

## Landscape for Democracy

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### 1. The democratic dimensions of landscape. The ancient Commune

For years we have considered the Italian piazzas the theatre of the communal democracy. Their main feature according to Louis Kahn is the dimension: the one that allows to recognize a friend that stands on the other side of the piazza. The Italian piazza contains small quantities of people, consenting confrontation between equals. Similar to the agora of the Greek polis (from which the term *politics* derives), it lacks of vectorial dimension, of tribunes from which *one* speaks to the *people*, being instead the place where common decisions are being made. These assemblies produce decisions concerning the preservation and defense of the inhabited places.

Taking up arms and defend against invaders was only part of the question. Good management of the territory was also needed: from the conduction of water and the agricultural organization, to rules such as the *Bellosguardo*, that made memorable the Tuscan landscape. According to the *Bellosguardo* rule, who builds on a hill to enjoy the panorama of the hill in front, is required to improve with his building the view of the one on the hill that looks upon. Produce for the others the landscape you would like to enjoy: the translation in landscape key of the evangelical recommendation.

Therefore, in the Italian piazza is condensed the entire idea of Commune, still today the less contested political power. The continuity throughout the centuries of the political value of the term *common*, is probably related to the practice of the *direct* democracy, that cannot structurally exceed the range of direct knowledge of the issues. This is also valid for *taking charge* of the landscape. The dimension of the landscape that each of us feels its own, is limited to modest territorial ranges beyond which the landscape isn't connected anymore to a complex and direct experience, but becomes partial, episodic, less engaging.

Summarizing, we are willing to take responsibility for the landscape that we feel as ours, as we have the *cultural property* over it, we feel that we are among the ones that have and are still producing it. This mobilizing feeling doesn't apply to large territories, but has pretty accurate boundaries, that we need to explore and understand if we want to count on an active exercise of democracy, in terms of collective concern and responsibility.

### 2. Democratic dimensions of landscape. The universal Good

If the term *Paysage* (by Pays) enhances the sense of identity, the work for producing the places and the political commitment of managing them. Instead, the term *Landschaft* (by Land) introduces the emotion of the relationship with Nature, with the Earth.

On one hand, Landscape inspires the sense of cultural property and corresponds to the effort of an entire community. On the other hand, is the raw material for the individual emotion from Jean Jacques Rousseau's walks and from the amazed gaze of Caspar David Friedrich. The Enlightenment and its sentimental side, the Romanticism, that discover the beauty of solitude in the face of nature, form the basis of a Landscape-as-Good manifesto, as universal right to the exciting relationship with the places and their perception.

The fundamental qualities of the individual are enhanced, underlining the basic conditions to be assured for everyone, regardless of operative variations and specific conditions. In elaborating the right to Landscape, follower of the fundamental rights declaration, the aim is to make available for everybody the raw material that landscape provides: the access to emotion, may it be the reassuring sense of identity or the exciting sense of exploration and wonder at the diversity of nature.

The universal value of emotion is among the rights of the individual, depends of each particular personality that by assumption is different of that of any other. As far as landscape is concerned, as outlined above, we should try to assure an universal Good and not a *common* Good, if to the term *common* we associate a collective effort to decide and to act accordingly. Today the commitment for democracy outside the institutions aims to ensure general rights and to encourage the emergence of forms of resistance to imposed changes (from the Occupy movements to the various No...), rather than to guarantee the conditions to exercise power and to manage changes.

### **3. Landscape for the difficult integration between Good and Commune**

In summary, the action of claiming the rights appears today the most coherent with the ethical essence of Democracy, even though in other periods to the idea of Democracy was rather associated the exercise of the collective decisional power than the legitimacy of the general rights.

The cultural and political climate nowadays tends to reward the effort of ensuring the Landscape as Good to which everybody is entitled. The experience of the common management of resources of which historical landscapes are witnesses remains in the background. We are trying to make available the Landscape Good, but without worrying about the cultural and operative conditions for this availability to become Common. We do not give priority to the design and management components of Landscape, but rather to the right of access, to the defense from offending the places, to the preservation of the excellence.

This attitude implies considering the Landscape as a morphogenetic system, able to evolve towards balance if it is not disturbed. But this is a characteristic that belongs to *Nature*, to the *Land*, but not to the *Pays*. The landscape is nowadays subject in any point of the continent to man-made processes, in which the natural balances are continuously aided or contrasted by increasingly incisive actions of single individuals or of entire communities. The Landscape system in Europe would not arrive to a condition of morphogenetic autonomy even if we abstained for years from any action. The only possible way is to manage landscape in continuous interaction with the human strategies, and this interaction should depend on a democratic process of decision-making as it regards a Common-Good.

In conclusion, in Europe the landscape as Good-for-everyone must become Common-Good. In other words, the practice of the landscape democracy, should not concern just the right to access, but also taking part to decision making and management. This road does not regard only landscape, but all other common goods: it concerns the current sense of democracy.

Nowadays, for the Common-Goods, the model of the medieval Commune or that of the ancient Polis cannot be taken as reference. Evidently, the dimensional issue emerges. The battle of democracy has moved now to different piazzas from the Italian ones: Tiananmen, Tahir are names that evoke huge spaces, where forces are measured instead of ideas, thousands not individuals. Along with this change of dimension emerges the dramatic fragility of the "mass democracy", its instable balance that does not allow creating the basis for sustainable strategies nor for taking care of the human habitat. Bridges must

be created between the two dimensions: make feasible the term GLOCAL that excited us years ago, but never generated an organic subsidiarity.

It's becoming urgent for the fundamental values of Democracy to experiment new forms of common efficiency, not only in design choices, but also in the management of durable processes. We need new initiatives towards shared goals that consent collectivities to feel as their own a common time and space.

The Landscape offers itself as fertile ground to start up collective strategies for the Common-Good. In the necessary relation between *Landschaft* and *Paysage* the effort for a *glocal* strategy is implicit. For Democracy to regain its meaning, the common sense of the places must be treasured, the management model of the rural past, of the active control capacity of the interventions in cities that are already widespread skills, capable of aggregating communities on operational issues otherwise latent or dispersed. We should start again from Landscape towards Democracy.