

Afterword

As the reader will have been able to realise the subject broached by Fabio Cutaia in this work is not easy at all. The landscape is characterised by its conceptual and methodological complexity and to try and search for its fit—its “armistice” as it is said by the author, or even better, “alliance”—with the typical practice of town and land planning turns out to be particularly difficult.

This is largely due to the lack of understanding of landscape concept whose meaning has been reduced so many times, but also, to the difficulty of the usual procedures and tools in land and town planning which are unintelligible for anyone who is not an expert on the subject.

The integration of both worlds—and the unavoidable implication that society takes part in these disciplines—cannot be done without carrying out deep changes in the methods, in the “know-how” of spatial planning. Nevertheless, it is essential that we change the way to contemplate and contact our environment, which means an entire cultural transformation much harder to achieve since it not only affects the experts on the subject, but also society as a whole.

In that respect, as a university teacher on these subjects, I consider it necessary to include two key aspects: training and awareness. According to the European Landscape Convention, both matters must be present in all the educational stages, from primary school to university, and spread to the civil society sphere as well.

The aforementioned cultural transformation could only come true that way. What is more, there will be a real interest in preserving and recognising the worth of landscape. Technical and legal mechanisms or specific tools will not be a problem if they represent a true social aspiration.

Only from these premises, a clear interest in driving the landscape implementation into the planning process, that Fabio Cutaia reveals throughout his book, will emerge.

After a conceptual and interdisciplinary long tour, the recent decade has brought itself a certain consensus-assembled around the European Landscape Convention—regarding terminology, definition and contents of landscape concept. Once this enormous effort is done, it is the time to put the Convention into practice, its application and transfer to the planning instruments. In the words of Alister Scott,

“[...] it is an urgent plea to move beyond the rhetoric of the ELC and to embed landscape more firmly into the spatial planning area (2011:2761)”.

In that regard, there is not so much experience about the implementation of the Convention postulated and its consequences on the European landscape in the future.

Some of the most recent studies such as the one entitled “Impacts of the European Landscape Convention on national planning systems: A comparative investigation of six case studies” (De Montis 2014), or the one coordinated by Sala and Moles (2014), that tackles the landscape planning in the local area through the analysis of international experiences, try to cast light on this undoubtedly key issue.

Moreover, the present work contributes to this respect, showing the transfer of some general concepts from the European Landscape Convention to the particular cases of Veneto and Catalonia.

Within each one of these regions leads the way into landscape politics. Besides analysing the international framework (such as legislation and instruments), Cutaia moves downward to the specific details in different projects of planning on a local and regional scale, conferring pragmatism on the studies that could not be otherwise.

Just from this experimental base, very close to both reality and the particular implementations of the landscape integration into the land planning instruments, we will be able to improve the tools in order to act in territories with landscape *sensitivity*.

From a perspective of the way to study the landscape integration and the planning through the Strategic Environmental Assessment, the author, in this work, seems to be firmly in favour of exploring methods that determine the treatment of landscape in the Strategic Environmental Assessment procedures that “[...] try to express the landscape values by using the language of numbers” (Chap. 4).

Therefore, Cutaia considers that the best way to achieve the desired landscape integration in town and land planning implementation is by means of its assimilation into other environmental aspects easy to measure, or, at least, with more tradition or practice of doing it by quantitative indicators.

I will not criticise his point of view because I feel that, as far as landscape indicators are concerned, there is almost everything left to do. However, the author certainly seems to move away from the guideline the European Council has issued in the “Guidelines for the implementation of the European Landscape Convention” when it states that it is essential to go forward in a landscape qualitative analysis within the instruments of impact evaluation. In fact, in this document, the European Council expressly set the landscape against the most widely-used methods to analyse the environmental components (water, air, soil), based on well-contrasted quantitative methods.

In this regard, in a complete and interesting study on landscape indicators, published by Cassatella and Peano (2011), it is stressed the difficulty of reducing the landscape analysis to exclusively numerical components. Thus, the best choice is to use a combination of both indicators, quantitative and qualitative, as suggested by the Landscape Observatory of Catalonia (Nogué et al. 2009).

Likewise, in the rest of the matters the book deals with, we will have to keep an eye on the development and implementation of these landscape indicator systems and return, from an appropriate temporal perspective, to review with critical attitude their validity. It would be a sort of evaluation of their own assessment systems.

As far as I am concerned, and before concluding, I must highlight the double value of this book: on the one hand, it expounds, thematically and conceptually, the relationship between planning and landscape by using a special tool (Strategic Environmental Assessment); on the other, it descends to very specific levels using the research on regional cases in Italy and Spain and the indicator analysis that should be useful to articulate, in practical terms, this relationship. In this sense, the author moves with ease over different planes: between the conceptual and the most practical plane; between global approaches and a particular case. All of them are indispensable aspects and the work, as a whole, would be incomplete if they were not included.

In conclusion, Cutaia presents a situation with issues not only of great interest, but also of great complexity. Obviously, he fails to provide answers for everything. Additionally, from my own point of view, he reveals more means of investigation and discussion than he can develop. However, I am convinced that he accurately aims at the key matters within these disciplines which will become objects of academic reflection and implementation in the coming years or even decades.

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