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**A culture for the landscape**  
Mariavaleria Mininni

Most of the landscapes we can see today have not been projected to meet our taste or not.

Many of them have not even been meant as landscapes, but they have become, in a sight unable to distinguish the figure and the background, the city and the countryside, that catches everything without being synthetic.

Where does the project of a landscape hide, then?

Urban and rural politics and logics are the first to be responsible of new landscapes production, powered by financial laws and community incentives; as well as the spaces corresponding to coastal and mountainous protection places, the landscape infrastructure politics and their consequences on the visible aspects of the landscape.

In an almost totally built landscape, every new intervention wears away a residual space, stops a horizon, shortens the space between the cities and confusedly fills the only landscape built over the last fifty years, the one of periurbanity.

But the politics of control in the land use and concentration of settlements are not enough without a more careful study about over-determinations concerning the production of such a space, the experiences but even the desires they satisfy. If we tackle a new idea of landscape and the ideas of nature it presumes it could be useful.

The landscape culture we refer to is that of French school, in particular of the Ecole nationale supérieure du paysage in Versailles, that defined a specific field of knowledge, born in a multiplicity of knowledge, arts and crafts, intended to define a field of specific

competence based on the ancient art of 'gardening', more ancient than agriculture. Competences not directly linked with Architecture and town planning, like in Italy, though they are part of both, but they can count on several disciplines that, somehow, concern landscape.

*New ideas of nature for contemporaneity*

Landscape is then a hybrid cultural idea, a cultural construction, both individual and collective concerning the relations of nature in space. The relation of landscape with human and natural sciences makes it the product of human thinking par excellence, that needs minds open to dialogue.

Splitting and wavering justify the process of naturalization of cultural values, products of experiences and emotions of a nature felt through an aesthetic code that gives back impressions of nature even about what is not nature. So the countryside becomes nature for city dwellers, the attribution of a meaning far from the agricultural space used to produce food, and it is charged with an emotional evaluation related to what becomes the most natural possibility. Or nature is independent from human will, lakes, mountains, woods, whose existence is proved by sciences and linked to the way sensibility that feels the nature. In all this the notion of landscape is capacious maybe because it is vague, it is operative without being optimistic, it is careful to transformations without complying with them, it elaborates technical culture without any determinism or overwhelming but making the protagonists talk.

*Projects, instruments and purposes of the landscape*

The hardest challenge for the landscape project is the one about the contemporary city and its relation with

nature. A relation that clarifies itself in three different conditions: the first is the search for citizens' well-being and their need of green spaces in order to improve their hygienic conditions and preserve the use of resources at the same time; the second is to satisfy that cultural and social need of nature for the citizens, that has a lot to do with the need of landscape for the city as a horizon of sense and affection for the things that talk about nature; the third is the realization of new forms of spatiality that can be satisfied by the creation of gardens meant both as private and public spaces, for the need of recreation and loisir in the territories of urbanity.

Why is the landscape the core of such a careful attention? Why do landscape politics attract and take up much more than environmental challenges today? Why has this word become successful, although it is not clear what its action field is, and mainly which professions and skills are ready to work with it?

The notion of landscape cannot coincide with the one of environment, although it presumes it, as well as it includes all the geographical, historical, phenomenological and landscape values. The sectorial vision of the landscape politics needs a different and instrumental use, in order to focus, little by little, various implications of landscape in the questions of its project. But it is the utopian and mobilizing dimension of a political and social challenge to concern the work of landscapists and the sense of their project. Sometimes without any emphasis, silent and latent, sometimes noisy and energetic.

*Landscape culture for town planning*

Town planning was, for a

long time, interested in environment and the worry for the planet and its resources survival took it up so much that it seemed useless to take care of landscape. If the ecology impulse has trained the planner sight to read and understand environmental resources, on the other hand it has distracted him from understanding the several aspirations of a population demanding imaginative nature and beauties, chasing after it in daily life, in travels, and reproducing it in images and symbols. The town planner and the landscapist both have to interpret processes based on rules beyond their control. They work with irony without losing the tragic and popular character of their job.

Today the landscape project is asked to measure itself against the project of contemporary city. But does its job come abreast of or substitute the town planner? Can the needs be shared, superimposed the answers? For the town-planners the idea of a landscape project comes from the meaning it has in architecture and town-planning. It represents a situation, of a state to be reached.

