

The Conservation of Cultural Landscapes

Edited by

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'... now in these things, a large part of what we call natural, is not; it is even quite artificial: that is to say, the tilled fields, the trees and other domesticated plants that are placed in order, the rivers kept within bounds and directed toward a certain course, and such, lack both the state and the appearance that they would have in nature. In this way the appearance of any land inhabited for a few generations by civilized people, not to say in cities and other places where men live together, is artificial, and much different from what it would be in nature.'

Giacomo Leopardi (1798–1837), *In Praise of Birds*

Introduction: Framing the Issue – a Trans-disciplinary Reflection on Cultural Landscapes

M. Agnoletti

Cultural landscapes are today a resource whose preservation represents a most modern theme, relevant to a great number of sectors such as planning, cultural heritage preservation, rural development, nature conservation and forestry, to cite just a few. The role of the landscape and therefore its perception has changed through time; it is no longer just a 'cultural' aspect, intended as an elitist phenomenon, isolated from the socio-economic aspect, but emerges as an essential element in the interpretation of a modern approach to sustainable development, far from paradigmatic views, but close to the needs of a large part of society in the whole world. It is not useful to report all the many definitions used to describe cultural landscapes, a matter for which more than a single chapter would be needed, but there are words that live in our minds more than others, also affecting the way to view research matters. In this respect, the definition given by Carl Sauer in 1926 has the advantage of summarizing much of the core concept: 'The cultural landscape is fashioned from a natural landscape by a culture group. Culture is the agent, the natural area the medium, the cultural landscapes the result'. It is interesting to note that in those same years the Italian philosopher Benedetto Croce promoted the first law protecting landscape in Italy,

mostly based on the concept of the preservation of aesthetic values, an interesting but very different approach, close to what Italy has represented since the end of the 18th century when the travellers of the 'Grand tour' journeyed across Europe, a trip undertaken by many European men of letters and philosophers to widen their cultural background. A more modern concept considers cultural landscapes to be the expression of historical integration between social, economical and environmental factors, influencing all aspects of development. According to the European Landscape Convention, landscape constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity, contributing to human well being and consolidation of cultural identity. At world level there is an evident trend towards degradation and the creation of less valuable landscapes, up to the point that cultural landscapes are often more endangered than nature. Their conservation imposes choices that are not easily made, along with the revision of some past orientations in the fields of agriculture, forestry and nature conservation.

The Conservation of Cultural Heritage

Until recently, international documents regarding sustainable development said

little about cultural landscapes. The Stockholm declaration of 1972 and the Brundtland Report in 1987 did not refer to landscape, while Agenda 21 (1992) had some reference to this matter, but without clearly addressing it. In 2003, the FAO GIAHS project (Globally Important Ingenious Agricultural Heritage Systems) clearly addressed the relationships between agricultural heritage systems and their landscape. However, the main specific tool available at world level for the conservation of cultural landscapes is surely the World Heritage Convention (WHC) of UNESCO (1972). At a European level the European Landscape Convention (ELC) is the most comprehensive proposal applying to the entire territory, while the Pan-European Biological and Landscape Diversity Strategy set up for the period 1996–2016 offers a more specific approach, as also described in the chapter by Schenk.

It is very significant that cultural landscapes (CL) have only recently been introduced into the World Heritage Convention (1992). Before that time the convention was mainly protecting natural heritage and cultural heritage, the latter concerning mostly monuments or architectural assets, with emphasis placed on the aesthetic. According to the WHC, cultural landscapes represent the 'combined work of nature and of man. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlements 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'. The three categories selected to classify CL and include them in the World Heritage List (WHL) of protected properties are: (i) 'a clearly defined landscape', mostly referring to parks and gardens; (ii) 'organically evolved landscapes', divided into two subcategories (a) 'relict and fossil landscapes' and (b) 'continuing landscape'; and (iii) 'associative landscapes'. Item (ii) more specifically refers to the features resulting from the action of forestry and agriculture shaping the land, while item (iii) is more linked to the intangible value created by man–nature relations.

