

Who is afraid of transition? Monitoring the impact of transformation on historical rural landscapes as indicator of communities' changing needs

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Abstract: Rural landscapes are a productive heritage. Consequently, these sites can be representative, more than others, of the quantitative and qualitative impact of macro-phenomena related to transition by monitoring transformations acting over them. This heritage is recently at the centre of a strong interest and debate. The challenges posed by a constantly transforming and stressed heritage led to an urgent need, emerged in particular in the last fifteen years, of an integrated approach that could cope with a complex background of issues, such as exogenous and endogenous pressures. However, at first instance, preservation approaches applied over historical rural landscapes focussed on a “crystallization” of these sites, although their intrinsic dynamism. Accordingly, some are the recent management tools dedicated specifically to this heritage, aimed to integrate preservation and planning policies (e.g. GIAHS, FAO). Their effectiveness is based on two main pillars, which differentiates them from previous approaches: first, the direct involvement of communities that have shaped, maintained and inhabited these sites over time, through an examination of newer needs derived from a recent opening to a globalized world; second, the definition of site-specific management plans able to change accordingly to the results of a participate monitoring over time, in the perspective of the definition of a win/win methodology including all the stakeholders involved (communities, agencies, institutions). The paper evidences the contraposition between the “fear” of an inevitable transformation and the potentialities they can generate as indicator of the transition effects on rural landscapes in time. Thus, the development of policies aimed to a dynamic preservation of this heritage must consider an accompanied and mutual support to transition between communities and professionals. To discuss this scenario, a comparison over the application of management and preservation approaches in two rural landscapes sites is given, to outline potentialities and critical aspects.

Keywords: Rural landscapes, integrated approaches, monitoring, dynamic conservation, communities

Introduction

The preservation of rural landscapes has gathered the attention of a growing number of scholars from different disciplines, since the early 2000s (Antrop, 2005; Antrop and Van Eetvelde, 2017).

The reason for this interest from a wide range of sectors lies also in the difficult determination of the concept of *landscape* itself which, as a “polysemous” (Gambi, 2000), “dense” (Varotto, 2018) or even “opaque” (Birks, 1998; Wynard Lion, 2007) term has needed to be adjectivized to delimit its meaning. The origins of the term *landscape* have had an influence over the definition of the concept *cultural landscape* nowadays: the fact that there is not a specific and unique definition might be a consequence of the ubiquitous use implied over the centuries of the word *landscape* in different languages (Meining, 1979, Rowntree, 1996; Taylor, 2009). From the restitution of the concept of *cultural landscape*, detailed by Carl O. Sauer in 1925¹, up to the most recent ones in the context of the preservation of the cultural heritage, which on the international level are identified in the definitions given by the World Heritage Center (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

¹“The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a cultural group. Culture is the agent, the natural area is the medium, the cultural landscape is the result. Under the influence of a given culture, itself changing through time, the landscape undergoes development, passing through phases and probably reaching ultimately the end of its cycle of development”.

Organization - UNESCO, 1992)² and the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000)³, substantial differences and implications have rose.

The limit to delineate the meaning of *cultural landscape* in a common and shared definition is reflected also as a first obstacle to overcome in approaching the safeguard and management of such heritage. Being complex and multidimensional, the main challenge is represented by a dualism of sense: on the one hand, a *forced* simplification and *impoverishment* of a multifaceted heritage, structured not only by many components, but also by the relationship intercurrent between them. On the other, the aforementioned presence of several and coexisting factors could lead to a picking approach, which investigates only partially the whole.

For long time, in fact, the anthropic and natural macro-components of landscape have been investigated as separate, taking little into account their crucial interconnections (Smith, 2006); or even, the presence of man and its action over nature has been considered as a critical aspect, “harming” landscape (Marsh, 1872). The origin of such *risk* has then been shifted towards the individuation of changes, transformations and development as main responsible of damage (Antrop, 2005).

