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PRESERVING AND PROMOTING THE URBAN LANDSCAPE. THE FRENCH AND ITALIAN DEBATES OF THE POST-WORLD WAR II DECADES

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The issues of promotion and preservation of urban landscapes are increasingly gaining prominence in international cultural and political debates. These issues can lead to tensions, especially for historical cities, partly because the concept of urban landscape as an element of cultural heritage is still to be acknowledged, particularly on a legislative level. Nevertheless, as the paper highlights, this concept was theorized in Europe for the reconstruction of historical cities in the second post-war period. This paper focuses on the French and Italian debates of the post-World War II decades, because they both elaborated concepts of urban landscape which were particularly advanced for the time. This article attempts to demonstrate their possible influence on the contemporary international debate developed by UNESCO between 2005 and 2011. Furthermore, this paper inspects the origins of the concept of the historic centre, developed particularly in Italy during the 1960s, and examines its relationship with the urban landscape. The reasons for the success of the historic centre are highlighted together with the simultaneous failure of the urban landscape at the legislative level, by inspecting the similarities, the divergences, and the historical connection between the two notions.

Keywords: Urban Landscape, Cultural Heritage, Historic Centre.

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Introduction

Over the last decades, the urban landscape has been receiving an increasing attention from researchers, planners and cultural institutions. In this paper, the concept of urban landscape is considered to be a component of urban heritage, an outcome of historical stratification, and it is linked to the city's own identity and perceived image. As the paper highlights, this concept was theorised throughout the second post-war reconstruction decades, when the issue of the relationships between the historical city and modern architecture and urban planning became particularly significant. Nevertheless, the concept was not able to achieve tangible results in protection practices, which even today concerns specific historic urban areas.

Since cities are now facing another important period of change, this issue of harmonisation between modern architecture and historical urban form has returned as a current problem, making the notion of urban landscape particularly relevant. Indeed, from the late 1980s to the present, because of the industrial crisis and the spread of the competitive global market, European cities have faced very intense urban transformations, which have affected their physical fabric. The goal of ensuring competitiveness and attractive prospects for investors has caused the urban landscape to become the object of a very awkward negotiation process between local authorities and private investors. For these reasons, many urban landscapes, even in historical cities, have changed dramatically, trying to conform to the image of global business cities (Appert & Montes, 2015). A massive number of skyscrapers has been built worldwide even close to historic city centres, whose preservation is not provided in relation with the context. London is a prime example: by ensuring the preservation of local heritage only through the protected viewing corridors policy, introduced in 1991, it has deeply changed its own landscape becoming a global city (Appert, 2008).

The reason for the vertical growth of cities is not only attributable to property speculation, but also to the need of municipal authorities to put cities into the competitive global market. As is often the case in periods of crisis or change, architecture 'is called upon to constitute the language for a society in search of a new identity, for corporations and cities in need of re-branding' (Kaika, 2010, p. 458). The urban landscape, or rather the "skyline", is supposed to be able to attract multiple stakeholders activating a globalization process of the image of cities.

Although some researchers have highlighted the importance of urban identity as a resource for the competiveness of cities (Kotler, Haider & Rein, 1993), this awareness is still to be acquired by most local decision makers. Furthermore, the latter do not always have adequate cultural skills to understand, and consequently to preserve, the urban landscape, which is a concept that is not well-established even among academics. This explains why

international institutions, including the United Nations Organisations UNESCO and ICOMOS, have recently expressed their concerns regarding historical cities, by stating the need for a new reflection on urban landscape, defining it as an important element of the urban heritage, and giving some guidelines to the municipal authorities on how to preserve it (UNESCO, 2011).

Nevertheless, as the paper highlights, this concept of urban landscape as part of the city identity and its cultural heritage has been theorized quite early in the European professional and legislative debates, even before the concept of historic centre, contrary to what one might assume. Italy and France played a key role in this debate, because of the qualitative and quantitative composition of their urban heritage and, above all, because of a long-standing tradition of public heritage protection.

