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A landscape character assessment of three terraced areas in Campania region, Italy

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Agricultural terraces represent the territorial structure of many cultural landscapes in the Campania region, Italy. Historic urban/rural settlements and hydraulic-agrarian systems have been developed on mountains and hills, producing diverse cultural landscapes depending on the specific geological, pedological and geomorphological characteristics, which influenced the character and functions of terraces. These unique landscapes are multi-functional and provide many ecosystem services: provisioning (food, water retention, building materials); regulating and maintenance (hydrogeological stability, soil fertility, protection from soil erosion, maintenance of genetic diversity, habitat); cultural services (heritage and traditional knowledge conservation, tourism and recreation, spiritual experience, education, aesthetic quality).

Three terraced landscapes in Campania are analysed, which present a rich diversity in the geological structure and formal/functional characteristics: the Roccamonfina vulcanic area, a highly fertile and lapillous soil; the Monte di Bulgheria, a clay-rich area; and finally the well-known UNESCO World Heritage site of the Amalfi Coast, a calcareous, steep rock faced area. A landscape character assessment of the three sites is processed, identifying the biophysical structure of the sites, natural systems and land use, and cultural and anthropic elements.

Terraced landscapes in Campania can be regenerated, taking again an active social and economic role for the society, enhancing their multifunctionality as a key source of wellbeing. Ecosystem services are mapped and evaluated to assess benefits and costs in a multidimensional framework. Spatial analysis in GIS environment supports this process, providing a decision-support tool for mapping and assessment of terraced landscapes, to convert their actual and potential value into a resource of economic sustainable development.