Even though the interdependency between anthropic and natural factors is recognized nowadays (Bender, 2002; Lowenthal, 2005; Aplin, 2007), when it comes to deal with the safeguard of cultural landscape is necessary to underline how the theoretical and practical approaches experimented on the international level have led, until recent times, to the development of further critical aspects, part of which can be reconducted to the investigation methodologies themselves, and caused mainly by a scarce integration between the diverse systems and tools (Akagawa and Sirisrisak, 2008).

The framework of issues presented becomes even more evident when facing the preservation and management of rural landscape. This heritage, being productive, is representative more than others of the quantitative and qualitative impact of macro-phenomena related to transition and transformation, given its intrinsic dynamism.

As for cultural landscapes, of which they are part of, rural landscapes face two main criticalities in terms of safeguarding and monitoring approaches and tools. One is represented by the possibility to fall into a “crystallization” (Van der Valk, 2014)⁴ process of investigated sites, in which a “museumization”⁵ of inhabited places implies resultant issues in social, economic and ecologic terms. Second, and consequential, the chance to develop management policies that do not consider the sites as a palimpsest or a process still undergoing, but rather as a “result”. That being so, such dualism has been recognized in literature as a “dilemma” (Van der Valk, 2014), leading to a question: should policies focus on the possible future changes of a site, or rather just “preserving” the past?

The identification of rural landscape as heritage and its preservation. A matter of time

As the definition of the concept of *cultural landscape* as often lead not only to difficulties in developing effective safeguarding policies, but also to a simplification of such approaches, a similar course is occurring regarding the concept of historic or traditional rural landscape.

In this context also, in fact, there is not just one, shared and common definition.

² “(...) *cultural landscapes represent the “combined works of nature and of man” designated in Article 1 of the Convention. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and/or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal.*” UNESCO: Cultural Landscapes, Date of access 1/11/18 <http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/>,

³ “*Landscape*” means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors;” European Landscape Convention, Article 1 “Definitions”, section “a”, Council of Europe (2000)

⁴ Van der Valk defines “*immobilization*” with the concept of “*landscape mummification*”

⁵ The phenomenon of “*museumization*” is expressed as: “(...) *presenting and interpreting cultural groups and their representative tangible and intangible heritage. (...) It has produced stereotypes derived from the past constructions of the Other, such as (...) the freezing of indigenous peoples and minorities in the old anthropological time frames. (...) has been a concern in heritage tourism and sustainable development.*” Galla A. and Paulo D., 2016, *Museumization*. In: *Encyclopedia of Tourism*, edited by Jafari J., Xiao H. (Cham: Springer)

The main critical aspect, when speaking of which sites can be defined as historic rural landscapes, is not about an *adjectivisation* of the world landscape itself -as occurred in the case of cultural landscape - so as to add a peculiarity to the word and better define this complex heritage; rather, the main issue in defining historic rural landscapes lies in *time*.

In literature, rural landscape is frequently addressed as *traditional* or *historic* (Antrop, 1997, 2005; Torreggiani *et al.*, 2014; Barbera *et al.*, 2014; Brogiolo and Colecchia 2017).

A rural landscape is assigned to the first or second definition by delimiting in which span of time a site has constituted and consolidated its peculiar elements. Two are the issues identified in reviewing the definitions: first, *traditional* and *historic* concepts sometimes overlap (Ludwiczak, 2012), while in certain cases the choice between the two classifications leads to a different identification of sites.

Therefore, a historic landscape cannot be claimed as *traditional* just because it was not strongly stressed by the impact of transformations occurred after the industrial revolution, such as mechanization of agricultural practices or changes in the species cultivated: in fact, there are no rural landscapes which were not affected (even in minimum part) by such processes of change.

The process might be represented both as a sudden event or as a slow modification: the crucial point concerning the determination of being a site historic or not therefore cannot be associate only to changes developed gradually in time, but instead all stages must be considered in the analysis.