By inquiring into the French and Italian debates of the post-World War II period, the paper aims to highlight the reasons for the failure of the urban landscape concept, at least at the legislative level. Indeed, urban landscape is the literal translation for the Italian *paesaggio urbano* and the French *paysage urbain*, which were elaborated respectively by the Italian and the French architects in the early decades of the post-World War II period. They both concerned the urban form, but corresponded to a complex concept dealing with the urban fabric, the skyline, the perspectives, and the perception of the city identity in general. In this sense the urban landscape was related to the urban heritage: the latter was conceived as the physical historic structure of the city, which included the historic monuments as well as the urban fabric and the spatial features. This conceptual elaboration, in addition to legitimizing the literal translation urban landscape, reveals the plausible cultural connection between the contemporary international debate and the French and Italian ones of the post-World War II decades.

To test this hypothesis, the historical perspective was adopted, in order to shed light on the cultural roots of the most recent debates about the protection of urban landscape in historical cities. Furthermore, because the theorisations of the French and Italian debates of the post-World War II decades were extremely forward-looking, it is hoped that this in-depth analysis will strengthen the contemporary debate, whose issues are still open questions.

To trace the debates the main sources of my research were the Italian and French professional journals, specifically *Urbanistica*, *Metron*, *L'architettura. Cronache e storia*, *Casabella*, *Urbanisme*, *Monuments Historiques*, *La Vie Urbaine*, *Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*. They were chosen because of their prestige during the time span studied, and their significance in relation to the topic. In addition, conference proceedings, publications and newspapers' articles were also considered. Finally, the professional debate and theoretical

propositions have been compared to the legislative documents with the objective of understanding which aspects of the cultural debate triggered preservation and urban renewal practices.

At the origins of the concept: the townscape and the critique of the Modern urban planning

In the post-World War II period, facing the problem of reconstruction, European planners and architects developed a highly intense debate about historical cities. From the late 1940s, the *Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM) began to question the modern urbanism elaborated in the previous decades, namely the notion of functional zoning, introducing the concept of 'humanisation' of the city (Tyrwitt *et al* 1952). This context led to a discussion about the urban landscape, whose origins are to be found in the British concept of townscape (Pousin, 2007; Marchigiani, 2002) developed in the late 1940s and promoted in *The Architectural Review*, particularly by Hubert de Cronin Hastings and Gordon Cullen.

The townscape, in turn originated from the visual planning approach –studied in the 1940s by Nikolaus Pevsner under the commission of Hastings (Pevsner, 2010)– was conceived as a response to the modern urban planning and its lack of beauty. By highlighting the picturesque tradition of British urban forms, the townscape was oriented to insert modern buildings into the fabric of the historic city, improving the aesthetic features of the urban setting. These features were not necessarily supposed to be historical, but they had to belong to the identity of the place and its 'genius loci' (Norberg-Schulz, 1979). Therefore the preservation of the historical city was a collateral theme, whereas the main aim was the improvement of the whole image of the city, although in later publications Cullen focused on historic and vernacular urban forms (Cullen, 1971). This made way for the interpretation of the townscape with a conservative and nostalgic concept (MacArthur & Aitchison, 2010). As a matter of fact, the townscape was a strategy to promote cultural continuity, addressing the built-up environment as a whole (Erten, 2015). Furthermore, it was supposed to be at the centre of a new urban planning model, which was very close to what nowadays is called 'urban design' (Marchigiani, 2002). In fact, the focus was particularly on the street furniture and on the elegance of the urban surrounding, which was supposed to be cleared of the shop and road signs and of the visual pollution of the modern urban lifestyle in general.

The most innovative aspect introduced by the townscape, which was inherited by the French and Italian concepts of urban landscape, is the focus on the visual perception, which was studied and developed with the help of sketches and photographs (Gosling, 1996). This method generated a special kind of layout in which pictures took precedence over the text, and which was to influence both Italian and French journals.

In sealing the end of the quantitative approach of the Modern urban planning, this aspect was not only innovative, but also very up-to-date. Indeed, the current definition of landscape given by the European Landscape Convention appeals to perception: 'Landscape is an area, as perceived by people' (Council of Europe, 2000, art. 1.a).

