

# Chapter 35

## Integrated Planning for Landscape Protection and Biodiversity Conservation

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**Abstract** The definition of landscape adopted in the European Landscape Convention implies the pursuing of awareness raising and public involvement as a primary instrument for planning and policy implementation. As in the Italian tradition, national institutions prove slow in applying such principles and coordinating them with traditional urban planning. The main problem consists in understanding the positive role of landscape, as a dynamic synthesis of cultural and ecological features. In many cases, policy-makers and professional actors still consider the theme of landscape conservation and biodiversity protection as limitative entities. Acts and policies related to Protected Areas worldwide can represent a precious background of experiences for the implementation of an operative procedure of territorial management, which will consider landscape and biodiversity as relevant as economic features. Other effective suggestions come from the outcome document of Rio +20, the latest international convention on sustainable development. Integrating landscape and biodiversity in current national laws may prove inadequate. A successful application of the most recent tools of planning based on holistic approaches and including public-participated processes will be achieved only through a radical reflection about traditional policy-making, which is still linked to the division of the matter in obsolete compartments.

**Keywords** Holistic strategies • Landscape and biodiversity management • Sustainable development • Integrated planning

### 35.1 Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to highlight some peculiar features of the actual lawmaking and institutional background, compared to the state of the art determined by international conventions and the academic debate, related to landscape protection and biodiversity conservation. Moreover, it will put forward some considerations regarding the enhancement of integrated policies.

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The Italian situation is an interesting case study, as it still shows substantial flaws vis-à-vis the general requisites established by the Council of Europe. The European Landscape Convention (ELC) states the need to widen the meaning of *landscape*, underlining the role of *awareness raising* (ELC, art. 6.A) and the active involvement of the public – meaning both private subjects and local institutions – as fundamental for the success of integrated environmental policies at all scales. Similar topics have been recently faced in international talks and conventions on sustainable development, such as Rio +20, which emphasized the importance of considering biodiversity and cultural heritage-related themes as necessary elements of any advanced form of policy-making.

The focus will be both on the main role of awareness raising and public participation as decisive tools for present and future planning and on the operative definition of landscape as intended by the ELC, which still meets many difficulties to be accepted and applied, both in European and Italian initiatives.

## 35.2 The Operative Definitions of Landscape

The definition of landscape worldwide is quite difficult and composite, involving a number of possible meanings according to different cultures, regarding different approaches to sensorial experience (Bruns 2013). The ELC highlights the importance of landscapes due to their contribution to individual and social well-being, their role in Europe's heritage and their significance as the environment of towns and countryside (Ward Thompson and Sarlöv Herlin 2004).

The Convention suggests the necessity to overcome other traditional attitudes towards landscape, widening the meaning of the term and linking it to the active role of the European population: it is considered as “an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (ELC, art. 1.a). The definitions adopted in various European strategies lack coordination with the ELC, since the word “landscape” may be referred to:

- The connective tissue of natural/paranatural habitats, which counters the fragmentation of the landscape itself and the threatening of biodiversity (*Benefits beyond boundaries*, IUCN 2003)
- The sociocultural dimension of landscape, mostly related to policies for rural development and cohesion (e.g. Carmona-Torres et al. 2011) which, according to UNESCO strategies (*Vienna Memorandum 2005; Management guidelines 1998*), are broadening the categories of excellent “cultural landscapes”, including strategies to attract tourists, inhabitants and investments (Voghera 2011)

The coordination of these definitions appears to be vital even for the construction and implementation of the operative idea of landscape proposed in the text of the ELC. The task could be achieved through a joint effort by the EU members: yet such coordination seems quite complex. On this behalf, the internal situation of any

European countries presents political, institutional and cultural problems. Overcoming the existing contradictions is sometimes hindered by the actual condition of national legislations. In these regard, the Italian case study shows some of the major difficulties, as the operative definition of *landscape* in the Italian Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code, Leg. Decree no. 42/2004, shifts between the ELC text and other traditional definitions, taken from dated national laws. The current version of the text does not take into account the role played by the public in the process of codification of what a landscape is (Priore 2009), as it says:

(...) landscape (...) a homogeneous part of territory, whose features descend from nature, from human history and from their mutual interactions (Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code, art. 131, c. 1)

while the same article used to link the concept of landscape to the identity of the people who lived on the related territory, following the ELC (art. 1.a). Conservation and enhancement are then limited to the values of those parts of territory, which can be considered as “perceivable manifestations of identity” (Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code, art. 131, c. 2). This passage is quite tricky, as the statement about the cultural aspect of the landscape implies in many experiences the attribution of an exceptional cultural value. Meanwhile, the traditional conception of landscape and the related demand for beauty has not been mitigated through the widening and updating of its meaning. On the contrary, it has been partially substituted by a renewed interest for the environment (Savio and Paludi 2005), yet without achieving coordination among the various institutional fields involved.

