscape that embraces everything from protection and conservation, through everyday management to long term planning and to opening heritage sites to visitors, making them understand and love the site they are visiting and therefore protect it. Heritage sites are not dead places, they are lived in. The balance between local inhabitants and stakeholders, visitors and the spirit of the place (*genius loci*) is the main goal of the Grand Sites de France.

¹ <http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/> downloaded 28/10/2013

² Video "La croissance durable dans l'accord de partenariat"



RGSF-I Making children understand the Puy Mary – Volcan du Cantal Grand Site de France and its integrated management through a game workshop ©RGSF/2010

We cannot dissociate nature and culture. Natural and cultural heritage, especially in Europe, are very rarely distinct. There is always a bit of nature in culture and vice versa. The only exceptions to this rule are a few purely natural reserves, mainly in Northern Scandinavia.

Growth for Europe, as presented in the EU 2020 strategy - smart, sustainable, inclusive, is the core of the Grands Sites de France and their policy. Areas of innovation, they work on long term sustainable growth and development with a focus on local populations and their inclusion in the development. Grands Sites de France are mostly rural areas that need smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Many of them faced demographic decline, agricultural abandonment and therefore landscape closure. Rural areas need to be innovative in order to reduce spatial fracture, create incentives to bring people back, protect their heritage and value it. Grands Sites de France are a model of an integrated approach and management.

II. Grands Sites de France policy and its coherence with EU environment, cohesion and agriculture policies

This article is based solely on the experience of the Grands Sites de France Network in the field of heritage conservation, sustainable tourism and local development of regions via sustainable management of cultural landscapes.

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Answering the question of balance is not easy in France, a country that is the world's leading tourist destination (with 82 million international visitors annually), and which has strong domestic tourism (growing with the economic crisis we experienced during the past four years). The concentration of natural and cultural heritage sites is very strong in France. They form the basis of the tourism economy, accounting for 6.2% of GDP.

What are the problems the sites face(d)? The majority of these sites have been protected since the 1950s, sometimes with poorly integrated infrastructures, with insufficient consideration for the environment and with no managing bodies for many of them. It has been recognized for some time now that the way these sites are managed must be changed. That is the role of the Grands Sites de France Network – to help managers in the adaptation of their practices to find balance between protection and opening to the public. What other problems are the sites facing today and what measures are being undertaken to improve things? We face invasion of cars and coaches, undesirable levels of crowding disrupting site's atmosphere (genius loci), obtrusive shopping outlets which are becoming the same wherever you go, souvenir shops with products that are anything but locally produced, local residents depending solely on tourism or, on the contrary, residents who object to the influx of tourists and develop hostile attitudes, regular visitors who no longer want to come to sites that have become "tourist traps". In short, many heritage sites are victims of their own success – a success that is not sustainable.

French 2014-2020 Partnership, the national consultation about EU 2014-2020 policies and funding states in its goals for sustainable growth that we need to beware of "risks brought to natural, agricultural, landscape and cultural heritage by their overcrowding."² Visitor flow management is one of the key elements of the integrated management approach implemented by the Grands Sites de France.

The national "Grand Site de France" policy has been implemented for 30 years. The Ministry of the Environment and Sustainable Development operates this policy and it concerns natural and cultural sites, protected for their landscape value by a long-standing and powerful law dating from 1930. This law relating to "the protection of natural monuments and sites with artistic, historic, scientific, legendary or picturesque character" allows protection of sites covering very large areas, often including important monuments which are themselves protected as historical monuments as well as vernacular heritage. The Grands Sites mostly include areas of recognized ecological importance as well. These are subject to national and/or European laws on the protection of biodiversity such as Natura2000.

They are very popular and well known in France, and in some cases worldwide. They form the bedrock of tourism in France and you will no doubt be familiar with many of them, such as the Sainte-Victoire Mountain in Provence, made famous by Paul Cézanne in his paintings. They all attract large numbers of visitors: the 40 sites in our network attract 32 million visitors annually, whether local, regional, national or international. Some of them are also included on the UNESCO World Heritage List like the Roman aqueduct of Pont du Gard or the fortified City of Carcassonne. In every case, the values and key concepts of the World Heritage Convention inspire our actions, independently on the status of the sites.