The study of the visual perception of places was to develop from the 1960s among many international research projects belonging to different disciplines, such as urban planning (Lynch, 1960), psychology (Arnheim, 1969) and geography (Tuan, 1974).

The birth of the Italian and French debates about Urban Landscape

Although some visual analyses of historical cities were developed even in Italy during the second post-war years (Trincanato 1948; Pane 1949), at the outset both the Italian and the French cultural debates referred to the British concept of townscape, probably due to the communication skills of the *Architectural Review*'s campaigns. However, their own urban theory and proposals for reform developed in a very different way. Indeed, rather than focusing on urban design, Italian and French planners faced the problem of transformation and preservation of historical cities. Nevertheless, because of their different cultural backgrounds, the two countries developed the concept differently the one from the other. In Italy, the debate on *paesaggio urbano* developed in the 1950s principally among the Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica (INU), that is the National Institute of Urban Planning, therefore it was forthwith integrated into the issues of urban planning. The figures who mainly developed this idea were Eduardo Vittoria and Giuseppe Samonà. In the Italian debate, two INU conferences were particularly important: the one in Lucca in 1957, *Difesa e valorizzazione del paesaggio urbano e rurale*, ('Protection and enhancement of the urban and rural landscape'), and the one in Lecce in 1959, *Il volto della città*, ('The face of the city'). Indeed, the expression *volto della città* was intended as synonym of the term *paesaggio urbano,* although the latter finally prevailed. At that time, the Italian legislation regulated conservation practices only for historical monuments or natural landscapes and special panoramas (L. 788/1922, L. 1089/1939, L. 1497/1939). Therefore, the INU debates were particularly innovative because they were able to introduce the idea of extending conservation practices to urban areas. This idea developed in the 1960s, but the protection addressed specific urban areas, for which the term "historic centre" was adopted. Nevertheless, during the second half of the 1950s, the Italian architects elaborated a very complex concept of urban landscape, which dealt with the whole – historical and contemporary – urban image, and which combined the practices of preservation and transformation of the city:

> 'The ambition of a new landscape springs from a reflection on the whole existing landscape that cannot be separated into its good and bad parts, according to a schematic division of historical periods. [...] On the contrary, the reality that today we want to preserve, [...] is that of the city as a whole: the landscape we speak about is the entire urban landscape, expression – in its contrasting aspects – of different moments of human civilisation and not only particularly happy moments' (Vittoria 1958, p. 118)[1].

The discipline chosen to guarantee this combination was urban planning, whose goal was to promote an active protection of the historical urban values through the city plan, going beyond the protective restrictions (Piccinato 1955; Vittoria 1957; Christen 1958; Benevolo 1958; Samonà 1958). In France, the debate about urban landscape developed in the 1960s, and it was initially related to the concept of 'art urbain', which originated in the first half of the twentieth century (Jannière 2007). *Art urbain* was conceived as an intermediate discipline between architecture and urban planning, which intended to promote the harmonisation of urban elements within their visual perception (Magnan, 1966). From this point of view, the notion was quite similar to the British concept of townscape. The notion of *paysage urbain* was related to the aesthetic features of French historical cities, and it did not focus on urban planning. It shared the criticism of the townscape debate to the modern urban planning and its lack of beauty, but it considered also its lack of attention to the individual as well as the social wellness:

> 'The concept of urban landscape, in contrast with rural landscape, expresses the new scale of urban design embodied in this new word of "townscape" which has recently appeared. [...] Practices such as the enhancement of the site's topography; [...] or the search for embellishment of urban silhouettes, have to provide the same emotions in the future and to allow us to find the "climate" and character of cities which have finally become personalised, thus offering men those subjective elements of beauty and harmony which are now lacking in our technical civilisation' (De Hoym De Marien, 1964, p. 74)[2].

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1 'L'ambizione di un nuovo paesaggio nasce da una riflessione su tutto il paesaggio esistente che non può essere scisso nelle sue parti buone e nelle sue parti cattive, secondo una schematica suddivisione dei periodi storici. […] Al contrario, la realtà che oggi interessa salvaguardare, […] è quella della città nel suo complesso: il paesaggio del quale parliamo è tutto il paesaggio urbano, espressione – nei suoi contrastanti aspetti– di momenti diversi della civiltà umana e non solo di momenti particolarmente felici'. English translation by the author.

