

## Introduction

The activity that will be presented on the following pages arose from the Ph.D. project “R.P.C.M. Apulia” (Reconstructing Prehistoric Communities’ Mobility in Apulia) led by the author in an agreement between the Universities of Münster, Germany, and Bologna, Italy, in cooperation with the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio of the province of Barletta-Andria-Trani-Foggia. The research originates in the necessity to bring a new systematic archaeological perspective to the prehistoric background of northern Apulia (a southern Italian region; fig. 1.1). The choice of this area was made because of its importance concerning several aspects.

The region of Apulia has been subject to human presence since the Palaeolithic and increasingly became one of the most important centres for trading, ideas, and people. It is remarkable to note how archaeologists discovered links between Apulia and the Balkans or the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, for example.

Therefore, the project aims to shed new light on a specific chronological arch from the Ancient Neolithic to the Early

Bronze Age of the northern part of Apulia, because of the role the region played in the past. Related studies mainly date to the 1970-80s with only some sporadic exceptions. Moreover, the relationship between the communities and the landscape will be addressed to evaluate how prehistoric people could use the land and how they could move around this area and keep in contact with one another.

To reconstruct these dynamics in prehistory, it was first necessary to create a database containing all existing information about sites and then to validate and classify them according to a specifically built model. The storing was conducted with the software ArcGIS v.10.1, and the sites have been georeferenced on the map as points. The database provided the basis on which the analysis concerning the mobility and perception of the landscape will be developed. Specifically, the analysis will include:

- Least-Cost Path Analysis;
- Fuzzy Viewshed Analysis.

The former was taken into consideration to evaluate the mobility of the communities in the study area and thus, to

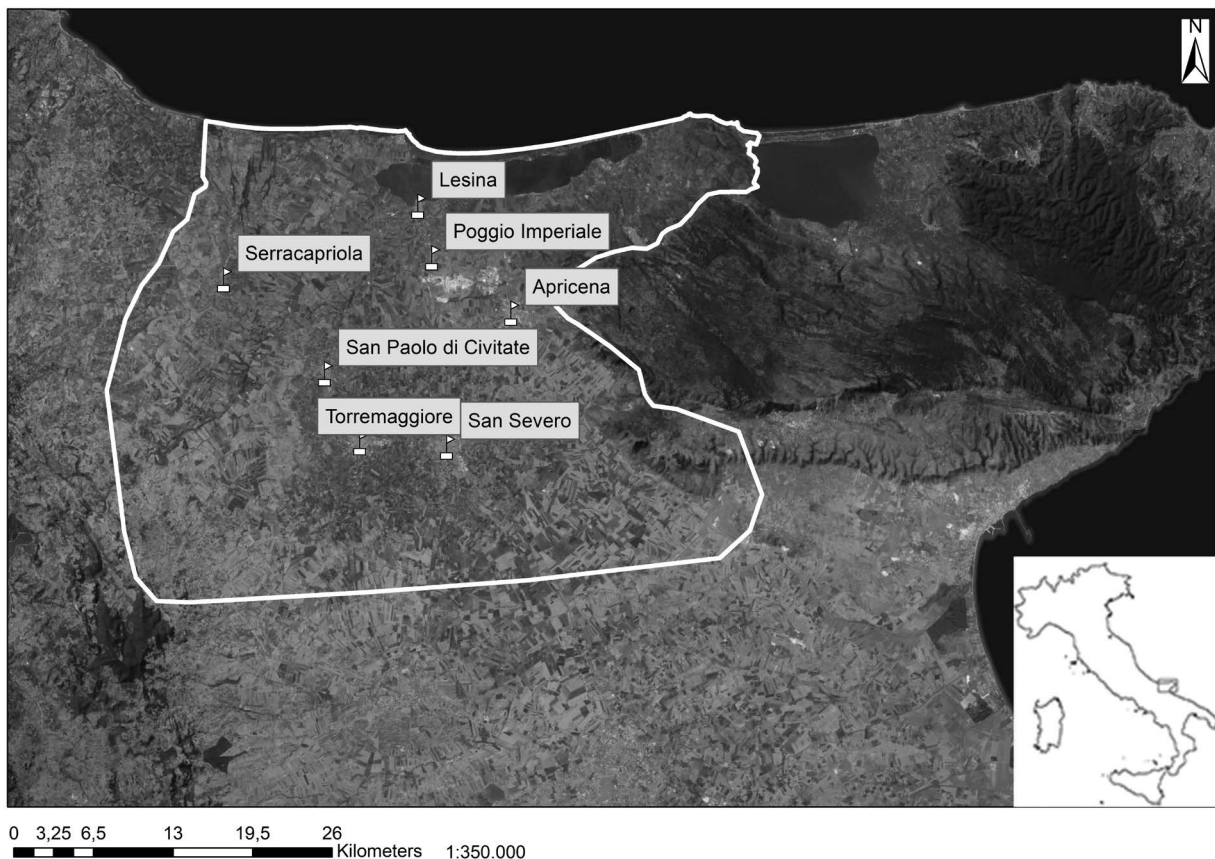


Figure 1.1. Apulia. In white is the area under consideration (image by the author; base map by Esri).

generate sample paths based on the time needed to reach a specific point with respect to the terrain trend.

The visibility analysis was conducted to grasp how the groups perceived the landscape through sight. Even though such data seems to be mere information, visibility played an important role, especially during the Copper Age, as far as the dominion and control of the trading ways is concerned.

The data coming from the above-mentioned analysis has been used to read into the settlement choices and to connect them to the development of new socio-economic relationships. To verify the data in the field, surveys were planned and conducted to validate the results of the analysis and to gain new archaeological evidence (especially where sites had not been investigated in a long time).

The aforementioned motivations are supported by the personal involvement of the author in local investigations that yielded knowledge of the archaeological background in several aspects. Examples were the excavations and the research in Grotta San Biagio (Ostuni, Brindisi) and in Coppa Nevigata (Manfredonia) that permitted to come into contact with the archaeological scenario of Apulia. These experiences triggered the will to analyze in-depth the cultural relationships that arose and developed in a region that played an important role across time.

Specifically, it became clear suddenly that, in order to accomplish this scope, it was necessary to change the investigation approach and hence the perspective through which I had to look at the data. Therefore, the question was:

“How could I gather and analyze data to give me extra information on the lifestyle of the prehistoric communities?”

The response was the landscape. Often not fully considered, the research on this element came into use during the 1970s when the term “landscape archaeology” began to appear in archaeological literature, and then it began to gain traction during the 1990s with the post-processual movement (Flemming 2006, 268–269). Currently, landscape archaeology is interested in an interdisciplinary approach, merging aspects such as ecology, economic geography, anthropology and sociology (Johnson 2012). An example of this is the recent investigation led by Hamilton and Whitehouse (2021) focused on the landscape and the perception of the surroundings by the individual, hence exploring aspects like the soundscape or other facets related to the sensorial experience of the people from a specific point.

Therefore, the consideration of the landscape as the main aspect, to which the research questions are addressed, finds

a fundament in the conviction that it is a social construct. In other words, as Hirst stated (2020):

“The same piece of ground holds different meanings to different people, and that idea should be explored.”

In conclusion, the new and innovative approach involved in the study and analysis of northern Daunia takes its first steps from within the landscape because in doing so, this and the following research will enable us to comprehend how the past communities evolved until the present day.