

THE SETTING: A CONTRIBUTION FROM THE EUROPEAN LANDSCAPE CONVENTION

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Terms of the question

In the ICOMOS, the monument/site has been always considered inseparable from its setting (the Venice Charter 1964, the Washington Charter 1987). The criteria themselves regarding the registration as cultural heritage in the World Heritage List underline the importance (Convention 1972) to include them into “landscape”.

Although that recommendation doesn't express a purely aesthetic conception, what has been developed about protection, management and conservation of monuments and sites has, on the contrary, given the setting almost a passive role, reducing its meaning and potentials.

In order to understand the importance that the question about the monument/site with its setting could have, it's advisable to analyse the contents of the European Landscape Convention, signed in Florence (Italy) on 20/10/2000 and entered in force on 01/03/2004.

Although facing different questions, the Convention offers interesting hints of reflection that the previous documents may be contained only in embryo. In my opinion, the assonances are several as well as the landings that could be transposed.

The European Landscape Convention expresses the long maturation process leading to state the principle declaring that “landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors (art. 1). It follows that “the Convention applies to the entire territory of the Parties and covers natural, rural, urban and peri-urban areas. It includes land, inland water and marine areas. It concerns landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes” (art. 2). It's targeted “to promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to organise European co-operation on landscape issues” (art.3).

The cultural route of historical heritage – characterized by the gradual attention shift from the monument itself to the settlement context, until considering not only the historical emergency but also the territory on the whole, with its minor frame and all evidences of tangible and intangible culture –

finds a strong analogy with that undergone by the landscape conception. The landscape, like an anthropic work, affects whole territory, as it has been shaped by men in the course of time.

In that sense, landscape becomes different and strictly connected to the social, cultural and economic reference contexts.

The Convention gives the traditional values of cultural and natural heritage a new dimension and considers how the ever-increasing world economic changes cause and fasten the landscapes transformations. Therefore, it aims at identifying for each state a route to follow in order to define univocal “rules” to be implemented for the protection, management and planning of the landscape. We are dealing with principles of landscape action which are treated in a dynamic and forward-looking manner. “Landscape protection”, in particular, consists of measures to preserve the present character and quality of a landscape which is greatly valued on account of its distinctive natural or cultural configuration. Such protection must be active and involve upkeep measures to preserve significant features of landscape.

In any landscape, as it's pointed out, the balance among the three activities (protection, management and planning) will depend on the area characteristic and the targets defined for its future landscape. I refer, therefore, to possible conceptions and methodologies to protect, plan and manage the territory together with all its potentials by taking into account the changes affecting the social and political sphere.

Landscape is also considered a key element to reach and assure citizens wellbeing, quality of life and –what seems to be more at heart today– human beings satisfaction. It's not by chance that the most stressed sentence is “aware that the landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures and that is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human wellbeing and consolidation of the European identity” (Preamble, paragraph 5).

Overcoming a strictly prescriptive logic, they point out the importance to “increase awareness among the civil

society, private organisations and public authorities of the value of landscapes, their role and changes to them”, considering landscape “as an essential component of people’s surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity”.

Obviously, we are dealing with a completely new formulation of the landscape concept, a clear expression of the existence of a tangible and intangible heritage. Thus, the question to consider is the following: in an ever changing context how can we safeguard identity? Or: How can we conserve cultural heritage in changing townscape and landscape?

The setting

I think that we should set on a wider analysis and consider how the swift changes -affecting the transition age between the 20th and the 21st century- ask for a background of knowledge that can no more be identified with few information about heritage, expressed through static and unchangeable values on which weighing the interventions. That means not only to work on several data and elements, but also to look at contexts as complex dynamic systems, trying to overcome the ever-present bad split between social development and settlement forms and also the usual dyscrasia between what is defined at law level and the interventions carried out.

On the analogy of what has occurred as to the monuments restoration theories – where there has been a gradual passage from position strictly linked to idea of monument to those including firstly the monument and then city and territory within the intervention– it can be seen that also landscape cannot be reductively considered as a “setting” or a theatre scene, once that its cultural and natural value is recognised,. The landscape always retains its peculiarities making it a resource and an integral part of the social, economic and cultural system. That doesn’t imply to safeguard landscape limiting the human presence in determined areas, but to find harmonious forms of development, making people aware and awakening their civil responsibility.