There are six crucial cultural criteria used for the inclusion of properties in the WHL, which must also meet the test of 'authenticity' to satisfy the criterion of being of universal value, as well as possessing 'uniqueness', 'significance' and 'integrity'. All these criteria suggest the crucial role of landscape assessment and the importance of the methodologies used for their assessment. As stated in the recent UNESCO world paper n. 6, evaluation has already become increasingly difficult, mostly because of the absence of comparative studies, an 'outstanding need' for places like Europe characterized by an 'extraordinary' variety of farmed landscapes (Fowler, 2003). However, attention to methodologies is still needed. During some lectures at the ICCROM in Rome in 2002, one of the advisory bodies of WHC, it was evident how the background of students coming from many different countries of the world was basically well suited to analyse proposed properties, mostly using classic historical, archaeological or ethno-anthropological research. On the other hand, modern techniques based on multi-temporal analysis, remote sensing and assessments of land use changes, together with all the techniques today available in the field of forest and woodland history or historical ecology, necessary for understanding landscape changes and assessing authenticity, significance, and integrity, were much less known and mastered. In this respect this book offers a contribution proposing not only specific methods as explained in the first part by Östlund and Bergman, Tello *et al.* and Chirici *et al.*, but also presenting comparative approaches, as explained for Tuscany. In fact, although different groups of people may have different perceptions of what a valuable landscape is, it is clear that a dynamic evaluation is needed to understand the trajectory of a landscape system and recognize which elements have become a value and which have not, while similar methodologies applied to different sites offer better chances to assess landscape, especially when trying to evaluate specific elements (e.g. chestnut woods, vineyards,

terraces, etc.) that may present different values in different contexts. On the other hand, this evaluation also meets the requirements of the ELC whose specific measures require identification, analysis of changes and assessment of landscapes in each country. It is also worth noting the potential offered by the approach of Tello *et al.*, where a traditional cultural landscape is also analysed from the point of view of energy flows, offering a possibly valuable tool for multiple analysis, particularly important for assessing sustainability.

The approach of UNESCO is meant to save specific sites and in fact the criticism coming from the Council of Europe, suggesting an 'elitist' approach, is symptomatic of the different views, perspectives and goals of the European Landscape Convention (ELC) and WHL. Actually, the two processes are not comparable. The WHL cannot be used as a primary instrument for the simple matter of the difficulty of including all valuable cultural landscapes in the list and submitting them all to a management system as requested. In this respect the ELC might be a more powerful tool, addressing the matters of policies, quality objectives, protection, management and planning for European Union (EU) landscapes at national and regional level, facilitating a process that is going to affect governance. As at 7 June 2006, ten states had signed it and 23 more had signed and ratified, accepted or approved. The fact that landscape must be recognized and protected independently from its value does not prevent the selection of specific properties of special significance, also because although there are many opportunities to establish nature protection areas in Europe, there are no similar instruments to protect cultural landscapes. This simple consideration could open a long discussion about the idea of 'nature' and 'culture' in modern societies. However, for now the WHL represents the only chance to protect cultural landscapes of special importance, unless proponents accept a sort of unclear mixture between natural and cultural values, also proposed in some definitions of WH cultural landscapes and the EU Habitats directive, where cultural values

could be saved within the framework of nature conservation, obviously a quite peculiar angle from which to look at the problem. These are some of the problems encountered with the proposal of creating a landscape park in the Apennine mountains in Moscheta (Italy) described in the book, amplified by the fact that restoring a wood pasture from a wood is simply forbidden by law, since woodlands cannot be reduced in their extension. It is also time to reduce the artificial separation between natural and cultural values typical of many conservation approaches; in the world today the natural system is well embedded into the socio-economic system, affecting all its features. However, an effective conservation of cultural landscapes cannot be done without interfering with the processes affecting their dynamics and also with the way sustainability is perceived and applied.

Agriculture and Rural Development

The dynamics of rural landscape are triggered by socio-economic developments affecting the rural world. The techniques used in traditional societies, usually before the technological development of mechanization and chemical fertilizers, created valuable cultural landscapes where the strict relationship between man and the land over a long time period has accumulated values, stratifying them in the physical components of the territory. The different forms of fields and woodlands, the use of tree species for hedgerows and mixed cultivation, the use of fire – an often misunderstood ecological agent, as very well evidenced by Metailiè – have created an extraordinary variety of landscapes. Europe is a good example of this diversity if we look closely at landscapes along a gradient north–south and east–west, as presented by several chapters in this book; but a great degree of diversity can be understood also in the chapters describing North America. The changes in technology, culture and economy at world level are threatening traditional landscapes, including the biodiversity on which they are based, but also

the structure of rural society. Complex cultural landscapes typical of densely populated regions and landscapes where the population had to establish specific management practices to adapt to the local environment are rapidly disappearing. Farmers are often compelled to develop innovation and to adopt unsustainable practices, over-exploiting resources and also contributing to the genetic erosion and loss of the cultural identity of places, interrupting the transmission of important heritage from one generation to another. This accumulated knowledge and experience in the management and use of local resources is a significant wealth at world level expressing the cultural identity of each ethnic group.

