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Atlases and landscapes

Attilia Peano

Atlases, originally systematic collections of bound and catalogued maps representing the image of the known world for the 16th century middle classes engaged in trade and commerce in distant lands, were highly successful for at least two centuries during which they were constantly reproduced in order to incorporate ever broader knowledge of new countries. The Ortelio (1574) and Mercatore (1595), considered to be excellent examples of the 16th century, are characterised by a common hierarchical interpretation of the world in which Europe reigned supreme over all the other countries. Subsequent atlases, printed and re-printed in the 17th century by European publishers to cater to growing demand from traders and entrepreneurs, in particular by the Dutch and above all Blaeu who increased the number of plates, publishing an atlas in 11 volumes, are of great importance. In the following centuries, atlases were specialised according to geographical area and topic; in Italy, the first national Atlas was published by the Touring club italiano in 1940; atlases gradually became less monumental with dynamic and also critical descriptions of the country represented. Contemporary atlas production is characterised by a wide variety of different types including road, tourist, physical, economic atlases. Each atlas, inserted in a specific cultural context and with its own specific purpose, type and form, relates a 'story' and reflects a vision of the world, regardless of claims and declarations of preciseness and scientific approach.

Landscape Atlases represent a field of observation and knowledge that started to attract attention at the beginning of this century when the first theories on the valorisation of territorial resources as a key to development were mooted, having abandoned the concept of constraints as an exclusive instrument of protection. Inclusion of the landscape in territorial policies was declared a major priority in the 1999. Development scheme of community space which indicated that European countries should adopt 'creative management' landscapes, considered as local and regional identity and as an image of history and of the interaction between man and nature. This consideration was also reflected in 2000 in the European landscape convention in which they were assigned a political role, expressing the need to consider the landscapes of the entire territory and to address these with policies and protection, management and planning measures based on recognition and evaluation, involving the stakeholders and populations concerned.

The landscape atlas is, therefore, a theme-based atlas that addresses a recently rediscovered and valorised topic, still characterised however by noteworthy specific aspects and ambiguity. The landscape is, in fact, an image more of processes than objects; it is dynamic and holistic insofar as it expresses the complementary natu-

re and relationship between various aspects relating to ecology, history, town planning, local economy, usually considered separately in territorial analyses.

It is also particularly difficult to gauge the population's perception of these aspects, as required by the European convention in order to draft shared preservation and transformation projects. The Atlas project configured for Piedmont, to meet the need for aperture towards new knowledge and interpretations, to chart the dynamic nature of the processes, to take into account change and the expectations aroused by existing programmes and projects, to permit use as a reference point for inter-institutional and social dialogue and confrontation also for the purpose of planning, has been organised as a hypertext, conceived therefore in a reticular, dynamic and interactive form, with information nodes consisting of texts and images derived from many disciplinary approaches and referred both to regional and local scale, as a constantly-evolving product with the possibility of continuous update. Specific attention has been dedicated to experimentation in order to chart social perception, adopting various methods and different scales.

Methodological proposals for the management and promotion of Piedmont landscapes

Attilia Peano, Claudia Cassatella

The inter-university department of territorial studies (Polytechnic and University of Turin), with the contribution of the Crt foundation and the collaboration of Piedmont regional council, has produced an Atlas for the management and promotion of Piedmont landscapes, coordinated with and complementary to the Atlas of historical landscapes in Piedmont produced by the Casa città department at the Turin Polytechnic. Together, they represent an 'atlas of change' under-lining the historical processes, repositories of the past, current dynamics, critical points of transformation and change scenarios linked to planning and innovation. The purpose of the two sister atlases is to achieve methodological and technological innovation regarding the way in which the landscape is read and interpreted, in the light of the recent indications of the European landscape convention and the Italian code of cultural heritage and landscape. The Atlas has been designed as a kind of portal, which organises varied, fluid content in order to provide an instrument for orientation that can be updated on an ongoing basis. It is divided into two main parts:

- part I, «The Region» (Piedmont); this section describes the geographical landscape, the history of the region, the content of sectorial studies on land and landscape planning, and the places and issues relating to the landscape of Piedmont which form part of the collective imagination.