If we face the landscape protection as “actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and /or from human activity” (art. 1, paragraph d), it’s easy to point out how setting and/or buffer zones, in relation to extraordinary events, acquire a peculiar and almost new value.

It’s crucial to take into account the identity value and the never ending collective processes of re-appropriating and building meanings introduced by the actions accomplished by all the people linked to a territory, though not permanently. That means to consider, in a dynamic way, at the endogenous elements, both tangible and intangible, which link the territorial history to the history of its populations. This doesn’t imply to crystallize the local cultural “heritage” and the identities, but to recognize them and, up to a certain extent, to build them.

The rites, the sacral character of ceremonies, the spirituality and, contextually, the territorial character of the man-nature relationship in the course of time have made the community perpetuate the species without destroying or offending what is offered by the earth and its products. The more or less visible signs left by the course of those relationships between man and nature make the places different today, giving them a unique and peculiar character. These signs, being so full of values, represent the identities and, through their recovery and exploitation, can contribute to strengthen the community and reconcile ancient bonds.

The identity of a place contains and allows us to read and understand the territory’s “memory”, its environmental knowledge, its growth laws and system of relations and governance. In such a view it’s evident that the setting question has a different and wider value.

The setting isn’t a theatre scene, reducing its role to an aesthetic contribution, but it has the value of “landscape” in all respects, where the condition of being a monument/site setting becomes a further appeal.

As the Convention of Landscape clearly states, the field of action of policies and measures about landscape comprehends the whole territory of the States. That means, in the case in point, the Convention refers to natural, cultural or artificial elements and the relations among them, namely to natural, rural or urban spaces indiscriminately. In this sense it’s possible to point out a further strong link to the problem under question in this session of our Assembly.

The variety of elements that can be faced shows not only the impossibility of applying the same policies and measures to such different contexts, but also the difficulties met by public power, obliged to introduce actions and sanction laws. The multiplicity of reference landscapes requires a careful attention to the different features, giving place to diversified local interventions in order to stress their peculiarities.

A planning aimed at considering local features has an obliged passage in what can be defined a “Charter of

Values” and should analyse several angles from different points of view, which cannot leave the evolution processes out of consideration.

It could consist of defining context not characterized by simple homogeneity, but mainly by relations to be considered when defining the intervention guiding rules.

In view of a rules system

Experience shows that, without specific laws, setting is often prey on autonomous actions that, though linked to the culture and needs, can compromise territory and heritage peculiarities and destroy the identity.

Therefore, the question should probably be overturned. It is not important to define rules, which might be torn off the context, losing effectiveness and consistence. In order to have a positive value, they should be formulated on the basis of something objectively valid and significant. Their force could reside in the way they allow to fulfil several purposes of common interest. With that expression, I refer to the need for conceiving and implementing some parallel actions targeted to inform, make aware and instruct people, in order to promote the sharing of ideas and the participation to the “project” and this together with a system of rules supporting it.

As far as the rules are concerned and in order to define them, we should previously think about their present role and value, so as to understand on which bases they are to be defined.

According to what has been stated in the Landscape European Convention and in order to build a rule system in accordance with its statements, the rules should involve also socio-economic targets of common interest, address behaviours and actions of the actors in agreement with the targets, produce direct/indirect advantages.

Assuming that, we can generally affirm that the rules system should:

- Safeguard the context and community identity;
- Contribute to the economic, social, cultural development and to the different users quality of life;
- Contribute to territory layout;
- Assure the best management of resources.

The contents of the rules should issue from the historical heritage, namely from reading the historical territory, from the community needs and identity characters. In order to be quality projects, above all they should take into account:

- the resources heritage;

- the local cultures and identities;
- the principles of sustainability .

Consequently, a careful combination is required between what regards the morphological-functional dimension and :

- Effective administrative proceedings;
- Environmental sustainability;
- Forms of social capital regeneration;
- Economic-financial feasibility;
- awakening/education/training actions, on several levels, targeted to promote sharing/participation.