² Video "La croissance durable dans l'accord de partenariat"

http://www.partenariat20142020.fr/mediatheque.html?req=1&mots_cles=&date_de_parution=&theme_du_media=0&genre_du_media%5B%5D=Vid%E9os downloaded 28/10/2013

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Recently, the Ministry of Environment has created a label to distinguish the sites whose managing bodies have achieved a level of excellence in sustainable management (socially, economically and environmentally). This national label "Grand Site de France" became part of the environmental law in 2010.³ This label is given for 6 years, and its renewal is possible only after an evaluation. 13 Grands Sites have been awarded the "Grand Site de France" label up to date.

Around 2000, local authorities managing the Grands Sites wanted to join in a network to share their experience and good practices, overcome their difficulties, move forward together and construct joint projects.

Therefore, our association (NGO) – the Grands Sites de France Network was created through a bottom-up initiative and not a "top-down" decision; managerial bodies join us on a voluntary basis. We have no authority over those local bodies, members of the association, as our role is to facilitate their moving forward together, learning new skills, exchanging on good practices etc. We are recognized and supported in this by the state, especially by the Ministry of the environment. The Grands Sites de France Network works closely with other heritage networks on the national level, such as national parks, natural reserves, various associations of historic towns etc. as well as with partners at the international level (UNESCO World Heritage Centre, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Council of Europe etc.)

Our activities consist of on-site workshops, thematic meetings, trainings and group works. All our work is based on good practice exchange since we believe very strongly in our members' expertise.

In the 40 members of our network, 13 sites have been awarded the "Grand Site de France" label and are helping and inspiring the 27 other which are working on a daily basis to obtain it in the years to come.⁴

The Grands Sites de France Network has an official role in the "Grand Site de France" label procedures.

³ <http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/Le-label-Grand-Site-de-France,14226.html> downloaded 28/10/2013

⁴ <http://www.grandsitedefrance.com/fr/label.html> downloaded 28/10/2013

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RGSF-2 - 14th Grands Sites de France Network Annual Meeting, visit of the mining sites of the Grand Site du Massif du Canigó ©RGSF/2012

Studies carried out with our public show that more and more, visitors do not appreciate being drowned in a crowd, preferring to be treated in a more personalized manner. Mass tourism is not the way to go. Visitors want human contact, they want to meet the residents and workers of the places they visit or stay at, they want to eat local food and buy local products (food, pottery, carved wood, local stories etc.).

In a Grand Site, they are looking for a new, interesting and enriching experience, something unfamiliar and in a way overpowering by its magnitude, beauty and identity, but also relaxing and shareable with friends and family, especially their children. Heritage sites are important places for inter-generational relationships and for value transmission from parents or grandparents to younger generations. Therefore, information about the site, its values and its inhabitants must be accessible and adapted to visitors with a wide range of cultural expectations and backgrounds, and programmes for young visitors are to be developed. One expression comes up often in surveys carried out with the French public: "Don't over-develop these sites!" Culturally, public is attached to the notion of heritage as a common asset with a local anchorage which should not be turned into business.

Local authorities, in agreement with French state administration, have decided to react to un-sustainable development of the 50s, 60s and 70s. In the past 20 years, they have all worked to change site management methods in order to adopt a strategy of sustainable development, to manage sites with

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respect for its cultural and/or natural values, the "spirit" (atmosphere) of the place, to work in respect of and in coordination with local populations and to promote local economic development. This approach corresponds to the EU 2020 Strategy. Many tourists want to have an intimate experience with the place they are visiting and they are more and more numerous to care about the impact their visit may have on the site – positive in terms of local economy and negative on the protected site itself.

Grands Sites' experience shows that protection laws, however powerful they are (and the legal arsenal regarding these sites is very powerful in France), are essential but not enough to protect this emblematic heritage. It's not a case of "tourism versus protection" or "visitors versus locals". On the contrary, the healthy management of heritage is central for the Grands Sites' protection. We cannot protect these sites if we are not acting according to principles of integrated sustainable development and we cannot offer a "real" experience to tourists if we cut them from local populations and vice-versa. The appreciation of the other comes with knowledge.