It is an image because it prefigures an intention. In many cases the experience of landscape project increases the one of urban project and local development, unless, as in the case of territory project, it is a substitute. It is still divided between two poles: one concentrated on development politics and their special composition which leads to the creation of projected and planned spaces; the other linked to the improvement politics of local development, identifying the production of the forms through the protagonists. In any case, the landscape project answers the question of the ruled forms, or the forms renewed by planners' creativity, if not by the

citizens' uses. By agreeing with Cristina Bianchetti's ideas about town-planner's job, it is indispensable to refer to materiality and the instability of meanings these jobs have to deal with. Building images becomes the core of the professional's job; throwing in the visible space the different visions coming from expert knowledge involved in the study of the landscape, bringing them near the practical contingencies as a field of discussion. What is interesting is the revision for the landscape images of the internal efficacy of a former difficult representation that becomes easy, and the external efficacy as a communication and persuasion device. As well as the territorial sciences that use devices typical of the different disciplines and professions, are used to measuring against themselves and their own languages. The work on the landscape stimulates debates and produces something new only if it accepts the challenge of the action, 'to dirty ones hands on the papers' to represent and communicate, stimulated to a proof of efficacy. The many professionals of space, geographers, sociologists, historians, ecologists, town-planners and architects of landscape can be considered as landscapists when they work in critical vision that finds a common tension. Working with broken lens means to see through superimpositions and distortions, paying attention to the news from the angles of refraction of a continuously checked reality. The landscape project is a society project where the territory is neither a sub-product of economy nor simply a support of actions. But it cannot be a simple infrastructure that facilitates the processes of

social production, though it is included. The project is mainly the ability of simultaneously working on esthetical, symbolic and ecologic questions that refer to the complex nature of landscape. Ductile concept, available, it does not impose itself but can pay attention, can speak and listen to. A good occasion is the new law about landscape where a landscape challenge is added to the culture of an urban project. The project is the only weapon against the identities rhetoric, it continuously interprets the territory in its progress and follows the building of strategic knowledge according to the choices to make. The landscape project deals with a new relation with nature; it gives the resource an environmental value charged of judgments and expectations and not determinate and deducible values. The project shall propose new experiences of nature in the contemporaneity, without hypostatizing it within the 'invariants' but acting into it. It is in the research of congruence of town-planning and architecture project scales, within the landscape option, that the territory government policies have to be set, the richness of its latest and not so recent experiences, enriching them with procedures and instruments that have given encouraging results in other European countries, adapting and reformulating them according to our contexts. Learning by confrontation, now that the challenge is open, is more and more stimulating because the Convention of the landscape takes us to Europe. Many instruments are available providing you are able to shape and adapt to the new needs. Concepts and techniques of interpretation and simulation of the processes happening

in the space, spatial statistics, sensitive remote analysis, may help read the transformations and study the change detection, simulate trajectories, prefigure scenarios, give sense to the valuations, beyond the due act. Innovative instruments like environmental equalization may help build the new basis thanks to the wisdom of new actors, better inclined to solve the problems bilaterally, what environment needs is more convenient, by using mitigation and compensation, apart from a simple accountancy, but as tools for the project. Experimenting the coherence of project scale is fundamental. Focusing the peri-urbanity territories, for instance, implies necessarily a transcalar project of the vision; understanding where the phenomenon starts and ends and which scale of representation contrasts it so to make it readable. At the same time the instruments regulating its transformations have to be placed in the scale where the themes get visible, sharable and coactive. A more complex concept of subsidiarity, more planning. To understand the phenomenon of peri-urbanity means to renew the techniques that explores fragmentations, diluted densities, double residentiality and life ubiquity styles and find the right ways to project and govern it: territorializing agricultural politics merging the open space management in contexts of metropolization with updating and versatility processes of such an agriculture that is unbalanced between food and landscape oriented; joining the two worlds of urban society and farmers, that ignore each other; working on the project of stringing together suburbs with the open countryside. A non-linear spinneret that

becomes a chain of value. At the same time, it will be necessary to pay attention to globalization processes that create interferences between the research of alternative energies and the risk of a new world famine, between the regulations of Pac, that believe in abandoning agriculture and the risk of food undersupplying for the countries at risk. Strategic and selective visions form above, like a vulture looking for its quarry, like a wayfarer that looks from the bottom, and together, like a climber who, going up slowly, modifies time after time the line of vision and the resolution grid of the better perceivable objects. It is not necessary to underline the questions of identity and of the relation between history and planning. Only a short mention of some easy affiliations. Looking back to the past there is no mercy for places; people did not wait for globalization to attack woods, to reduce nature into the farmlands to the minimum, to drastically simplify the environment in non sustainable forms. History professionals may help demystify the ideological adherences between territories and societies letting us in an extraordinarily planning vision over history. Transcality, process-like, inter-sectoriality of landscape plan underline its holistic character strategic without covering, able to orientate the many processes without being a further layer of rules that slows down the already heavy planning machine, avoiding the paradoxical ends of an excess of planning. The strategy for the landscape plan becomes, more than in other territorial plans, a scenario of the possible that has coherently the power and becomes stronger when selecting politics as construction of

the most suitable choices.  
Projecting the rules,  
projecting the  
managements, projecting  
the regulations, means  
looking for the physicalness  
of forms not divided by  
processes, anticipating the  
ends and paying attention to  
the several transformations  
that have consequences on  
the landscape.  
Distractions have been very  
damaging. A vision of  
landscape that imbues the  
culture of a society could  
make the production of a  
landscape more and more  
normal, unintentional the  
effects, recovering the  
poetic meaning. Maybe, in  
this way, we will talk about  
landscape a bit less.