Unfortunately, there has not been a clear recognition of the significance of landscape resources in rural development strategies, as well as the role of rural landscape for society, not only in the international documents concerning sustainability, but also in policies. In this respect, political entities like the EU are very interesting case studies of the effects of a Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) affecting different nations with different histories. According to the OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) definition, rural regions in the new EU, open to 25 countries, represent 92% of the territory; 56% of the population lives in rural regions, generating 45% of gross value, providing 53% of the employment, while agriculture and forestry represent 77% of land use. Despite the evident importance of the rural regions for landscape quality and socio-economic aspects, we can easily conclude that agricultural policy (including forestry) in the past decades has favoured the degradation of cultural landscapes. The contribution given to technological development, production, *setaside*¹ and the measures favouring tree plantations in areas removed from production have contributed to the disappearance of traditional cultivation practices, homogenizing landscape and often introducing new degradation, as described in the chapters about Tuscany and in the

1. Removal of cultivated land from production.

case of Spain described by Montiel Molina. There has been little recognition of the relationships between typical products and local landscapes, or services like agri-tourism, based on landscape, and few actions for the conservation of the cultural values of traditional landscapes, representing the cultural identity of the European regions. From this point of view the new EU countries in Eastern Europe, described in the chapter by Angelstam, will probably experience the same trends.

The new EU agriculture reform (CAP) offers further possibilities, but also new threats to cultural landscapes, although much will depend on the way regions use this instrument. The new 'single farm payment' independent from production is probably going to again favour the abandonment of traditional cultivations, usually less remunerative for farmers, who will not be interested in saving these types of cultivation without specific measures. The lack of important initiatives regarding the landscape is also tied to the will to defend the interests, however lawful, of economic activities which consider regulations about the landscape limiting or possibly damaging to their activity, not only in the industrial sector, but also in the agricultural one. There is also the idea that farming activities always preserve landscape quality, an attitude historically criticizable, but symptomatic of an opinion shared by many people.

The Axis 1 of CAP EU Rural Development Regulation 2007–2013 – 'improving competitiveness of the agriculture and forestry sector' – holds no indications concerning the development of the quality of agricultural production promoting landscape as an added value. There is in fact an underestimation of the role of landscape within several productive sectors, foremost of which is viticulture, which represents a power point for several countries. As shown by recent research carried out in Tuscany, the market value of the product 'wine' largely consists of immaterial factors, among which the landscape (expression of culture, history and environmental quality) represents the main component. Therefore, the producer bases

much of his/her earnings on the exploitation of a resource for whose maintenance one should invest some resources. The wine-makers know it very well, but few of them are investing money in this resource. The 'key actions' described in the CAP address the need to face increasing global competition, and landscape resources could easily help to reach this goal. From this aspect, the effort of several countries to include some wine regions in the World Heritage List of UNESCO is quite significant, as has already occurred for the Tokaji region in Hungary. For the Chianti region of Italy this has not been successful as yet because of disagreement on the possible advantages and disadvantages, not among the winemakers, but among towns for the effects of the management system requested by UNESCO on their urban planning. It is also a matter of accepting the concept of a gradual evolution from a merely productive role to a role of territory preservation, which some farmers themselves still find hard to grasp. That is also one of the reasons why much of the EU budget goes into agriculture. In this respect, the reference to environmental services in Axis 2, recognizing the farmers' role in delivering services such as water and soil protection with no specific indications about landscape, is also neglecting the fact that the abandonment of traditional practices may also increase hydro-geological risk.

Axis 2 of EU rural development – 'improving environment and countryside' – might offer some possibilities, especially when it refers to preserving farmed landscapes. However, it is not clear what is meant exactly by protecting both natural resources and landscape in rural areas and the indicators suggested in the guidelines for rural development do not help in this respect. The rural landscape is a cultural creation, therefore there is the need for careful evaluation when promoting more nature; pushing for more renaturalization might work for heavily industrialized areas, but the use of agri-environmental measures to recreate traditional mixed cultivations, wood pastures, tree rows, pollard trees, hedges and landscape mosaics would often