2 'La notion de paysage urbain en opposition avec paysage rural exprime bien la nouvelle échelle de l'esthétique urbaine concrétisée par ce nouveau mot de "townscape" apparu dernièrement. […] Mise en valeur de la topographie du site ; […] recherche d'embellissement des silhouettes urbaines, doivent nous procurer demain les mêmes émotions et nous permettre de retrouver le "climat" et le caractère des villes enfin personnalisées, offrant à l'homme ces éléments subjectifs de beauté et d'harmonie qui lui font défaut dans notre civilisation technique'. English translation by the author.

Starting from the 1960s the French architects and planners dissociated themselves from the recent experiences of the *grands ensembles*, condemning them firstly for their lack of beauty and aesthetic quality, or better the insufficient quality of the *art urbain* (Magnan, 1966). Therefore new attention was given to historical cities, even rehabilitating a key figure such as Camillo Sitte (Sitte, 1889) in the review process of the Modern Movement (Spagnoli, 1994). Within the critiques of modern urbanisation, the urban landscape was described, even by geographers such as Philippe Pinchemel (1964), as a concept linked to urban heritage and its visual perception. Indeed, in France the term of urban landscape appeared in the 1960s both in the fields of Urban Planning and Geography, probably because of the presence of many geographers in Commissions and Research groups of the Ministry of Urban Planning (Jannière & Pousin, 2007).

It was only in the 1970s, within the context of the environmental issues and the influence of Italian culture (Cohen, 1984) that the concept of *paysage urbain* became explicitly associated with public spaces and the question of urban planning. Although the French architects and planners abandoned the concept of *art urbain* and focused on the environmental aspects of the urban landscape, the perceptible dimension deriving from the British notion of townscape was never reduced. Indeed, in the 1970s the urban landscape was also defined as 'visual environment' (Delfante, 1972).

There is no doubt that the notion of *paysage urbain* was able to animate the French debate for longer, whose main figure was Charles Delfante.

The turning point between the Italian and the French debates

It is interesting to note that the Italian cultural debate on urban landscape dwindled at the same moment as the French one gathered momentum. This turning point corresponds with the early 1960s. In this period the Italian planners, having argued for the need to transfer the debate from the technical to the legal level, delegated the legislative reform of planning to the political action, and focused on morphological studies. The theoretical elaboration was therefore delivered into the hands of the Ministry of Public Works, and in 1964 a parliamentary Commission was instituted: the *Commissione d'indagine per la tutela e la valorizzazione del patrimonio storico, archeologico, artistico e del paesaggio*, ('Inquiry Commission for the protection and the promotion of the historical, archeological, artistic heritage and landscape'). As it was chaired by Francesco Franceschini, member of the Italian Parliament, the Commission is usually named *Commissione Franceschini*.

In 1966 the Commission published a final document which is particularly interesting for the potential contribution to the cultural and legislative debate. Indeed, by defining the concepts of urban landscape, historic centre and cultural property, the Commission offered a global vision which recognised and re-elaborated the notions theorised in the

national and international debate[3]. In particular, the urban landscape was defined as cultural heritage in constant evolution, whose preservation for future generations has to be taken into consideration in all practices of creation and transformation of the city. Furthermore, the Commission affirmed the importance of the cultural issues besides the social and economic requests within the urban transformation practices (Commissione d'indagine per la tutela e la valorizzazione del patrimonio storico, archeologico, artistico e del paesaggio, 1966).

The document of the Franceschini Commission was published in 1967 and was widely praised at the level of the cultural debate, but it had no outcomes in terms of legislation (Pallottino, 1987). In fact, it did not lead to any legislative reform in the field of cultural heritage, which would be achieved in Italy only in 1999.

On the contrary, in France it was exactly from the mid 1960s that the cultural debate took into consideration the issues of urban landscape. It was from this period that some planners, such as Charles Delfante, began to travel to the USA, coming into contact with the academic research of Kevin Lynch and his team on the image of the city (Lynch, 1960). Indeed, from 1964 onwards the magazine *Urbanisme* published many articles about urban landscape, most of them signed by Charles Delfante himself.