In view of defining actions

When defining indexes and rules, the problem of identifying the reference ambit is crucial as well and arises from several issues. On the one hand, it's necessary to consider several components and, at the same time, work on sufficiently detailed elements; on the other hand, we need to refer to factors of different scale and, for instance, get in relation to different functional and management bodies.

In such a context, a first important step is represented, as always, by the knowledge stage that, according to the specific problems and implications, cannot be characterised by “inventories”, namely identifying only with a sum of punctual investigations on single “subjects” and leaving out the study on the relations (physical, cultural, functional, visual), whose understanding is basic to define protecting, changing and transforming actions.

Several investigations have already analysed the theme of knowledge and everything about it. So I think that it's not necessary, here, to dwell upon that question and its specific problems, i.e. the knowledge methodology. It's obvious that the adopted analyses shouldn't be purely descriptive and classifying, but should also be expression of the decision-making and evolution processes.

The problem under question is about which ambits are to be referred to.

Assumed that any context (monument or site) has its own peculiarities, issuing not only from the purely physical presence of a manufactured structure, but from several tangible and intangible values, which it's the expression of, we need to accept that the definition of the to-be-taken actions cannot lead only to the passive conservation of the heritage. In fact many other elements are to be considered. Other valid factors to be referred to are, for instance, the economic-social-cultural development and the quality of life of different users in agreement to the context features and the real collective needs.

In order to define the possible actions for socio-economic-cultural development and for incrementing the different users quality of life, taking into account the context features and the real collective needs, the division into territorial categories (physical-natural, economic-productive, settlement, infrastructural and historical-cultural) can be useful, i.e. those produced by the interaction of the three basic territorial components (space, subjects and activities). The above-said categories, which could be analysed in relation to the action of natural or anthropic factors –according to the art. 1 of the Convention– can be investigated in their articulation so as to consider the different impacts that a transformation could cause in relation to the perceptive categories (environmental quality, quality of life, urban quality, cultural identity, peculiarity and use of places) (Picture 1).

Indeed, any intervention represents a change and therefore this division into categories could help understand the different impacts that a transformation action could produce as to perceptive categories. More than analysing every single impact, it is important to understand the types of relations occurring between the different categories of territorial and perceptive components.

What issues from a view of the different types of relations –from a weaker one, showing a simple influence relation, to a most important one that affects or produces– leads to an ex-ante assessment of the possible perceptive impact of the interventions, which could be useful in defining targets and actions as well as rules for an active landscape safeguard.

The assumption inducing to diversify the types of relations, according to their strength, consists of considering that the investigated categories don't affect the perceptive ones all in the same way.

After describing the relations system, namely the articulation of the usually emerging territorial categories, we can go on by investigating the constitutive elements, considering each of them accordingly to its physical, socio-economic and perceptive aspects (Picture 2).

Although the physical aspects could be considered the starting point for the territorial ambit “knowledge”, they don't have any meaning without their relation to the socio-economic and perceptive aspects. Man and his activities, indeed, are integral part of the city and territory transformation and evolution, and landscape is “shaped” and “specified” by the relation system.

Each considered element can be analysed, in a systemic way, according to its physical aspects investigating its

consistency, distribution and vulnerability; and according to its socio-economic ones considering its demographic and productive component as well as the flows and dynamics they can produce.

In the same way, as regards the perceptive aspect, each time we can point out the identity or aesthetic values and work out a set of indexes to be referred to (in absolute or in relation to a group) in order to define the actions to be implemented in view of the expected targets.

Remarks and test area

What shown above has been developed within a National Research Project funded by the Italian Ministero dell'Università e della Ricerca Scientifica e Tecnologica and, in particular, within a study on the active safeguard of historical territory, having the Sorrentino-Amalfitana peninsula as test area.