be better than recreating 'pristine forests' even for ecological networks. We do not necessarily need large forest areas to connect habitats, while we should not confuse the role of a 'network' with its physical structure. Not only the chapters on Southern Europe but also the one by Bradshaw and Hannon on Sweden describe traditional cultivations, raising the issue of what is meant by the term 'biodiversity' and the preservation of 'high nature value farming and forestry systems', both in CAP and nature conservation strategies. It should be remembered that the loss of biodiversity is also linked to the reduction of species introduced by farmers in some periods of history, as the Romans did also by importing 'non-native' species from the orient. Biodiversity should also consider 'spaces' created by the different land uses, typical of many traditional landscapes. This diversity is today dramatically reduced by abandonment and consequent advancement of forest vegetation on old fields, or by the extension of mechanized monocultures. Therefore, measures concerning afforestation and also agri-environmental measures need to be carefully evaluated since many would simply use these subsidies because they are there, despite the fact that what is really needed is something else. With regard to organic farming, which is a very positive initiative in many ways, it must be remembered that organic products can be made in Sicily or in Sweden, but their production does not ensure the conservation of the landscape they come from. It is instead time to close the circle 'quality of food – quality of the landscape', favouring a strong correlation between the two.

Axis 3 of EU rural development – 'the quality of life in rural areas and diversification of rural economy' – could actually represent a good opportunity if diversification into non-agricultural activities could include services like the restoration and management of landscape and the promotion of agritourism, which would create new jobs. Tourism has not always been seen as the direct result of farming activities – in other words, 'services' are sometimes placed outside the rural world, but especially when

they are tied to the appreciation of landscape resources, they are clearly linked to the activity of farmers. In this respect, the conservation of cultural landscapes might represent an economic opportunity even without having a productive landscape in terms of crops. In other words, the simple maintenance of cultural landscape represents an economic activity in itself, with people employed just for this purpose. Unfortunately, there is not a clear understanding of how landscape affects even the usual tourism forms, such as those linked to museums or historic city centres, because when many visitors are travelling from one place to another it is also to appreciate the landscape. In this respect it is interesting to see how a large portion of this tourism is presented as 'ecotourism', clearly proposing the issue of the appreciation of the natural values of territories, whereas they are mostly cultural. From this perspective it is useful to view what has happened in countries like the USA, where employment in landscape services has seen a spectacular growth between 1972 and 2003, accompanied by a strong decrease of entrepreneurs and employees in the traditional productive activities in agriculture or forestry. It would not be unrealistic to imagine a similar development especially for those regions offering important landscape resources. One example of interpreting the new CAP for landscape conservation could be the development of strategies and actions for preserving and developing landscape resources through the national rural development plans. This has occurred in Italy, with the establishment of a commission for this purpose.

Forest Strategies

The strategies concerning forestry, and the way sustainable forest management (SFM) has been interpreted, are playing an important role in view of the increasing extension of forest areas in the EU. Forest and woodlands have been mostly regarded as a source of timber or of ecological value. There has rarely been an appreciation of their cultural significance, unless when

referring to recreation or social values. Most of the traditional knowledge related to local management forms, timber assortments and the relationships between woodland and agriculture typical of agro-forestry systems has been lost. Today this knowledge survives in some niches in Western Europe and in developing countries, as described by Angelstam for Eastern Europe. The tendency to use species better suited for productive functions, also through afforestation, and to re-naturalize forests are rapidly deleting the evidence of past cultural influences. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio in 1992 adopted several 'forest principles', meant to submit the forests of the world to specific management, supporting the development and implementation of criteria and indicators to clearly define elements of SFM and to monitor progress towards it.

Several international meetings have suggested some thematic elements as key components of SFM: extent of forest resources; biological diversity; forest health and vitality; productive functions of forest resources; protective functions of forest resources; socio-economic functions; legal, policy and institutional frameworks. These elements, also acknowledged by the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF), reflect the criteria of the nine ongoing regional/international processes on criteria and indicators for SFM and were acknowledged by the International Conference on Criteria and Indicators in Guatemala in February 2003 and by the FAO Committee on Forestry in 2003. In Europe, these indications have been included in the SFM criteria endorsed by the Ministerial Conference for the Protection of Forest in Europe (MCPFE), and are basically reflecting the same view, including one more item concerning the role of forests as CO₂ sinks in criterion No. 1. Similar criteria are used in the main certification standards like PEFC (Pan-European Forest Certification) or FSC (Forest Stewardship Council). The thematic elements, the criteria of MCPFE, and the certification standards represent a sort of hierarchy of values for forests and wood-