The influence of Kevin Lynch on the French debate can be observed in the importance given to the role of movement in perceiving landscape, in turn linked to time. The latter was defined as the fourth dimension of urban landscape (Delfante, 1972). Nevertheless, the most important reference, even for the French architects and planners, was the British concept of townscape, which had been disseminated by Gordon Cullen some years before through his publication (Cullen, 1961).

Urban Landscape and Historic Centre: legislative outcomes of the theoretical debates

Another important interpretative concern, especially regarding Italy, is the connection between the urban landscape and the historic centre concepts. Indeed, as mentioned above, at the end of the 1950s, the cultural debate on historical cities was particularly intense in Italy. A crucial year was 1959, which corresponded to the peak of the debate on urban landscape and, simultaneously, to the origin of the term *centro storico*. Therefore, the first important data emerging from the research is that the concept of historic centre originated from the debate on urban landscape, and not vice-versa.

[3] Respectively: the two INU Conferences of Lucca 1957 and Lecce 1959; the Gubbio Convention about the protection of Historic Centers, 17-19 September 1960; the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, The Hague, 14 May 1954.

This fact is quite astonishing, because the historic centre, corresponding to the most ancient area of historical cities – usually the inner city – lies between the concepts of historic monument and urban landscape, and implies an intermediate notion of protection. Indeed, the latter concerns the preservation of monuments and buildings, urban fabric, materials, volumes, and the general image of the area, including its three-dimensional perception. Nevertheless, the protected area is geographically limited, therefore the preservation cannot include its background, its relationship with the site, and its landscape.

Although the urban landscape concept may therefore be intended as a development of the historic centre notion, in Italy it was the contrary. This hypothesis is confirmed by the chronological and theoretical analysis. In fact, the last Italian congress on urban landscape was in 1959, whereas the first regarding the historic centre was in 1960. In addition, if we consider that many of the architects and planners involved were the same for both congresses, we can argue that the debate on historic centre was a derivation of the debate on urban landscape. Furthermore, the two cultural debates had originally many points in common: they both opted for urban planning rather than conservative restoration to preserve the historical values of cities, and they both asked for a legislative reform, in order to unify the laws of preservation, n. 1089 and n. 1497 of 1939, with the law of town planning, n. 1150 of 1942. This cultural affinity was explicitly confirmed by the Italian planner Giovanni Astengo, who participated to both congresses (Astengo, 1960).

As proven by the Italian legislative documents, the notion of historic centre predominated over that of urban landscape. Indeed, while the urban landscape is not cited in any legislative document, the Law n. 765 of 1967 –through its ministerial decree n.1444 of 1968– introduced some modifications to the town planning Law of 1942, among them the border delimitation of the historical and artistic areas.

Nevertheless, neither of the two cultural debates was able to obtain the legislative reform, unifying preservation and urban planning. This fact reveals the substantial detachment existing in Italy between the cultural and the political milieus, neither of which was effectively able to cooperate in the field of urban planning legislation (De Lucia, 1989). Presumably, this was not the only reason for the failure of the urban landscape concept on the legislative level. The need to allow land development, which was very intense in Italy during the 1960s, probably was a reason to prefer the concept of historic centre to that of urban landscape. Indeed, regarding the preservation of a delimited portion of land, the former was less restrictive than the latter. Moreover, as a consequence of the urban restoration practices of inner cities, land and property values increased, which would be a very important feature with the coming of a *laissez-faire* policy.

Furthermore, it must be considered that in the post-World War II decades, until the mid-1980s, most of the Italian historic centres were in great urban decline, with numerous critical consequences from a social and a sanitary point of view. In this context, it is understandable that Italian planners and architects, together with the politicians and public opinion, preferred to concentrate on the emergency of historic centre rather than on the discussion about urban landscape, heritage and identity, which probably were perceived as too conceptual and theoretical. As a matter of fact, the concept of historic centre achieved tangible results in Italian conservation practices, while the concept of urban landscape is still being theorized, at least on a legislative level.