- part II, «Characteristic landscape areas»; this divides the region according to the most significant landscape areas which are then described in detail.

Each environment is illustrated in two ways. The first is a collection of different representations: maps, photographs, pictures and images familiar to the general public (very famous landscapes, etc.). The second consists of the interpretative frameworks produced by the experts: these include environmental, socio-economic and scenic contexts, and the history of population development in the region. An illustrated document then provides a brief evaluation, which adopts the interpretative categories used in landscape policies: type of landscape, significance, values (relating to geomorphology, natural history, population development, geomorphological, naturalistic, agricultural and scenic issues), status, dynamics and pressures, and critical areas. A section, detailing the current dynamics and changes envisaged by plans and projects, enables a comparison of future scenarios.

The networked structure and inclusion of hypertext enables a great deal of content to be stored, and browsed according to need. The idea behind the Atlas is that it will encourage public decision-making with regard to the landscape, as it allows links and comparisons between

interpretations and proposals from various sources. Unlike other landscape atlases, it is not a planning instrument (it does not include rules and is not institutional), but it is an instrument for the planning process. The knowledge is geared towards action, while leaving the decision-making process open.

In order to do this, the information must be comprehensible to various groups of people, and the public point of view must also be considered. The research group carried out several tests in order to understand how the social perception of the landscape can be analysed, and be taken into account for policymaking purposes.

The proposed aim of the landscape atlas is not to provide a univocal description of the landscape, but to compare the many images of the «interested parties and population concerned». It takes into account the social perception of a landscape, as required by the European convention, and can be a useful tool in planning processes, by clarifying the viewpoints and values at stake, separating the information-gathering and evaluation stages of the decision-making process.

Social perception of the landscape and the Atlases

Claudia Cassatella

'Landscape means an area, as perceived by people'. Inclusion of this assertion in the European landscape convention has made social perception a *sine qua non* in landscape planning. It seems to demonstrate that the political significance of the landscape lies in the perceptive (or sensitive) dimension, which distinguishes it conceptually from land. It permits, in fact, consideration of both the sectorial values attributed by the experts and those ascribed by 'common feelings' stemming from memory and tradition, use, including production, enjoyment, and aesthetic appreciation. Social perception of landscapes is a very broad field of enquiry requiring appropriate methods, still in the experimental stage, with which to indicate those who should be consulted and how (it is not always clear what is to be sought from their involvement: ingenuous or window-dressing operations are by no means rare), as well as the way in which expert and non-expert knowledge should be put together in the drafting of policies. Surveys of this kind are faced with problems concerning their level and moment (identification, evaluation, choice of strategies), and especially the groups of subjects.

The regional scale now *de rigueur* in landscape planning is particularly problematical. Determination of the landscapes that confer its identity on a region presupposes the existence of a feeling of belonging to and identification with a territorial ambit, which is relatively new in Italy. Yet this feeling of belonging and identity is not the only reference value for a landscape. Suffice it to think of its aesthetic value, often perceived and defended by "outsiders", even against the local population. Consideration of the landscapes regarded as 'World heritage sites' will show the need for case-by-case definition of the field of attention, including the identification of groups representing different points of view, both within and without the area in question.

The *Atlante dei paesaggi piemontesi* (Diter 2007), addresses the question of the social perception of landscapes through the experimentation of several enquiry methods on different scales. Numerous enquiries have been compared on the local scale: the scenic-perceptive setting (expert analysis), the landscape represented in guides, the landscape 'pushed' by tourist bureaux and local authorities, the presence of landscapes on Internet sites (for a potentially planetary public), and a 'landscape preferences game' played by five populations.

