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Luigi La Riccia

Landscape Planning at the Local Level

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Foreword

Writing a foreword is a difficult exercise between praise and criticism because the goal is always to make clear an identity. In the case of the book of Luigi Riccia, this is rather an easy task because his project is clearly defined: to show to what extent the landscape may be, even today, a useful tool for urban planning. We must welcome the efforts to abandon the pure description of the landscape through images whose banality has become proverbial. Although it is a complex issue, I think that it is more interesting to return to think the landscape as a planning tool rather than as an object of pure description. True enough, the landscape is, at least, equivocal or has become such since the moment that the territorial production has not obeyed the rule of combining knowledge and practices; that is, since the functional dimension has no longer taken into account the regulation aspects.

In the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, not only in Italy but throughout the Western context, the landscape and the cultural heritage protection were the focus of many and often very precise laws essentially oriented to the morphologic dimension and to strengthen the protection of the "beautiful view" (in Italian *bello sguardo*) rather than the maintenance of the whole territorial system.

After the World War II, several other provisions and reforming laws were approved in order to recover the old towns and also to consider the new environmental concern. That happened before finally agreeing on the European Landscape Convention, which can be certainly considered as a significative progress, even if it is now outdated and needs to be resumed into a new perspective.

In his book, the author clearly shows that today we are facing a new vision of the landscape, which takes into account a strong desire to recover and restore innovative correspondences between morphologies and functions. The idea is, therefore, to imagine a system in which a functionally planned territory is not in opposition with the perceived one, i.e., the lived landscape.

The famous expression "drawing the landscape" must give way to another, more appropriate: "thinking and making the landscape". "Thinking" the landscape is much more than "drawing" the landscape because it means finding correspondences not only at the visual or perception level, but also at the organic level. In this sense,

landscape can be considered as a significant element for town planning, whose deep and not always immediately visible structures play an essential role in territorial processes.

In order to illustrate his project, La Riccia has made an interesting choice including four classic and representative Italian urban plans: Assisi 1958 (Giovanni Astengo); Urbino 1964 (Giancarlo De Carlo); Reggio Emilia 1994 (Giuseppe Campos Venuti); Bergamo 2010 (Bruno Gabrielli). The very skilful analysis of these urban plans has taken into consideration three interpretation keys: the characteristics of the plan, the interpretation of the landscape and the actions towards the landscape.

The first interpretation key consists of three elements: the plan's structure, the plan's technical content and the role of images and perspectives. The second interpretation key considers four landscape paradigms: historical, morphological, ecological and perceptual. It should be noted, however, that the third paradigm is certainly not new, but it has not been explicitly taken into consideration by town planning. Finally, the third interpretation key considers planning strategies, rules, projects and other implementation tools. These reading keys have the advantage of being projectable in all urban plans in so far as they are not temporally defined and therefore limited to particular periods. This point is important, because it means that the tested model might be also applicable to different cultural contexts. The methodology proposed is very interesting and relevant, and it has the advantage of making different cases of cities comparable in the course of their planning and transformation.

In this methodology, landscape is not just an image but much more: it becomes a planning instrument. It implies that the planning process can be reversed: we are not starting from an—a priori—conceived image; on the contrary, we are building it step by step. The result is a consistent image that could favour more the "experienced" and the "lived" landscape and less the "seen" or "admired" landscape. In these conditions, landscape becomes a dynamic category and a useful tool for urban planning, not only from a morphological point of view, but also for the people's quality of life.

Not only this means that landscape is no longer to be drawn in two dimensions, on a paper sheet, but also it is to be "thought" in an n-dimensional world. This is the price to pay for reforming town planning and fully revaluing the role of the master plan.

Through the study cases reported by the author, we find out that Assisi's plan has been conceived as a comprehensive plan of conservation and restoration; Urbino's plan has been intended as an organic plan with a strong morphological and projectual dimension; Reggio Emilia's plan has set a new image of the city on the ecological dimension; Bergamo's plan has been structured on a twofold, strategic and regulative, dimension.

It is evident that landscape is not a simple image anymore, but more and more a complex image in which the visible is a part, and only a part of the plan that must be developed in different directions to be able to integrate everything that belongs not only to the vision sphere.