Some of the problems inherent in the Italian case can be found in other contexts, where attempts are underway to coordinate national laws with the ELC. Much must be done, not only in Italy but also across the whole European Union, in order to receive a positive feedback from institutions and social actors. First of all, the traditional conservative conception of landscape (strongly linked to touristic offer) must give way to the new conception of a *multilayered public infrastructure* (Bunge 2011), characterizing its planning as a composite and positive phenomenon based on new holistic aesthetics. The entity *landscape* itself encompasses both eco-centric and cultural dimensions; the adoption of cross-cultural approaches, as elaborated in landscape scholarship, is fundamental for the formulation of effective and up-to-date strategies (Stokols 2011). As shown infra, then, any operative definition of landscape should be conceived as a feature of an integrated policy-making aimed at sustainable development. The participation and awareness of the public are the crux of the matter.

### 35.3 Awareness Raising and Public Involvement: A Neglected Task?

The ELC insists on awareness raising and public involvement as decisive features of any planning strategy. Article 6 of the Convention underlines the importance of allocating resources to the information and involvement of citizens, multi-disciplinary training of technical staff and local/regional/national authorities and development of related school and university courses (*ECL explanatory Report*, 52–53). The achievement of such objectives is essential, yet it encounters many difficulties. Social and political actors should pursue these tasks for many reasons. First of all, public awareness is fundamental for the definition of bottom-up landscape concepts, which could become the rationale of effective policies (Groening 2007). Any planning operation should be characterized by the constant dialogue among the proposing subjects and the public, so that bottom-up proposals can be harmonized with top-down decisions. Following Daniel Burnham:

when the majority of the people of any town come to think that convenience and its consequent beauty are essential, they will have them, for a democracy has full power over men, land and goods, and can always make its laws fit its purpose. (Burnham 1910)

Traditional frameworks of European national institutions are not generally ready for the implementation of such principles. The Italian case proves useful to underline particularly critical features. In Italy planning processes are still characterized by top-down approaches, by traditional conception of the regulation processes (mainly based on rigid set of rules) and by the small places left to local communities and stakeholders. The effects are aggravated by the confusion deriving from the coexistence of different plans (local urban plans, regional and territorial plans, landscape plans, PAs plans and others).

In Italy, design activities have to face an eminently limitative attitude by public institutions. Top-down planning is often conceived as the elaboration of multi-layered landscape and zoning plans, which set standards and limits according to composite criteria of territorial management. The involvement of citizens is limited to the possibility of presenting written remarks during the process of formulation of the plans, while awareness-raising activities are almost ignored, especially at a local/regional scale. The institutions play a rigid role in the process of landscape transformation: after the formulation of the plan, they mainly have to express acceptance or denial of the proposals put forward by private actors. Meanwhile, update periods for the plans themselves are often too long, and the related procedures too cumbersome. It should be added that both officers and professional actors are seldom trained to consider landscape or biodiversity-related themes as active tools of urban design: the various fields of intervention still appear disconnected (Isman 2004). These limits are particularly evident when it comes to infrastructure designing and building. In such cases, economic interests tend to overshadow all other aspects, although many European experiences speak in favour of the possibility of integrating infrastructure building, landscape planning and

biodiversity conservation (Shannon and Smets 2010, 2011). The problem is inherent in the system: the Italian legislation conceives most governance tools and rights as an emanation of the central state. Any attempt to promote bottom-up policies is hindered by the substantial aim of the law: syncretism finds stringent limits in the current separation of the various aspects of territorial management. Meanwhile, the institutional relations among the central government and local/regional authorities are continuously being debated (Bonaudo 2005). Designing political measures implies that outstanding cultural values are identified and highlighted, in such a way as suggested, for example, by the codification of UNESCO sites. This tendency risks to clash with the intent to assure adequate “knowledge, conservation, planning and management” of the “whole territory”, as stated by the *Codice dei Beni Culturali e del Paesaggio* (Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code, art. 135, c. 1). Italian landscape planning, as conceived in the same article 135 of the *Codice*, cannot be considered as an effective implementation of the ELC, since it is often linked to obsolete notions of traditional urban zoning. Although the coordination of different specializations is achieved through various forms of multidisciplinary actions, the state of the art of the academic and political debate would still recommend a greater effort towards a transdisciplinary model (Doble and King 2011; Stokols 2006; Linehan and Gross 1998), allowing the elaboration of holistic approaches, which could help preserve and enhance the various aspects of a territory effectively.