Each enquiry has its own specific nature and its own limits, which means that it is best to have several approaches on hand. Comparison is the easiest if the contents are referred by interpretation to a set of preselected landscape values. To promote the usability of the enquiries in landscape planning, reference is made to the values

cited by the Cultural heritage code (morphological, naturalistic, historical, cultural, aesthetic), with the addition of the socioeconomic or use value, and the negative value. Examination of representations, especially those in tourist guides and other publications, has the advantage of being also applicable on a large scale in cases where the undertaking of direct surveys is rendered more complicated by the amplitude and selection of the sample. For the Piedmont as a whole, two groups of pictures have been chosen to represent the viewpoints of insiders and outsiders. That of the local community is illustrated by the representations produced by the Regional tourist board for its communication and land promotion operations, that of the national community by those of Piedmont in the guides and books of the Italian Touring club, which has distinguished itself in promotion of knowledge of the Italian cultural and landscape heritage since its foundation at the end of 19th century. Both sources, of course, mainly offer stereotype landscapes. Even so, interesting observations arise from the comparison of the two groups.

The Atlas as a metaphor for the history of territory and landscape

Mauro Volpiano

Interpretation of the landscape today must necessarily include a passage through the relationship between tradition and innovation, between the need to handle change and awareness of an area's historical sedimentation. Experiments are international in nearly every culture, even prior to the legislative context. Cognitive analyses as the introduction to projects and planning take account of the historical matrix of landscapes, sometimes finely divided into disciplinary intersections as in the case of the french Atlas des Paysages, at other times with more properly historical and territorial analyses as in the case of the method perfected in the 1990s by English Heritage aimed at the coverage of the whole of the country by means of Historical landscape characterisation (HLC). In other national contexts, a strong cataloguing and documentation tradition expresses not so much cultural interpretation of landscapes as their collection within an inventory through the elaboration of procedures for the recognition and cataloguing of significant portions of a country's lands, such as the methods devised by the National park service with the guide-lines furnished by the Historic American landscape society, or the general cataloguing of the portuguese heritage, consultable on Sipa, the integrated webgis portal established by the Direcção geral dos edificios e monumentos nacionais. With their search for systematic coverage and in the intersection of their languages, these experiments evoke the tradition of the atlases, which have always been the multimedia tool par excellence in the continual cross talk between maps and their accompanying descriptive texts. Atlases, therefore, understood both as a metaphor of a way of working and as operative instruments, now nearly all multimedial, are of assistance for the configuration of a process of shared understanding and high scientific specialisation.

The Atlante dei paesaggi storici piemontesi has been generated in this context. It is the outcome of an endeavour to bring together and set out to innovate Turin's traditional work in the field of historical land use studies dating back to at least the early 1960s. The Atlante provides a panorama of the main historical and cultural characters of the Piedmontese landscape divided into periods with indications of the circumstances that have moulded the area since Roman times. The basic choice was to interpret the processes that have shaped the region and formed its present landscape as opposed to a reading founded on the material permanence of its components. As examples of this intent to interpret the landscape via the critical lens of what has generated change rather than its material outcome, one can point to the erection of castles as opposed to castles themselves, not the great production behemoths, but the gradual establishment of new industrial standards from those of the Ancien

régime to those of today. The landscape is thus portrayed as a system of systems, the stratified result of both the relationships over time between territorial processes, some clearly legible, others immanent, and also, albeit subordinately, their corresponding material outcomes (buildings, infrastructures, agrarian layouts). This has led to the identification, for the entire region, of a relatively restricted number of historical processes and territorial settings to which to ascribe a stratified account of the morphogenesis of the Piedmontese landscape. The data have been plotted with a Gis software.