As a matter of fact, transformation in rural landscape constantly occur. Therefore, the issue is represented by the delimitation of a time span in which a rural landscape, to be defined as historic or traditional needs to be identified within. Thus, defining a rural landscape within one of the two concepts basing on a belonging era might result in a contradiction, being rural landscapes a process still on going and in constant modification, a palimpsest of individual and collective stories and narratives.

Thus, by choosing a certain segment of time as more significant to be considered or preserved, it comes a misinterpretation in investigation and research: a historic rural landscape must be analyzed as a continuum that includes all the phases of a still lasting process. This reflection is well explained by Renes (2015): in the challenging tentative to define the concept of historic rural landscapes and, overall, what should be considered within this definition, the result often led to a forced simplification of this heritage.

The concept of heritage, in a broader sense, is itself considered a process (Harvey, 2001): the same can be assumed when investigating historic and traditional rural landscape definitions; as landscape is “time materialized” (Bender, 2002), also the meanings associated with it as heritage must not stand still, but rather developing accordingly to changes in context. The IFLA-ICOMOS (International Federation of Landscape Architects – International Council on Monuments and Sites) *Principles concerning rural landscapes as heritage*, as the most recent definition, synthetize effectively the urgency to overcome the question over time and transformations: “*Rural landscapes as heritage are expressions of social structures and functional organizations, realizing, using and transforming them, in the past and in the present. (...) All rural areas can be read as heritage (...) traditional and recently transformed by modernization activities: heritage can be present in different types and degrees and related to many historic periods, as a palimpsest.*” (2017).

That being so, the “dilemma” cited above between preservation of the past or management of change regards the dimension of *time* in a broader sense. Being rural landscapes a *palimpsest* it is not possible to define, or better prefer, which layer deserves more than others to be preserved: and even is critical to delimitate time spans in which a rural landscape might be considered as historical. The choice to preserve only a portion of a landscape, given the fact that it is considered more “relevant” than the whole that composes its context, poses an inevitable contradiction even with the principles stated in the European Landscape Convention.

Preservation policies must therefore include all the transformations and the intertwines that occurred in the past and are on-going today, since it is this intricate network that reinstitutes the complex scenario that has to be safeguarded.

Dealing with change and communities needs in rural landscapes: a review of management and preservation methodologies applied at the international level

At the international level, there are different methodologies that have developed since the eighties of the twentieth century for the preservation and management of rural landscapes, diverse in terms of research realm and specific objectives. The ecological approach, as an example, implemented at first the Integrated Conservation and Development Projects (active for just over a decade until the early 2000s) and subsequently Community based conservation programs (Little, 1994; Berkes, 2003; Campbell and Vainio-Mattila, 2003; Folke *et al.*, 2003 Garnett *et al.*, 2009).

Both the methodologies are centered on the communities that live and manage the rural landscape; the tools express the will of integrate development and conservation policies of the rural sites by involving the population. Another contribution is given by the contractual tools of management and protection of rural landscapes, as Payments for Environmental Services (Pagiola, 2007; Leimona *et al.*, 2008; Wunder, 2005, 2015).

In the field of heritage preservation on a supra-national level, the World Heritage Center (UNESCO) counted (as of 2018) 29 sites that can be identified as rural landscapes listed as World Heritage (UNESCO, 2018). The process of safeguard developed by the World Heritage Center includes criteria to be respected both in the phases of nomination as World Heritage site and in the subsequent periodic monitoring; furthermore, from 2005 management plans are compulsory for nominated sites.

Besides these efforts, today these procedures are still applied on a *recommendation* level, which is independent of the category of heritage examined: moreover, management plans rarely provide specific indications on the criteria for monitoring the changes taking place on the sites examined. Although, during the thirtieth session of the World Heritage Convention (Vilnius, 2006), the need to create a set of indicators that could render the criteria indicated by operational guidelines less *discursive*, emphasizing how “*setting precise but realistic and measurable results and indicators is essential for effective performance appraisal and monitoring*” (UNESCO, 2006) and that a first draft of these indicators was carried out by ICOMOS UK (2006), the development of the criteria was not completed. To date, a set of indicators (although partial) can be found in the management plan compiled for the Stonehenge site in 2009 (Young *et al.*, 2009).