lands. It is easy to note the absence of a real consideration of cultural values in the list of indicators. We must look through the various chapters, particularly on socio-economic functions, to find reference to this issue. This problem is well addressed for FSC, SFI and PEFC by Anderson. The first main criteria, 'extent of forests', which in MCPFE has been modified to 'maintenance and appropriate enhancement of forests and their contribution to carbon cycle', should probably meet the necessities of countries with scarce forest cover to increase their extent and the general feeling that more forest will mitigate climatic change in respect to global warming. However, especially in Europe, the further extension of forest land is probably not the main problem in SFM, considering the increase occurring at least from the second half of the 20th century. In Italy, forests have increased almost threefold since 1900, but it is questionable that this increase had a significant effect on mitigating global or local warming since they represent about 0.21–0.25% of world forests; therefore their possible contribution can only be estimated according to this figure. On the contrary, the cultural value of the forest landscape and its contribution to the world's cultural heritage would be probably higher. The relevance of cultural, historical and landscape values in Europe could well represent one of the main criteria of SFM. Recently the MCPFE, according to an initiative started by the Austrian government during the Vienna conference of 2003, has started a reflection on this issue, reflected by Resolution 3. Two international meetings to discuss the implementation of cultural, historical and landscape values in SFM were organized in 2005 and 2006, involving IUFRO, MCPFE, UNESCO, WHC, UNFF, European Landscape Convention and FAO. After the last meeting in Florence, a group of experts for the enhancement of indicators and guidelines was created (Agnoletti *et al.*, 2006). It has been acknowledged that recognizing the cultural origin of EU forests cannot be reduced to the matter of saving particular sites somewhere on the continent, but acknowledge the cultural origin of

EU forests and find a way of managing them according to this perspective.

In this respect, the recent vision and strategies of the EU Forest Action Plan, are worth comment. In the document the role of culture is not really addressed, although the text recalls the MCPFE meeting in Vienna of 2003. Therefore, the international activity previously mentioned has not been taken much into account, as well as almost a century of investigations in forest history and cultural heritage. Concerning the multiple functions of forestry, economic, ecological and social functions are the main themes. Among the environmental functions, landscape is recalled as an element of ecological stability and integrity, but the document seems to refer to natural values rather than cultural landscapes. It must be remembered that more nature might also mean deleting cultural values, expressed by traditional practices, like different forms of coppice woods, pollard trees, chestnut orchards, and wood pastures, which are going to disappear if left to natural processes.

Moreover, as in other directives, using the word 'nature' to describe cultural landscapes creates mental associations putting landscape management into nature conservation. This often leads to the erroneous assumption that by protecting nature we always protect landscapes.

In the chapter about the 'values of forests and forestry', 'social functions' might offer some opportunities to protect landscapes. Especially when referred to make rural areas attractive for living, providing recreational opportunities, but also when mentioning that forests represent a cultural heritage. Concerning the 'key actions', the document proposes the structure of the CAP and its many axes, but it is worth noting that culture and landscape are not mentioned in the 18 key actions listed. An important opportunity, at least for monitoring landscape, could be the implementation of the proposed 'European Forest Monitoring System' if properly designed. The environmental objectives are recalling the goal to halt the loss of biodiversity by 2010 but, according to past experiences, biodiversity

will probably be mostly referred to species and natural habitats, not to landscape diversity. Together with the protection of 'integrity' and prevention of 'fragmentation' of forests, this will probably favour the further extension of forest land, and the strong reduction of the residual landscape diversity. These views, however, are also a result of the general approach to environmental conservation.

Nature Conservation

The European Union has achieved a really important objective, establishing a network of protected areas for the management of Europe's natural heritage. The European Community has gradually been implementing a policy on its territory starting from 1973. The priorities were established in the first Action Programme for the Environment. In the following decades, specific financial instruments were created for nature conservation and a long series of directives have been enhanced. Among the most interesting ones are the Habitat Directive and the Bird Directive aimed at protecting wildlife species and their habitats. Member states have identified special areas of conservation and should draw up management plans combining their long-term preservation 'with people's economic and social activities', to create a sustainable development strategy. The directives identify some 200 types of habitats, 200 animals and over 500 plant species as being of community interest and requiring protection. A scientific assessment on a national level of each habitat or species of community interest was made for this purpose and protected sites have been identified and proposed in the form of national lists presented to the European Commission, now forming the Natura 2000 network. Any action not directly connected with the management of the site, but likely to have a significant effect, must be subjected to appropriate assessment in view of the site's conservation objectives.