What are the advantages, both for planning and other purposes, of a survey of this kind? Firstly, discernment of the essential features of the landscape not as fixed components crystallised in a moving scenario, but as members of a changing context. Next, selection of only those historically significant processes with an influence on the current landscape, and hence the selection of the properties and systems that are truly significant. Insofar as selection is linked to processes and not to formal or aesthetically oriented reasons, it also promotes recognition of morphologically distinct properties, and thus opens the way to the putting forward of measures for the integrated realisation of their full worth by means of material signs that could seem not immediately assignable to homogeneous categories.

The European context

Angioletta Voghera

Experimentation in Europe of practices for understanding the landscapes directed to their planning and management has been the main spin-off from the European landscape convention (2000), during which stress was laid on the need to identify and evaluate landscapes to render them an integral part of the 'collective memory'. The result has been an innovation of the traditional forms of landscape understanding, a process influenced by interaction between the international indications and individual historical-cultural roots for land organisation, and development and protection of the landscape (Voghera 2006). Countries with a germanic-anglo-saxon cultural root (such as the Netherlands, Germany and United Kingdom), characterised by a tradition of drawing the best benefit from the landscape integrated in land use policies, share common notions of landscapes and their protection, whereas dated notions of landscape are typical of the Mediterranean countries (such as France, Spain and Italy), and it is here that the first innovations are taking shape.

Experiments of Atlases in the understanding of the landscapes develop an objective description of the landscapes to disseminate identity, elaborating multidisciplinary readings, and a subjective interpretation founded on social perception of the landscapes.

Interesting for the evaluation methodology, as a process of understanding the landscapes for action aimed at the construction of policies and plans shared by the social actors, are the German, the Slovenian, the Dutch and the English Atlases.

The wide range of methods devised by individual countries for identifying, interpreting and/or evaluating landscapes can be compared in terms of their: scale of analysis and representation; criteria for the identification of landscapes; types of values represented; participation; operativeness.

Landscape interpretation experiments have been conducted on a national scale (in Britain, Spain and Slovenia), on a regional scale (in France), and on a local scale (in Denmark) (Coe 2006).

A common feature is the interdisciplinary nature of the analyses, which converges in the identification of units or ambits that embrace landscapes with similar physical geographical, historical, environmental or socioeconomic characteristics. Experiments in Spain, Denmark and the Netherlands are identifying characterising systems that constitute large ambits arranged around a landscape matrix.

All too often, however, disciplinary analyses constitute sectorial interpretation that is rarely recomposed for public discussion through a synthetic and structural interpretation. The types of values represented (as monuments, documents, use, symbolic, environmental) are

influenced by a nation's traditional protection and management of its territories. The most common category is historical, accompanied by recognition of symbolic value and, since the 1990s; the ecological-environmental and use value.

Atlases are primarily directed to understanding. They have little operativeness and refer to tools for the assessment of values and orientation for intervention. A common feature of countries with a Germanic-Anglo-Saxon culture is the elaboration of evaluation methods as a process of collective learning to render explicit values and selection criteria useful for planning.

Participation is a critical aspect. Atlases are an 'expert representation' of landscapes for use in raising the consciousness of the population (as in Germany, United Kingdom, and elsewhere) as an actor of the form of the landscape and involved in its maintenance and management.

Different as they may be in their operativeness, Atlases are the main tool for the communication of values, spreading awareness throughout the population, and creating a framework of reference for policies and actions.

Experiences on the landscape catalogues for Catalonia

Jordi Bellmunt, Maria Goula

Massive interest on landscape in the Mediterranean emerged with the renewal of the discourse on public space; with time it has been oriented towards less explored design fields and resulted more exposed to natural processes. The present text deals with the work developed by the Centre of research and landscape design, Barcelona, related with the elaboration of the first landscape catalogues in Catalonia.

The elaboration of the landscape catalogues begun on 2005 on a political initiative from Generalitat de Catalunya and coordinated by Observatori de paisatge de Catalunya, the latter was founded with the main objective of registering experiences and spreading knowledge on landscape, putting into practice the concepts proposed by the European landscape convention.