This inclination to the difficult dialogue between site management policies and those more closely related to the safeguard of rural landscapes has only recently been partially overcome, through the identification of operational and analytical methods that comprise a broader spectrum of disciplines and related skills (e.g. preservation of heritage, geography, economy, ecology, archaeology) in a holistic and inclusive perspective of management.

An example is represented by the FAO Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems (GIAHS) program, active since 2005. GIAHS foster a dynamic approach aimed specifically to the protection and development of historic rural landscapes, acting on a global level; the program directly involves the population, by using also contractual tools. The community is supported by experts from different sectors in the process: unlike other analyzed methodologies, the GIAHS are articulated on the community that lives and that has created the rural landscape subjected to the program.

In the given context, management plans as GIAHS can represent a significative step forward in terms of definition of policies. Firstly, the system overcomes the concept of historical rural landscapes as an object focusing rather on this heritage as a process: the core of this shift is given by the role of the community in all the steps related to the inclusion of a site in the program, from its individuation to the management after the nomination.

The milestone is represented by a premise: a site should be included in the program only if the nomination process is shared by the community that inhabits it. Such standpoint has one main implication: as the policies are community-centered, the management plan can be adapted accordingly to the developing needs of the inhabitants (Altieri and Koohafkan, 2003; Howard *et al.*, 2008; Boerma and Koohafkan, 2010).

Concerning the presented methodologies, although progress has been made in recent years in the process between the theoretical and practical application of policies, some critical aspects persist in

the effectiveness of evaluation of the different approaches over time. The current methodologies for the protection and conservation of historic rural landscapes, in particular those relating to management plans, although present shareable objectives, appear still unclear in monitoring implemented actions (Alumae *et al.* 2002; Agnoletti, 2014; Palang and Fry, 2015). The risk is that of not being able to monitor the actual implementation of the proposed policies in a timely and effective manner.

Indicators for monitoring transformations in rural landscapes: an overview

Although in the literature well-structured proposals regarding the evaluation of the integrity of rural landscapes have already been advanced, it was found, however, that there is still a relative lack of monitoring indicators over both risk management and the effectiveness of the policies applied.

In order to be able to assess the impacts of transformations and, consequently, indicate and structure which mitigation policies of the phenomena encountered may represent an effective response, an in-depth investigation must be carried out into the sources of statistical data and the information measuring the indicators. In fact, incomplete or unreliable sources can cause an inaccurate assessment of the impact of the phenomenon: the prepared counteraction actions, therefore, can be underestimated with respect to the criticality found.

The usefulness of the indicators is reflected in the restitution of a synthetic meaning: they are developed on the one hand to reduce the number of measurements necessary for returning an "exact state of the art", and on the other to improve the communication of results measurements to end users.

At an international level, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) developed a set of indicators for assessing and monitoring sustainable development, presented in a first report published following the Rio Conference in 1992. Ten years after the first report, having collected and analyzed the critical aspects in the application of the indicators provided in the first phase to assess rural landscapes, OECD developed a document that gives a vast framework of the evaluations expressed in different countries (NIJOS/OECD, 2002). Although there are some general considerations important for the implementation of assessment criteria (e.g. quantifiable indicators), the contribution does not show the will to address the indicators towards an analysis on the impact of the phenomena that act on the rural landscape, but rather the assessment is limited to its characteristics.

In the same years, in the European context, following the ratification of the European Landscape Convention (2000) the theme of monitoring the changes and risks (endogenous and exogenous) to which the rural cultural landscape is subjected becomes central.

This has therefore led to the development of new researches: in the Italian context, the first important study is due to the research group of Vallega (2008). By interpreting the text of the ELC and the given definition of *landscape*, the research outlines indicators referred both to objective characteristics of landscape (e.g. natural and socio-economic processes) and to others related to perception aspects. In the design of the indicators, therefore, four reference contexts are taken into consideration: ecological, socio-economic, cultural and institutional.