Local authorities have wide-ranging powers and have responsibility for policy coordination across their territory (town planning, economic development, environmental policy, local transport, etc.), which allows them to have a global vision and to act globally on both the site AND its environment, and not only on the protected zone. This broad vision allows the managing bodies to act towards local economic development via heritage sites. It is important to state that tourism may play an important role in local economic development but it cannot be the unique way to take. It is the managing bodies that draw up the strategy of presentation and transmission, including congestion management, and the site management plan, while respecting rules of protection and in close cooperation with the culture and environment state bodies at the national or regional levels and local inhabitants and workers. Local authorities are also in charge of day-to-day running of the Grands Sites and the reception of visitors: Information, guidance, services, facilities, ticketing, designing maps and interpretation tools, programming cultural events, public relations and site promotion, carrying out necessary work, and so on. Preservation, management and tourism promotion should be in balance and harmony between visitors and 'locals' is a basic need for local economic development.

Another significant point is that heritage sites' impacts on local economy are important but indirect. This is often a difficult point to explain to partners, investors or public state authorities that think in terms of economic profitability and direct economic impact. The impact is indirect and will be attained only through management in a framework of sustainable development. If a site is well managed, all funds being invested in it contribute to sustainable tourism and economic development of the area.

III. EU policies and concrete examples from the Grands Sites de France Network

As mentioned above, Grands Sites de France are cultural landscapes with a mixture of natural and cultural heritage, which, thanks to the integrated management approach, is used as leverage for local sustainable development. A vast majority of the 40 members of the Grands Sites de France Network have one or several Natura2000 areas on their territories, several are also in charge of Life+ programmes. But most are not limited to European Environment policies such as Natura2000 and Life+, they are at a crossroads between Natura2000, Life+, Leader, ESF, ERDF and EAFRD.



RGSF-3 "Lavogne" - a piece of cultural heritage in the Gorges du Gardon, rebuilt within the Life+ programme ©SMGG/M. Picart

To state a few examples from the 2007-2013 period:

Natura2000

As mentioned above, three quarters of the 40 members of the Grands Sites de France Network are also, in parts or in totality Natura2000 sites, some have even several Natura2000 areas in their sites. The aim of our members and of the Grands Sites de France policy is to create harmony between cultural and built heritage and the environment and make them enrich themselves simultaneously.

In 2010, on the occasion of the International Year of Biodiversity, the French Ministry of Environment and the Grands Sites de France Network created an exhibition called "Preserving landscapes, safeguarding biodiversity – the engagement of the Grands Sites". It brings out eight Grand Sites de France

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or sites working towards the label with important Natura2000 sites and showed the importance and benefits of an interaction between protected landscapes and Natura2000 sites.⁵

There is no point to list all the Grands Sites de France and those working to become Grands Sites de France and their actions for Natura2000, but a few model initiatives are to be mentioned. In France, since 2010 and every two years, the Ministry of Environment, awards the "Natura2000 awards". These awards "aim to develop and disseminate good practices and innovative actions on Natura 2000 sites" in France.⁶ In the two years the awards took place, a member of the Grands Sites de France Network was distinguished. Camargue gardoise www.camarguegardoise.com and Massif dunaire de Gâvres - Quiberon www.site-gavres-quiberon.fr have both been awarded a distinction. In 2010, Grand Site de la Camargue gardoise's managing body received the "Grand Prix Natura2000" for its innovative Natura2000 actions with local salt and wine producing companies.⁷ In 2012, Grand Site du Massif dunaire de Gâvres – Quiberon received the award for exemplary action in preservation and rehabilitation of the Natura2000 site after the shipwreck of TK Bremen in December 2011.⁸

Several member sites also conduct Life+ programmes and among them the Gorges du Gardon www.gorgesdugardon.fr, a candidate to the Grand Site de France label. A "lavogne", which is a piece of vernacular heritage in the area and serves for livestock to drink from, was built again within the framework of the site's employability actions (ESF in 2010). A new construction of two "lavognes" of 10 metres in diameter each is currently in project within Life+. These will be built in stone, with the use of traditional techniques. They constitute not only troughs for livestock but structure the cultural landscape.