Nevertheless, interesting suggestions for the development and enhancement of holistic policies may derive from experiences related to the management of outstanding areas and buildings. In these contexts, authorities have to consider an advanced degree of interaction between biodiversity conservation and landscape protection as a standard approach, since these features represent a priority. Protected Areas, such as transnational, national and regional parks, represent excellent case studies. In particular, interesting hints come from the Anglo-Saxon cultural area. The US *National Park Service Organic Act* of 1916 held the conservation of “the scenery and the natural and historic objects and the wildlife therein” as vital to the enjoyment and well-being of present and future generations of citizens. Similar principles are stated in the UK *National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act of 1949* (II, 5 and 11a), which considers the creation of opportunities for the understanding and enjoyment of “natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage” as relevant as their conservation and enhancement. The statement also includes the social and economic well-being of local communities as a primary task of national parks. These previous experiences represent good precedents for the formulation of the ELC text, thus explaining quite well why England has been one of the first countries to promote an institutional framework for the enhancement and implementation of measures related to public involvement and awareness raising (Butler and Berglund 2014) after the ratification of the Convention. Recent formulations linked to Protected Areas at a regional and local scale have specified the main terms of public involvement. A particularly clear manifesto about the relevance of public involvement could be found in 2011 on the Web portal of the natural parks of the Australian state of Victoria:

The purpose of Park Victoria is to conserve, protect and enhance natural and cultural values, provide quality experiences, services and information to customers, provide excellence and innovation in park management, and contribute to the environmental, social and economic well-being of Victorians. (Parks Victoria 2009)

The experience related to the institution of the Park as a protected area could prove very precious for what regards the conception of holistic landscape policies: the latest approaches cannot do without considering Protected Areas as contexts, in which planning related to biodiversity and landscape preservation have to coexist in a syncretic way. In similar contexts, we see different attempts to enhance the application of bottom-up models of information and intervention, like the Public Participation Geographic Information Systems, or PPGIS (Brown and Weber 2011), and to overcome traditional political obstacles, such as the difficult dialogue among institutions, which can be verified, for instance, in the processes of constitution of transnational parks.

### 35.4 Concluding Remarks: Integrating Landscape and Biodiversity

The international debate at a strategic scale is trying to define a set of criteria for the definition of truly holistic approaches, which may involve conservation and protection of global cultural, natural and biological features, organized in “landscapes” and “ecosystems”. On this behalf, a very important point was marked by the Rio +20 convention on sustainable development. The outcome document (*Future We Want* (United Nations 2012)) recognizes that “ecosystems. . . their livelihoods, their economic, social and physical well-being, and their cultural heritage” are all deeply connected in the life of human beings (art. B.30), while the “conservation, as appropriate, of the natural and cultural heritage of human settlements” is considered as a primary task (art. V.A.134). The document also underlines the relevance of “natural and cultural diversity” as active contributors to sustainable development (art. B.41). The section devoted to “sustainable tourism” (art. V.A.130) states the need to “conserve and protect the environment, respect wildlife, flora, biodiversity, ecosystems and cultural diversity, and improve the welfare and livelihoods of local communities”. In the end, art. V.A.197 affirms the “intrinsic. . . ecological, genetic, social, economic, scientific, educational, cultural, recreational and aesthetic values of biological diversity”, thus aiming at an ideal definitive overcoming of the barriers between biodiversity and cultural heritage as separate institutional fields.

It is clear that the document favours econometric-like definitions and avoids any open mention of complex terms, such as “landscape”, due to their different meaning in the various cultures worldwide and to the resulting ambiguity (Bruns 2013). The document pleads the adoption of a holistic attitude towards policy-making and planning, as recently claimed also by international associations of designers (Moore and Marques 2013). Such principles will work only when considering the public as

a protagonist of the multilayered process of territorial management and transformation at all scales. Many tools are available, considering international conventions and political orientations and the results of the academic research; interesting examples can be found among coordination experiences of bottom-up and top-down policy-making in the USA (Doble and King 2011; Gray 2007; Forrester 1999; Healey 1997; Hester 1989), where aware researches on this themes have been conducted since the 1960s (Arnstein 1969). Various experiences can be found in the Italian context as well (Cassatella et al. 2010); yet, due to the discontinuous support given by national institution, the implementation of up-to-date principles is still perceived as a sort of extraordinary cost. Policy-makers reason in an easier way about trying to integrate landscape policies in the existing tools of governance, as requested by the guidelines for the implementation of the ELC (*Recommendation CM/Rec (2008)3*, I.1.D-E-F); landscape should be used as a fundamental peculiarity of the policy itself. Compromises are sometimes too difficult and many actors could look at the ELC as a sort of limitation. Since landscape is 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 (ELC, art. 5.a)

landscape planning has to be faced together with other aspects of territorial planning, namely, those regarding the traditionally "less outstanding" parts of the land. Available instruments have to be re-thought according to a new holistic attitude, which shall look at landscape and ecology as winning moves for an innovative policy-making.

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