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Pietro Laureano, architect and town planner, is a Unesco consultant on arid areas, Islamic society and ecosystems in danger. He worked for eight years in the Sahara desert and coordinated projects in Algeria, Jordan, Yemen and Ethiopia. He is the author of the report on the successful addition of the Sassi of Matera and the Cilento Park to the Unesco World Heritage List.

He is one of the 1,300 experts from 95 countries who took part to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA) launched by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan in June 2001.

He taught at the University of Florence, Algiers and Bari at the Faculty of Architecture and he is professor in the Master's Degree courses at the University of Basilicata and Bologna.

In his quality as Italian representative in the technical-scientific committee of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) and as President of the traditional knowledge Panel promoted a world data bank on the local knowledge system.

At present this mission is being carried out by the research centre IPOGEA that was founded by the author and located in the Sassi of Matera. IPOGEA, *Research Centre on Local and Traditional Knowledge*, coordinates EU projects in 10 countries all over the Mediterranean and research and landscape restoration works carried out by means of traditional techniques and their innovative use.

He has published *Sahara giardino sconosciuto* (Giunti Barbèra, Firenze 1989); *Sahara jardin méconnu*, Larousse, Paris 1991), *Giardini di pietra. I Sassi di Matera e la civiltà mediterranea* (Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 1993); *Jardin de pierre. Les Sassi de Matera et la civilisation méditerranéenne* (Presses Universitaires des Vincennes, 2005) and *La piramide rovesciata. Il modello dell'oasi per il pianeta Terra* (Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 1995).

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