Like geography, with which it has close relations, town planning has suffered from the "eye's totalitarianism" for too long. In this book, the author shows very well the need to set stable correspondences between morphologies and functions to deeply questioning the expression "drawing the landscape" in favour of the expression "thinking the landscape". The classical urban planning has had, and continues to have an obsession with visibility and consequently with the *bello sguardo*. Putting the word "thinking" instead of the word "drawing" may seem a small thing, but makes a great difference because it is a way to integrate in the urban planning research elements of deep structures that are not immediately visible. For this reason, the interpretative choices from La Riccia introduce readers to this small revolution.

The question is whether today it is "possible to build a new image of the city through the rules that planning can provide, and then assuming the rule as a non-negotiable part of town planning activity; this interpretive key allows us to open to a possible resolution of doubts and unresolved issues regarding the integration of the landscape into the planning process". This author's statement is of great interest in methodological terms and the framework that he has staked will be reconsidered for new research perspectives. In fact, he reports the example of "the drafting or the revision of definitions resulting from disciplinary fields and context even too far from each other, according to often different approach methods. On the one hand, the contribution offered by planning emerges in terms of setting the long-term strategies. On the other hand, the landscape complexity and richness have been also guaranteed in the moment of their conversion in rules, as in the management of urban transformations, but in general as far as possible away from the risk of simplifications and typifications".

This remarkable and well-written book has the rare advantage of containing many ideas for the future research, first of all to study the role of the three main logics, eco-bio-anthropo-logics in the urban planning, then to show that landscape is less a morphological matter and more a matter of dynamic regulation. Landscape should be not only an "image" but also a concrete liveable place.

In conclusion, we can ask ourselves a question: does protecting the landscape mean preserving its visibility or its liveability? Or better yet both the one and the other?

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Turin, Italy — Luigi La Riccia
November 2016

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Abbreviations

ANCSA	Associazione Nazionale Centri Storici e Artistici/Italian National Association of Historic and Artistic Centres
CED PPN	European Documentation Centre on Natural Park Planning
CHLC	Italian Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code
CIVILSCAPE	Non-governmental Organizations for European Landscape Convention
CoE	Council of Europe
CRPE	Commissioni Regionali per la Programmazione Economica/Regional Committees for Economic Planning
DEFRA	Department of Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (UK)
EC	European Commission
ECTP	European Council of Spatial Planners
EEA	European Environment Agency
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
ELC	European Landscape Convention
ENELC	European Network of Local and Regional Authorities for the Implementation of European Landscape Convention
ESPON	European Spatial Planning Observation Network
EU	European Union
EUROSTAT	European Union Statistical Office
FAI	Fondo Ambiente Italiano/Italian Environment Fund
GIS	Geographic Information System
ICOMOS	International Council on Monuments and Sites
INA	Istituto Nationale delle Assicurazioni/Italian National Insurance Institute
INCIS	Istituto Nazionale per le case degli impiegati dello Stato/Government Employees Housing National Institute
INU	Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica/Italian National Institute of Urban Planners
IUCN	International Union for Conservation of Nature

LCA	Landscape Character Assessment
LDF	Local Development Framework
MaB	Man and Biosphere UNESCO Programme
MATTM	Italian Ministry for Environment and Territory and Sea
MBPE	Ministero del Bilancio e della Programmazione Economica/Italian Ministry of Balance and Economic Planning
MiBACT	Italian Ministry for Cultural Heritage, Activities and Tourism
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCAs	National Character Areas
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
NPS	National Park Service
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
PEBLDS	Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy
PGIS	Participatory GIS
PIT	Piano di Indirizzo Territoriale/Regional Design Plan
PPR	Piano Paesaggistico Regionale/Regional Landscape Plan
PPTR	Piano Paesaggistico Territoriale Regionale/Regional Territorial Landscape Plan
PRG	Piano Regolatore Generale Comunale/General Municipal Master Plan
PSR	Piano di Sviluppo Rurale/Rural Development Plan
PTCP	Piano di Coordinamento Provinciale/Province Coordination Plan
SEA	Strategic Environmental Assessment
UN	United Nations
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNISCAPE	European Network of Universities for the Implementation of European Landscape Convention
WBCSD	World Business Council for Sustainable Development
WCED	World Commission on Environment and Development
WHS	World Heritage Sites
WWF	World Wide Fund for Nature
ZPPAUP	Zone de Protection du Patrimoine Architectural, Urbain et Paysager/Protection Zone for Architectural, Urban and Landscape Heritage