In particular, the Amalfi Coast belongs to that territory and is inscribed on the World Heritage List since 1997. As referred in the Evaluation by the expert mission, it is an outstanding cultural landscape covering an area of dramatic scenery rising steeply from the coast to rugged mountains. Within it there is an exceptional diversity of landscape types, ranging from ancient urban settlements through areas of intensive land-use and cultivation and pastoralism to areas untouched by human intervention. The complex topography and resulting climatic variations provide habitats for an exceptional range of plant species tithing. In this area, nature is both unspoiled and harmoniously fused with the results of man's activity. The Landscape is marked by rocky areas, wood, and maquis, but also by citrus groves and vineyard, grown wherever human beings could find a suitable spot.

The investigated area, including the one inscribed on the List, is full of historical elements, as well as natural ones, and it is affected by intense tourist flows making it vulnerable at the same time. The signs left by the human action in the course of time make us understand how the relation between man and his natural space hasn't been always harmonious and synergetic and how it's crucial to start actions of safeguarding and exploiting the natural heritage and the anthropic one as well. From this point of view, there is the need for defining rules guiding interventions which should pay attention to the landscape values.

What above said, as to territorial categories, leads to an ex-ante assessment of the actions impacts, namely the definition of their possible perceptive importance. This might be one of the most interesting contribution that could

be given to work out an adequate assessment of the possible actions effects, in order to define objectively valid rules targeted to fulfil purposes of public interest.

It's clear that to fulfil quality purposes always requires an optimal mixture between the issues of the socio-economic-performance targets and the environmental ones that could be defined according to the context.

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Abstract

The swift transformation processes call for considering contexts as complex dynamic systems consisting of tangible and intangible endogenous elements linking the territorial history and the history of the people living there.

In the light of what expressed in The European landscape Convention, a setting cannot be reductively considered as a stage wing playing only an aesthetic role, but it acquires the “landscape” value with its peculiarities deriving from the several values it expresses.

In order to define the actions to undertake so as to achieve the socio-economic-cultural development and the improvement of the different users quality of life, and being consistent at the same time with the context peculiarities, we suggest a division into territorial categories. These last ones, which could be investigated in the light of the action of natural or anthropic factors, can be analysed in order to consider the impacts that a transformation can have in relation to some perceptive categories.

The analysis in which the different types of relation are clearly lead out produces an ex-ante assessment of the possible perceptive impact of the interventions, which can help to define the targets and actions as well as the guiding rules for an active landscape protection.

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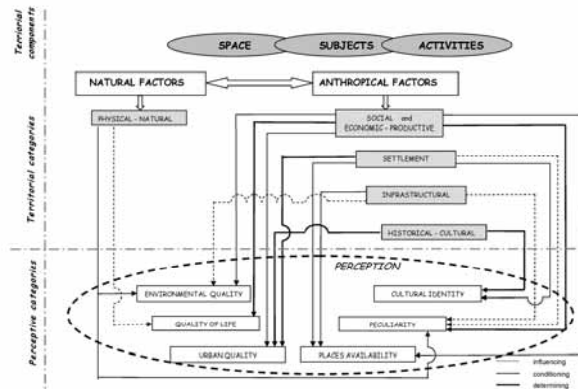


Fig. 1 Territorial categories

	TERRITORIAL CATEGORY		PHYSICAL ASPECTS			SOCIAL-ECONOMIC ASPECTS			PERCEPTIVE ASPECTS	
	COMPONENTS	ELEMENTS	INDICATORS			INDICATORS			INDICATORS	INDEXES
HISTORICAL-CULTURAL	MATERIAL HERITAGE	Historical centres	Area	Place	Area	Population	Activities	Relation	Distinct or indistinct place	Areas Times Costs
		Historic-architectural emergences Monuments Other historical heritages	Quantity Condition	Ray of influence	Area	Presences	Employees	flows		
HISTORICAL-CULTURAL	IMMATERIAL HERITAGE	Events	Quantity	Ray of influence	Presences	Activities	Relation	Presence of identity representatives events	N events/year	Used area
		Festivals	Area Period	Ray of influence	Presences	Employees	flows			

☀️	CONSISTENCE	👤	POPULATION COMPONENT
⊗	DISTRIBUTION	👷	PRODUCTIVE COMPONENT
👤	VULNERABILITY	👤	RELATIONAL COMPONENT
		👤	AESTHETIC COMPONENT
		👤	IDENTITY COMPONENT

Fig.2 Territorial categories elements