ESF

In Bibracte www.bibracte.fr, Natura2000 covers most of the Grand Site de France.⁹ The forest is managed and protected in cohesion with Natura2000, its logging has been recently (2011) certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), mostly thanks to the long term planning and sustainable management of landscape and species.¹⁰ In several Grands Sites de France, ESF has been mobilised for integration projects for employability of people in difficulties - long term unemployment etc. These are mostly restoration works. In Bibracte, the employability project has been ongoing since 2004 thanks to the ESF. 8-12 people work 28hours per week on the site and its surroundings to restore paths and little built remains, open the archaeological site to public and do the day-to-day upkeep of the landscape. This maintains the site and opens it to the public and creates new opportunities for people struggling to find employment, it a nutshell, it represents sustainable and inclusive growth.

⁵ The detailed leaflet explaining the exhibition and the interactions between Grands Sites and Natura2000 is available here: http://www.developpement-durable.gouv.fr/IMG/Brochure_GS_adultes_basse_def.pdf

⁶ <http://grandsprix.n2000.fr/grands-prix-natura-2000> downloaded 28/10/2013

⁷ <http://grandsprix.n2000.fr/node/6337> downloaded 28/10/2013

⁸ <http://grandsprix.n2000.fr/node/6466> downloaded 28/10/2013

⁹ <http://inpn.mnhn.fr/site/natura2000/FR2600961> downloaded 28/10/2013

¹⁰ <http://www.grandsitedefrance.com/en/2011/247.html> downloaded 28/10/2013



RGSF-4 Solutré-Pouilly-Vergisson, Grand Site de France and its employability team rebuilding a traditional dry stonewall ©RGSF/2013

Solutré-Pouilly-Vergisson Grand Site de France www.solutre.com has its own employability team, renewed on a regular basis, specialised in the construction and restoration of vernacular built heritage in dry stone. Dry stonewalls are an important part of this archaeological, natural and cultural site. For over 1000 years, men have cultivated the vineyards and built the dry walls that structure its landscape. This action, which is in favour of cultural and natural heritage but also in favour of social development, has also positive impacts on biodiversity of the site and reduces environmental risks (erosion).¹¹

A similar employability projects that benefit the environment, cultural landscapes, vernacular heritage and people are taking place in several Grands Sites de France. A Grands Sites de France Network thematic publication called "Fil des Grands Sites" is currently under publication on this topic. It will present several different case studies among our members and will be available online by the end of 2013.¹² One of the main conclusions of this "Fil des Grands Sites" is that employability projects have bigger chance of success when they take place in cultural landscapes and heritage sites – people tend to be more motivated and inspired by the place. For example, in the department Pas-de-Calais in Northern France, the average success of such projects is about 23%, in the Grand Site de France des Deux Caps Blanc-Nez Gris-Nez www.les2caps.fr, the average is over 45%. Most of the employability projects in the Grands Sites de France are funded partly from the ESF. Material for the work of this social-environmental-cultural

¹¹ <http://www.solutre.com/document.php?pagendx=129> downloaded 29/10/2013

¹² The publication "Les chantiers d'insertion dans les Grands Sites" will be available here (in French): <http://www.grandsitedefrance.com/fr/publications/205-le-fil-des-grands-sites.html>

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undertaking is often funded partly from the ERDF. These employability projects represent a perfect integrated approach where interaction between people in difficulties, the spirit of a place and the environment create sustainable and inclusive growth.

ERDF

Since most Grands Sites de France are situated in rural and remote areas, most of them also match the cohesion policy with their actions of development.

For the long term renovation project of its museum, finished in 2013, Bibracte – Mont Beuvray mobilized among others ERDF. This new project inserts the museum in its site and surround area. Smart growth is what characterizes it most – different types of new technologies have been used, and mostly those produced by small local companies from this very rural area.¹³ ERDF was also one of the contributors to the installation of a highly efficient wood stove for the museum during the renovation works.

Grand Site du Puy de Dôme, the heart of the volcanic area "Chaîne des Puys" represents perfectly a mixture of cultural and natural heritage and the fact that they cannot be dissociated and that they represent important leverage for local development. The Mercure temple, dating back to the 2nd Century, one of the biggest roman temples in the western part of the Roman empire, situated on top of the Puy de Dôme mountain¹⁴ is currently under reconstruction (2013-2014). ERDF represents around 30% of the works budget. A similar situation took place for the renovation works of the Grand Site de l'Anse de Paulilles, a perfect cultural landscape – a former dynamite factory site where nature and men made most of the landscape <http://www.cg66.fr/60-le-site-de-paulilles.htm> (working to obtain the label). In 2007 and 2008, ERDF represented 14% of the budget for the major works of renovation. Environment, heritage and development go again hand in hand.