Concerning the monitoring over UNESCO World Heritage listings, the Università di Torino investigated over nominated rural landscapes sites (2013-2015). In the research, reference is made to the indicators for the evaluation of sites, structured in four categories: economic, historical, socio-economic and managerial (Gullino *et al.*, 2013) The focus of the investigation of the considered sites lies in evaluation of *integrity* concept as defined by the World Heritage Center. Thus, changes are not quantified through units of measurement. The evaluation of the management plans applied to the examined sites is also limited to a comparison made in a descriptive way of the most recurrent phenomena, thus not quantifying the impact of the identified phenomena (Gullino *et al.*, 2015). In the same years the investigation of the Universities of Palermo, Tuscia and Molise led to the definition of a set of specific indicators for the analysis of the transformations of the traditional agricultural landscape (Paesaggio Agrario Tradizionale - PAT). The main difference compared to what was observed in the abovementioned investigation lies in the articulation of indicators that are mostly quantitative and measurable, associated with a specific unit of measurement. By subdividing the

families of indicators into frames of reference for the analysis of the environmental, productive and social and settlement structure, the model consists in analytical system providing a global assessment of the identified issues (Marino and Cavallo, 2014; Barbera *et al.*, 2014). The Italian Ministero delle Politiche Agricole Alimentari, Forestali e del Turismo developed the National Register of Historic Rural Landscapes in the context of the "National Observatory of Rural Landscape, Agricultural Practices and Knowledge", in which a site can be registered only if it corresponds to the parameters of "significance, integrity and vulnerability" of historical rural landscapes, widening the UNESCO criteria. The tool for checking the transformations of historic rural sites in this case is present in the VALutazione Storico Ambientale methodology (VASA): a diachronic reading of permanence derived from data relating to soil consumption (Ministero delle Politiche Agricole Alimentari, Forestali e del Turismo).

Every action has a reaction. A review of changes, transformations and management plans in two rural landscape sites

The sites compared in this section have been selected not only for the similarities they have in the peculiar characteristics of which they are composed, albeit with differences, but also for the consequences of the choices that management plans, practices and regulations at national and supra-national have involved in safeguarding rural landscapes.

Ifugao terraces, in the Philippines, faced issues in the application of management plans and regulation, both developed by the national authorities and the UNESCO. On the national level, starting from the 70s in the context of the so-called Green Revolution, the government adopted actions in order to make the land more competitive on the international market. The main change was the introduction of new varieties of rice, developed to have a higher productivity rate than the traditional ones and, at the same time, to reduce cultivation times. The irrigation system and crops in Ifugao terraces have been managed for centuries on a democratic basis; the traditional system has been built and adapted over time to cope and avoid possible conflicts that could have arisen from the needs of the individual towards the community. This management, which was in charge to the community, went through substantial changes in the last thirty years. Based on a government decision, and subsequent to the effects of Green Revolution, since 80s the National Irrigation Agency (NIA) has taken the place of the collective management of the water resource. The main reform regarded the maintenance of irrigation canals by using concrete, considered more resistant for purpose. In monitoring the process of change, Acabado (2015) reports how the intervention on the canals was already out of order in a short time: concrete structures damaged rapidly, causing interruption in the water system. Analyzing the literature (Hayami, *et al.*, 2000), it is also reported how NIA had already entered into financial and technical difficulties from the 1980s, lacking to maintain the international competitive standards that follow the pressure of Green Revolution.

But Ifugao rice terraces do represent a milestone also in the UNESCO World Heritage list, being the first *cultural landscape* nominated in 1995 (UNESCO, 1996). At that time, the nomination process did not require a management plan for the site to be submitted by the State member (management plans will become compulsory in 2005). If, on the one hand, the listing of the site as World Heritage had the purpose to preserve the Ifugao terraces from the changes imposed by the Green Revolution, which were harming traditional cultivation and the structure of the *Cordilleras*, on the other the nomination acted as trigger for sudden changes. International and domestic tourism rose at an impressive rate; in just three years from the listing, the government asked for assistance so as to prevent changes in land-use, abandonment of cultivations and damages to the irrigation system (UNESCO, 1998). In short time, terraces were inscribed in the *In Danger* list (UNESCO, 2001). After eleven years of efforts and by including the community in the decision process, also by entering in the GIAHS program as pilot site in 2005 (and being nominated in 2011) the site was removed from the *In danger* status (UNESCO, 2012).