In the 1970s the Italian architects rejected the concept of urban landscape, and concentrated exclusively to the one of historic centre. On the contrary, in the same period the French cultural debate elaborated a complex notion of urban landscape, which concerned the heritage as well as the planning issues. As mentioned above, especially after the oil crisis of 1973, the French architects and planners abandoned the concept of *art urbain* and focused on the environmental aspects of the urban landscape.

This theoretical evolution was reflected by the legislative framework: from the *Loi Malraux* of 1962, concerning the protection of the *secteurs sauvegardés*, meaning portions of historical cities, it proceeded to the *Loi sur l'architecture* of 1977, which insisted on the integration of architecture in the context.

The analysis of the French legislation reveals an equal and opposite situation compared to the Italian one. In France not only did the political action precede the cultural issues, but sometimes it anticipated them, as in the case of the *Loi Malraux*. In fact, dating back to 1962, the Law anticipated the cultural debate on urban landscape by only a few years. The latter would be developed after 1964.

The cohesion between the cultural and the political milieus was reinforced in the mid 1960s, particularly by the figure of Max Querrien. He was Director of Architecture at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs from 1963 to 1968, and author of many articles published in professional reviews such as *Les Monuments Historiques de la France* and *Urbanisme*. By considering the preservation practices within the architectural creation, Max Querrien represented the relationship between the cultural and the political debates, although on the legislative level the outcomes were not up to his own expectations. Indeed, the *Loi de programme* 67-1174 of 1967 introduced some penal procedures, as the obligation to return the classified sites to their previous state in case of un-authorized works, but it was not able to introduce the elaboration of urban plans by the Ministry of Cultural Affairs for extended protection areas (Laurent, 2003).

The concept of historic centre constitutes another substantial difference between the French and the Italian theoretical elaboration. It was stronger in the Italian culture than in the French one, as the lexical analysis confirms. Indeed, if in Italy from the late 1950s the term *centro storico* became increasingly important (De Pieri, 2012), replacing, from 1960, other expressions such as *città storica*, *ambiente antico* or *preesistenza ambientale* –respectively meaning historic city, ancient environment or environmental pre-existence– in France more expressions coexisted, such as *centre ville*, *centre historique* or *quartiers historiques*, meaning city centre, historic centre or historical areas.

This fact reveals that in France, unlike in Italy, the concept of historic centre did not predominate over that of urban landscape, but it was the opposite, as the legislative documents confirm. In fact, as mentioned above, from the protection of *secteurs sauvegardés* of 1962, it proceeded to the *Loi sur l'architecture* of 1977, which explicitly cited the urban landscape as something to protect and respect because of its public interest. This kind of protection was to develop during the 1980s and 1990s, particularly with the introduction of the *Zones de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural et Urbain*, introduced in 1983 – meaning areas of architectural and urban heritage protection – which were developed in 1993 in *Zones de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural, Urbain et Paysagère,* therefore adding the landscape heritage. Nevertheless, even this kind of protection was applied in delimited portions of land, therefore without considering the whole urban landscape.

The contemporary debate

From the late 1980s to the present, following the industrial crisis and the dawn of a new global economy, European cities have faced very intense urban transformations, which have affected their physical fabric. Indeed, in the competitive global market, the image of the city has become a fundamental object of the negotiation process, having turned into a marketing brand. In most current political and technical debates of many European cities the urban landscape has been replaced by the term "skyline". Nevertheless, the latter is not really synonymous of urban landscape, but rather it is only one of its dimensions. In particular, it usually does not take into consideration the historical heritage of the city, but rather it is conceived as an urban brand and a symbol of economic power (Attoe, 1981). This is one of the main reasons for the globalisation of the skylines of many European cities, sacrificing the historical urban landscape. The European debates of the post-World War II decades appear, therefore, particularly distant.

Today more than ever, architectural production is driven by powerful forces and societal goals which lie outside the architecture itself (Olds, 2001; McNeill, 2009). Probably as a consequence, the contemporary architectural debate turns out to be more fragmented compared to the one of the twentieth century, as the analysis of the professional journals reveals.

