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Cultural assets and everyday landscapes

Paolo Avarello

The subject of the landscape seems by now to have become pervasive even in the latest 'ordinary' plans, often in homage to the European landscape convention, although potentially vying with the most recent version of the 'Urbani Code' (the 'Settis commission') which seems to put a brake on the growth of regional and local autonomies, and as a consequence also the development of ways of territorial governance based on the principle of subsidiarity, on collaboration-conciliation among authorities, and lastly on joint planning.

The latest version of the Code, in fact, confirms the state's right to lay down further specific constraints, apart from the categories as per law 431/85 ('Galasso'), and that of authorizing, in the final instance, transformation measures in the protected areas. The Regions, instead, will have the task of drawing up and approving landscape plans, or 'town planning-territorial' plans specifically considering their landscape and environmental values (law 431/85, art. 1 bis).

The 'new' Code itself mentions the European Convention more than once, but does not seem to grasp its basic orientation, nor its most innovative contents, at least with regard to the type of protection that has historically taken root in Italy, one of the first countries in the world to pass laws to protect the landscape, although in a vision essentially defending its 'singular places', which tends to vie against transformations by means of bans and prohibitions, regarded as all the more effective the more rigid they are, and all the 'safer' the more they are emanated 'from on high' (by the state).

The first question is thus to resolve the contradictions between a conception of protection intended solely for sites of excellence, identified for their 'environmental' aspects, or for the presence of cultural assets, or again for the traces of still visible and significant history, and the 'European' conception which tends instead to identify the whole territory as 'landscape', albeit articulated according to the ways in which it has taken shape in time, and how it presents itself today. In practice, therefore, extending to the whole territory forms of protection necessarily subdivided and by and large 'active'. A slogan could be 'from constraints to care of the territory'. A profound difference, therefore, between the 'European' vision of the landscape and of its protection, extensive and adaptive, and instead the 'national' vision, point-form, rigid and negative.

On the contrary, the approach of the European Convention tends first and foremost to extend the landscape, in its various forms and articulations, making provision to 'care for' the 'natural' elements and-or artificial ones that form it, to the point of including, following this logic, even 'degraded' landscapes, foreseeing where possible their recovery and, more generally, the 'maintenance' of the

landscape.

The new landscape plan of Apulia, which substitutes a preceding plan, wholly based on the constraints, seems instead to fully accept the approach of the European Convention, not just on principle but, for example, dedicating special attention to agricultural territories, and to the relevant methods of cultivation, in an attempt to involve the operators, also associating with these activities other forms of income, connected with tourism.

Hence, a plan that seeks to innovate the modalities of protection, making it active, not limited to the constraints, but striving to trigger virtuous practices in the use and management of the territory.

In the hope that these will start up and become consolidated, but also and this is the most ambitious aim, will be able to modify the point of view of the inhabitants, which, according to the Convention, 'makes' the landscape («as perceived by the inhabitants»), but is entirely ignored by the Code, which reserves for 'experts', and for the public powers, decisions on what to protect, without reasoning about how, applying what practices and above all with what means.

Then there is another aspect, a strongly innovative one, the 'novelty' is collaboration, not only among the various levels of territorial governance, involving, in this case, also the superintendencies. If the plan for Apulia truly maintains and develops the premises, in any case, we will be able really to speak of a new season of planning and of taking care of the territory.