A similar path is traced in the *subaks* system of Bali, Indonesia. The cultivation practices of the site are strongly intertwined with traditional ecologic knowledge and religious aspects: the culture system revolves around the rituals based on the philosophical principle of the *Tri Hita Karana*. The whole society is organized in the *subak*: community of farmers who manage and share land and resources,

cultivating rice with traditional techniques. The rituals related to water and the temples voted to it are the foundation of the *subak* itself. It is estimated that there are 1200 *subaks* on the island, and that the water system is managed by about 4000 farmers (Salamanca *et al.*, 2015).

This complex system, as happened in the Ifugao rice terraces, encounter a first crisis in the context of the Green Revolution. A variety of non-native rice was introduced: growing at particularly high rates, it allowed to harvest up to six times more cereal in two years than to the use of consolidated cultivation techniques. Issues rose rapidly: if on the one hand there were benefits, at least from the economic and productive performance, on the other farmers faced for the first-time scarcity of water resources. A second change occurs in the 1980s, when the Indonesian government decides and implements a plan of management of the irrigation network called the Bali Irrigation Project: this program should have improved the canals system. Again, the imposition of new rules and the lack of dialogue between government and the population has led in a short time to the suspension of the program, given that the community showed strong disagreement towards newly introduced practices, which considered water-related rituals partially (Lorenzen and Lorenzen 2005). The position taken by the community derives from the precise rules regarding the management of waters and the rituals associated with them.

Concerning the listing of the site as World Heritage (2012) the path that led to the nomination of the *subaks* and the subsequent management of the site presented some critical aspects. As noted by the report edited by the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) (Salamanca *et al.*, 2015), the management plan and the regulations put in place following the appointment of *subaks* in the list had issues in conduct the site through proper management. A cause of the partial failure of the implemented policies is attributable to the lack of a specific approach to the site itself. The development of a management program that, at least initially, is designed to be potentially applicable to very different situations has posed a series of problems deriving mainly from the top-down nature of the method itself.

A further factor that has placed critical points in the relationship between the government and local communities has been the decision to set a “pay per access” to part of the site, setting a ticket to access the World Heritage area. Although this decision could be a possible source of income for the families belonging to the *subak* object of the intervention, the government pronouncement to entrust the management of the tourist infrastructures to an external company has raised strong controversies from the community, felt excluded and deprived of decision-making power. Furthermore, the decision to provide tourist services with only a part of the UNESCO site led to protests by neighboring *subaks*, who fear a substantial economic loss as a result of this fact.

The top-down approach imposed by the government and the agency led to disagreements concerning mainly the exclusion not only of the communities themselves, but above all of their representatives from the assembly. Finally, the inhabitants complained about the absence of guidelines that could effectively explain the correct administration of the site.

In both presented cases, is evident how the application of top-down policies has led to inevitable conflicts and exposure of the inhabitants and landscape to new types of pressure; furthermore, it is shown how transition from a condition to another frequently leads to modifications of which real consequences can be not immediately noticed.

In the context of rural landscapes such transformations can be represented, to cite some examples, by the substitution of traditional cultivations with newer species, or by the introduction of different irrigation systems. Such interventions might be derived from authorities’ decisions, maybe not including the community in structuring policies, even if the population will be like in charge of practically accomplish over the site what was planned.

For example, the appointment of the rice terraces of Bali has attracted international attention to them, having as consequently an unprecedented series of threats (e.g. pressure tourist, economic rivalry linked to land holdings, loss of biodiversity). At the local level, the lack of an inclusive management plan has given site residents a secondary role, causing the progressive loss of the main agent of landscape transformation.