Although the Habitat Directive contains specific reference to socio-economic

development and seems to offer a chance for a positive integration of the protected areas with cultural landscapes, the establishment of these areas is presenting contradictions. The need to identify the areas, according to a fixed list of habitats mainly focused on natural 'species' and not on 'species' and 'spaces' related to land uses, has created situations in which the cultural origin of many areas is sometimes neglected presenting naturalness where it plays a minor role. Furthermore, the rules clearly state that any action that is going to fragment or affect density and composition of these habitats is to be avoided. Therefore, not only the fragmentation typical of many historical landscape mosaics, but also the action of man needed to preserve these areas can be seen as potentially dangerous, or even forbidden according to the way the 'evaluation of incidence', a sort of environmental impact assessment for protected areas, is carried out.

The potential, but in many cases already effective, conflicts that have arisen are the result of a certain view interpreting sustainability at global level. The original problem probably relates to the approach to sustainability that has been largely affected by the 'degradation' paradigm, emphasizing the negative role of man in the environment, as an agent depleting the ideal state of 'naturalness', considered the most desirable for the life of living organisms and the overall quality of the biosphere. Although the degradation of the environment is undoubtedly a reality and a threat affecting the world, several investigations carried out in the field of forest and woodland history and historical ecology, but today generally included in the wider framework of environmental history, indicated a wide number of cases where man has created valuable landscapes, not only from a cultural value standpoint, but also from an ecological point of view, enhancing biodiversity and improving the conditions of the environment.

The approach to biodiversity has often neglected the diversity of spaces, generating a reductive interpretation of nature conservation and also promoting views pertaining only to certain scientific groups. The chapter on Tuscany in Part I shows that

48% of the diversity has been lost in the last 200 years, but no agencies are evaluating the problem, even in the monitoring of environmental conditions, or in the management of protected areas. However, the result of the research presented in this volume has convinced the service of nature conservation in Tuscany to promote new guidelines for the conservation and management of landscape in protected areas, proposing also to establish a monitoring system for this specific problem. There are clearly uncertainties in the way biodiversity should be managed. However, it is not surprising that many forest and woodland areas are described as having mostly natural and semi-natural features and how policies descending from this interpretation will apply an ecological approach to their management. There would be instead the need for promoting projects for landscape restoration considering that the 'combination of human intervention and natural processes has often created places for utility and beauty, of nature and culture', as stated by Diamant, Marts and Mitchell in their chapter. However, there is also the need for a dynamic management of cultural landscapes, including them in the socio-economic process and not only in special conservation areas. In this respect, the chapter about Moscheta and those by Rotherham, Latz, Barbera *et al.*, Métaillé and Johann present approaches and methodologies suited for different cases.

Conclusions

Besides the economic aspects, there is also the matter of cultural sensibility, which still has to be stimulated for a full understanding of the problem by administrators, scholars and the public. It is often said that the landscape is a perceptive category, which cannot

be objectified, as if its values were exclusively immaterial and could not find their concrete representation in the territory. The limit of such a concept is clearly identifiable in the analogy with the urban sector, where in a not-too-distant past it was not a foregone conclusion that the preservation of the architectural structure of a historical city centre had to come first. The recognition of the values tied to architectural assets was also the result of a cultural maturation, which considers the structure of a building as a value to be preserved, not different, from a conceptual point of view, from that represented by a terracing, a row of maples and vines or an ancient chestnut grove. An important difference lies in the fact that the rural landscape, with its woods, fields and, therefore, living elements, is often characterized by a higher dynamism, whereas both of them can be used for economic ends. The desire to live in a farmhouse or restore a historic building in a city centre is certainly not connected with a higher management economy (if anything it is the contrary), while the maintenance of an old mixed olive orchard, a wood pasture, or a hedge cannot be proposed from a perspective which aims at maximizing profits, but for the whole range of values they represent. Certainly cultural landscapes reflect the evolution of humanity and its interrelationships with nature, resulting not only in outstanding aesthetic beauty, the maintenance of biodiversity and valuable ecosystems, but also providing multiple goods, services and quality of life, which is a fairly good way of interpreting sustainability. As recalled by the FAO, it is perhaps time to pay more attention to cultural landscapes and their contribution to the natural and cultural heritage of the world, establishing the basis for their global recognition, dynamic conservation and management in the face of economic and cultural globalization.

Reference

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