Recently, the need for a new debate about the protection of urban landscape in historical cities has been solicited by international institutions like UNESCO. The *Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) Initiative* emerged from the international conference 'World Heritage and Contemporary Architecture. Managing the Historic Urban Landscape', held in Vienna in May 2005. The Conference adopted the *Vienna Memorandum*: a first outline of principles and guidelines which gave birth to different international expert meetings (UNESCO, 2010), until the adoption of the *HUL Recommendation* in 2011.

The analysis of the UNESCO documents suggests an influence of the previous French and Italian elaboration, even though those debates are not explicitly cited. This hypothesis is supported by the expression adopted, which, as mentioned above, is not the townscape, but rather the literal translation of the Italian and French expressions. This is further confirmed by the meanings conferred to this concept, which are very close to the ones of the Italian debate of the 1950s and to the French debate of the 1970s. Indeed, the historic urban landscape is linked to the whole image of the city, to its identity, its history, and it entrusts urban planning with the task of promoting and preserving urban landscape:

> 'The historic urban landscape is the urban area understood as the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of "historic centre" or "ensemble" to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting' (UNESCO 2011, art. 8).
>
> 'Conservation of the urban heritage should be integrated in general policy planning and practices and those related to the broader urban context. Policies should provide mechanisms for balancing conservation and sustainability in the short- and long-term. Special emphasis should be placed on the harmonious integration between the historic urban fabric and contemporary interventions' (UNESCO 2011, art. 22).

This focus on policy planning and practices is due to the general weakness of the legislative action, which has been unable –Italy and France are two examples– to adopt and translate into operational terms the concept of urban landscape elaborated at the theoretical level. This weakness is still a critical aspect of urban planning in historical cities, especially in a period of intense urban transformation such as the present one.

Conclusion

The French and Italian debates of the post-World War II decades have been particularly interesting for the cultural elaboration about preservation and promotion of urban heritage. They both theorized a very innovative concept of urban landscape which, going 'beyond the notions of "historic centres", "ensembles" and "surroundings"', anticipated the

most recent international debates (UNESCO 2005, art. 11; UNESCO 2011, art. 8). The Italian cultural debate was particularly intense, theorizing a very complex and advanced notion of urban landscape within a few years, but it had no legislative outcomes. Furthermore, it was suddenly replaced by the concept of historic centre, although the latter was its own derivation.

On the contrary, the French debate followed a more linear evolution, starting from the protection of some parts of urban land, corresponding to the historic centre, and then taking into consideration the urban landscape. The latter was developed in a longer time span, compared to the Italian debate, and therefore changed its shades of meaning: from the *art urbain* it developed into the field of urban planning. Within a decade the French debate, under the influence of Italian culture (Cohen, 1984), embraced a notion of urban landscape similar to the Italian one, although the latter had been abandoned by its own planners and architects for almost fifteen years.

Both Italian and French notions of urban landscape failed to succeed in reaching substantial outcomes in terms of legislation. In Italy, the urban landscape was not even cited in the legislative documents; in France, although the concept was adopted by the legislation, it did not obtain real protection practices. Indeed, regarding exclusively some portions of urban land, the protection of landscape features excludes the urban landscape intended as the whole image of the city.

In conclusion, the preservation and promotion of urban landscape are still open questions, and the need for a new debate has been solicited by international institutions like UNESCO. The reading of the *Recommendation on Historic Urban Landscape* (UNESCO, 2011) suggests that the French and Italian debates at least did the groundwork for the contemporary international debate.

Although the promotion of the cultural heritage has been on the political agenda of European cities from the late 1980s, when its economic value was generally recognised, the cultural and economic values of the urban landscape are still to be acknowledged. This fact is at the root of substantial conflicts concerning urban landscape. On one hand, the pursuit of an attractive international skyline, which generates a process of globalisation of the image of European cities; on the other hand, the attraction of cultural tourism which needs rather the reinforcement of the local identity and memory (Choay, 1992). Therefore, without a real awareness of the potentiality of urban landscape, without the recognition of its belonging to cultural heritage, no protection practices can be experienced. Its conceptualization is urgently needed in order to obtain legislative instruments for its preservation and promotion for future generations.

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