The introduction of non-native species in the crop cycle can lead to decidedly impacting effects on the sites themselves. Since this heritage is so strongly founded on the interweaving of ritual, religious and traditional practices with those that regulate the cultivation of local species, with the timing and the methods that these have followed for centuries, even a minimum change is sufficient to create an unbalance.

If the policies of protection of the site, recognized as heritage, moved in the direction of the conservation and prevention of possible interference due also to the introduction of "new" elements in the landscape, on the other hand the programs of governmental origin with regard to in the agricultural field do not question themselves with the same problems, replacing the native species with modern varieties of culture.

At first, the impact of changes might result in a positive impact to all the stakeholders involved: if the decision of install a more fruitful cultivation could on the one hand increase the production of a sector and result in a more immediate earning for farmers, on the other if not regulated it can lead to the exploitation of fields, causing loss of fertile land and biodiversity over time.

As shown, both the sites were at the center of "power relations": the local economy has found to confront itself with a market on a larger scale, even without the necessary preparation in a rather sudden manner, in which new scenarios for agriculture and, at the same time, new economic sectors that allowed a greater gain in less time than those of traditional rural activity were outlined for the community.

In situations like the ones just described we are witnessing a paradox: an action considered innovative and that aims to be an improvement, but applied without having a deep knowledge of the territory and its characteristics, has an opposite impact compared to the initial intentions.

Some remarks. Who is really afraid of transition?

Given the complex background of investigation methodologies, researches, tools dedicated to the management and safeguard of rural landscape, a main critical aspect emerges. As Renes states, in an effective synthesis "*Landscape preservation means management of change*" (2015): a reflection that implies the consideration of transformations and changes more than a "matter of fact" in safeguarding rural landscapes, but as the continuous action that relates all the components of this heritage.

As shown, policies that tend to an "immobilization" and that do not cope with the inevitable changes in site represent a potential risk themselves. The fear of transition that seemed to have prevented policies to act accordingly to transformations must be overcome in a broader sense, so as to develop preservation and management methodologies that are passible of modification in the whole process that leads to the safeguard of a site, from the policies design to application and monitoring.

Transformations on rural landscapes do not necessarily have, as a consequence, the complete losing of those characteristics and structural elements that represent a site and make it peculiar. Changes imply modifications over a site, sometimes necessary to cope with the needs of its inhabitants, posing new challenges: that being so, policies of management and safeguard must be developed accordingly, through a critical contextualization of the endogenous and exogenous phenomena (e.g. social, economic etc.) that brings transformation over this heritage.

As presented in the two sites analyzed, transition is critical when is managed as an obstacle to preservation, regarding changes only as a harm, rather than a driven of opportunities, and leading to actions that crystallize sites. But rural landscapes are a living heritage: the dilemma then goes beyond the one regarding dynamism and stillness in developing preservation and management policies: attention must be given to the actors that will play a role in this framework, and specifically to the position that each stakeholder will represent.

Paradoxically, rapid changes and their consequences over the social and environmental system constituting historical rural landscapes might act as trigger for the development of management and conservation policies: this could happen when awareness of the intertwines between transition effects and the evolution in the needs of a community rise.



For these reasons it is not possible to read all transformation that constitute rural landscapes as singular events, but rather there is the need of reflecting over the possible multi-level results of decisions. Furthermore, is fundamental that the preservation of rural landscape comprise the whole site, and not only the parts considered “significant” due to the fact that transformations have act less over them.

The dimension of time, then, closes the circle: overcome the dilemma means to consider that each element, relationship and system is destined to transformation, and a successful management plan should adapt accordingly to this dynamism.

In the given context, management plans must overcome stillness when defining policies. Being rural landscape a heritage-process, and in continuous change, it is therefore necessary that methodologies of investigation and programs applied to sites are structured as adaptable, through a management that includes transformations as “backbone” to develop policies.

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