Leader and EAFRD

Cirque de Navacelles, one of the sites working to obtain the Grand Site de France label is perfect example of a crossover funding. One of the most rural areas of France, Leader and EAFRD policies are particularly in resonance with its situation. A document promoting hiking trails on the causses (plateaux) and points of interest as well as the communication and interpretation plan of the Grand Site were co-financed though Leader. A "Concerted Development and Management Operation for Rural Areas" (called OCAGER in Languedoc-Roussillon region) was co-financed at 50% from the EAFRD and the Grand Site's rural cottages were renovated with 35% of the same funding.

Despite having made a distinction between different EU programmes and funds and having separated Grand Sites that show these examples in order to show the wide range of possibilities, most of our members take part in several different programmes at once. Grands Sites de France are heritage sites and landscapes that are the hearts of local sustainable development programmes. It is only natural that with a territorial approach, they are at the crossroads of different EU programmes, most of them taking part in at least 3 or 4 EU policies. For us at the Grands Sites de France Network, an integrated approach is the way to go with heritage.

¹³ http://www.bibracte.fr/fr/decouvrez/expositions_02_03.html downloaded 28/10/2013

¹⁴ http://www.puydedome.com/Temple_de_Mercure-_54187.html?l=1 downloaded 28/10/2013

IV. In conclusion

Based on our experience, management of cultural landscapes needs to be driven at the local level, in a strong national or international framework, with common goals, law and control. Local management means local authority representing the public interest, acting in co-operation with state and European administration, local populations and scientists.

These sites are of course very attractive for tourist operators, but we are convinced that there is a major risk in running them along the usual criteria of economic profitability. In harmony with the EU 2020 Strategy and the smart, inclusive and sustainable growth it puts forward, heritage sites need to be managed with an integrated approach that comprise environment, agriculture and cohesion policies. From our experience, integrated approach to environment and cultural heritage benefits sustainable development and growth. Environmental and cultural heritage policies are not dissociable, not in Europe, where nature and culture are de facto interlinked. Heritage, if approached globally, is a great leverage for EU 2020 Strategy goals. Heritage is something people share and love and cherish, it is a great starting point for a better, more sustainable future. The challenge is to combine good public policies with private involvement with an important share of local involvement and investment, on the ground of shared values.

V. A new project since 2010

Since 2010, the Grand Site de France Network has been opening itself to an international perspective. The International Training and Exchange Centre for Francophone Heritage Sites' Managers was created in 2010 in the framework of a wide partnership. In 2013, the Steering Committee comprises the World Heritage Centre of UNESCO, French National Commission for UNESCO, France-UNESCO Convention, ICOMOS France, the Association of French World Heritage Properties, 3 French Ministries (Foreign Affairs, Culture and Ecology and Sustainable Development), the Regional Council of Burgundy, the University of Burgundy, the Ecole Arts et Métiers ParisTech of Cluny, the Centre des Monuments nationaux and the European Centre of Archaeology in Bibracte, France.

It is intended for French-speaking site managers worldwide, whether they come from French-speaking countries or not, who wish to manage their sites in a sustainable manner, confront their views and share their practices with peers who face similar issues.

Three major themes are in the competences of the Centre: 1) international network and information resources platform, 2) training and 3) sites' cooperation. The first intensive training for 19 managers from 13 countries took place in December 2011 under the auspices of the French National Commission for UNESCO. In 2012 a Workshop on heritage sites' international cooperation was organised in November. In 2013 a workshop took place in May 2013 in France for sites linked to metallurgy and another edition of the heritage sites' managers' intensive training took place in October 2013. Currently, the network is composed of over 80 heritage sites' managers or experts from 27 countries, the online database consists of over 250 documents and links and several international cooperations between sites have begun, such as the Kilwa Kisiwani (Tanzania) & Estuaire de la Charente cooperation. For more information: www.polepatrimoine.org



RGSF-5 International training for an integrated approach by heritage sites' managers – 2013 group visiting Cluny ©RGSF/2013

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