It is important to underline that the experience has a double purpose: on one hand, to register in an exhaustive and non eclectic way Catalonia's contemporary landscapes, exposing the results to the citizenship in direct contact with local administrations; on the other hand, to generate new cartographies which will define the instruments for description and evaluation of those landscapes at the scale of regional planning. Moreover, they set the legal frame for the establishment of quality objectives as a guarantee of preservation and improvement.

Focusing the identity of those landscapes meant identifying complexity, fragility and opportunity situations. However, the most innovative aim was to interpret and recognize project opportunities within ordinary landscapes which are far away from being singular, sublime or sublimated.

The fundamental directives of this work have been the exploration of locations' abstract form through the definition of permanent horizons and minimum visual units, and the careful study of visual image based on ecological active structures as well as natural and vigorous agricultural patterns. The descriptive base for those landscapes has finally been the unit as perceptive and physiographic basis; however the final structure of this work introduces a new element that of the ecological frontier, the latter are considered areas which have highly valued as dynamic landscapes.

Finally, the cartography on quality objectives for each landscape unit offers an instrumental value since it is not just focusing on the valuable landscapes but it is inclusive mixing project opportunities of deteriorated landscapes with structural and quality landscape situations.

Tuscany landscapes Atlas and spatial planning

Gabriele Paolinelli, Antonella Valentini

In 2004 Tuscany Region promoted, inside its new territorial plan, the formulation of an Atlas of landscapes characters. The beginning of the study was coincident with the issuing of the Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio, but the Italian technician-legal scenery is now completely modified, two reviews of Codice and the confirmation of European landscape convention, with important effects on landscape planning.

Atlas is a recognition of landscape characters over all the Tuscany territory, independent of sites under protection. Landscape characters of territory are seen without any aesthetic filter. This formulation correspond to thoughts landscape as central reference for protection and transformation policies. Atlas aims to promote the perception of landscapes values even for ordinary territories that are without any protection guarantee. Really, from quality of everyday areas depends the effectiveness of protection of landscape goods recognized as being of outstanding beauty.

Atlas assumes the conception of landscape as couched by the European convention. Neither natural nor cultural aspects are privileged, hoping to create a reasoned archive on structural characters of Tuscan landscape where the division between excellent landscapes to protect and ordinary landscapes to consume doesn't exist. In the Atlas as 'structural character' are intended qualities, but also critical states, significant at regional level to describe Tuscan landscapes. The difference between 'identifying structural characters' and 'ordinary structural characters' aims to propose a reference for discussion and popularization, helpful to social perception that the European convention fixes as constituent component of landscape. For 'identifying structural characters' are intended characters that connote in an exclusive way the landscape of a particular historic-geographical ambit; 'ordinary structural characters' are instead relevant characters but spread in different ambits.

The choice to use photography to represent structural characters is linked to the will to describe landscape and start participation processes to share the noticed values at the same time.

Tuscan territory has been divided into thirty-eight ambits to which are referred the files of Atlas composed by three sections. For each ambit the first section reproduces the arrangement and the synthesis of structural landscape characters through text, photography and cartography means (the second one is limited, we just said that more interest is put on photography as more direct instrument to communicate with people, therefore a possible developing of Atlas could be the cartographical representation of identified characters). The second and third sections are dedicated to represent (by photos) identifying and ordinary structural landscape characters.

The technician and legal context in which now Tuscan Atlas is inscribed is complex. European landscape convention underlines the importance to integrate landscape into different planning instruments; landscape is the reference to define policies of landscape quality to protect, restore, create and enhance territories. Besides this, social perception is not for convention an aesthetic consideration, but it means to give a cultural sense to landscapes.

European landscape convention became a law in Italy in January 2006, but the position expressed by Italian jurisprudence is different. Italian code on landscape goods is addressed to those parts of landscape to protect and no reference is done to social perception.

Therefore, related to the significance of Atlas of landscape characters, is needed to understand the role of landscape planning between protection and transformation policies.