Cultural landscapes: Negotiation between global and local

Francesca MAZZINO, Patrizia BURLANDO
University of Genova, Faculty of Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Genova, ITALY

Abstract:
Since the origin of the use of the term 'landscape' in a modern sense the cultural dimension has been the key to understand the relationship between the human beings and the places of their life, to describe the co-evolution between natural and human processes. The first part of the paper considers the meaning of 'cultural landscape' analyzing the evolution of the international Charters concerning the various aspects of the landscape preservation and protection which reveal the progressive extension of the definition of "cultural landscape": from UNESCO, Paris, 1972, to ICOMOS, Ename, 2007. In the second part, the characteristics of the cultural landscapes are considered: integrity, authenticity, rarity, scarcity, identity, in terms of stratification and historic permanence of land uses, the most significant historic periods of landscape transformations; alteration, disappearance of relevant elements and the diffusion of the multiculturalism. In the third part the weakness of some cultural landscapes will be considered in which rejection and degradation of the cultural resources are caused by different reasons (various historic cultural landscapes vulnerability, socio-economic sustainability lack). With the increase of the easiness of access to the resources produced in others places conditioned by the global market many landscapes are destined to disappear while modern landscapes with new structural and functional characters will grow.

The landscape in Calcinara-Sestri Ponente, west of Genoa is taken as example for the study of a contemporary degraded cultural landscape. Its degradation has been mainly caused by the realization of operations planned by the town planning and by "spontaneous" transformations out of its control with the creation of new "hybrid" landscapes between town and countryside. "All this is part of our culture which claims respect and offers a new and stimulating subject to the landscape. In the future the profession of landscape architect will overcome its present limits... and apply itself to create with mobility of order and beauty." (Brickerhoff Jackson, 2003).

Keywords: *Cognitive processes, vulnerability, globalization, localism, cultural landscape networks.*

The meaning of 'cultural landscape'
Since the origin of the use of the term 'landscape' in a modern sense (Petrarca, 14th century) the cultural dimension has been the key to understand the relationship between the human beings and the places of their life, to describe the co-evolution between natural and human processes. In the international documents the definition of 'cultural landscape' has evolved: at present the contraposition between natural and human landscapes in the urban and rural contexts has been overcome. The social perception of the landscape is a part of cognitive processes in which different aesthetic evaluations are related to a different social composition of the populations. The concept of 'cultural landscape' is also strictly related to the objectives of landscape quality, which varies depending on different cultures with different needs and aspirations.

In 1972 the principal aim of the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage UNESCO (Paris) was the protection of the world heritage, both cultural and natural, without integration between anthropic and natural components; in 2000 (Florence) the ELC promoted, through actions for the protection, planning and management of the landscape, the achievement of aims concerning the landscape, based on the relationships between the actions of man and nature and underlined the role of social perception in the evaluation of landscape.

This definition of landscape reflects the idea that landscapes evolve through time, as a result of being acted upon by natural forces and human beings. It also underlines that a landscape forms a whole, whose natural and cultural components are taken together, not separately.

"Landscape quality objective", once a particular landscape has been identified and described, is a detailed statement of the characteristics, which local people want to recognize in their surroundings.

More recently (2007) in recognizing that interpretation and presentation are part of the overall process of cultural heritage conservation and management, the ICOMOS Charter sought to establish seven cardinal principles, upon which Interpretation and Presentation - in whatever form or medium is deemed appropriate in specific circumstances - should be based: Access and understanding, information sources, attention to setting and context, preservation of authenticity, planning for sustainability, concern for inclusiveness, importance of research, training, and evaluation. The need to live in unspoilt and good quality places is more and more widespread, even if it is not often possible: the lack of balance existing in the contemporary town and the need to live in close contact with nature influence the population who show it through different ways: the creation of spontaneous associations, new relationships in the urban country between population and rural place in different ways: those who work in town but live in the country, those who live in town and cultivate the land and finally those living and cultivating just as a hobby (Donadieu, 1998).

The characteristics of the cultural landscapes
The main characteristics of the cultural landscapes considered are: integrity, authenticity, rarity, scarcity, identity, in terms of stratification and historic permanence of land uses, the most significant historic periods of landscape

transformations; alteration, disappearance of relevant elements and the diffusion of multiculturalism.

From the Nara Document on Authenticity (The Document of Authenticity-ICOMOS-1994) it ensues that: the authenticity of a cultural landscape cannot be evaluated within pre-arranged criteria because these change from culture to culture or within the same culture, the definition of authenticity depends on various factors including forms, design contents, techniques, uses, traditions, spiritual and philosophical conceptions.

The Charter of Cracow (Charter of Cracow-ICOMOS-2000) integrates the previous document defining the landscape as a cultural heritage, which is the result of the prolonged interaction in the different societies between man, nature and physical environment. "It testifies the evolutive relationship of communities and individuals with their environment. In this context their conservation, preservation and development focus on human and natural characteristics, integrating material and intangible values. It is important to understand and respect the characteristics of the landscape and apply suitable laws and regulations in order to harmonize the pertaining territorial functions with the essential values. (...) In many societies landscapes are historically related to urban territories and influences. The integration between the cultural landscape, the sustainable development in the regions and places characterized by agricultural activities and the natural characteristics, requires the comprehension and the awareness of the relationships over time. This involves making links with the built environment of the metropolis, city and town. The integrated preservation of the archaeological and fossil landscape and the development of a very dynamic landscape involve social, cultural and aesthetic values ".

Rejection and degradation of the cultural landscape
The weakness of some cultural landscapes and the degradation of the cultural resources are caused by different reasons. The vulnerability of various historic cultural landscapes depends on the impossibility of achieving the socio-economic sustainability. The resources and the economic development are generated by the structure of the landscape. In case of non-use or change of use of the resources the landscape associated to them disappears (Farina, 2006). With the increase of the easiness of access to the resources produced in places conditioned by the global market many landscapes are destined to disappear, and modern landscapes with new structural and functional characters are growing. The conservation of the landscape depends on the production and maintenance of the resources; this concerns the localism and the globalization as the two opposite dimensions of the 'cultural landscape' in which different landscapes are included: the 'clearly landscape designed and created intentionally by man', the 'organically evolved landscape' – both 'relict landscape' and 'continuing landscape'– and the 'associative cultural landscape' (UNESCO, 1972). The challenge is how to manage the globalization, which appears unavoidable because of the development of new technologies and the organization of the economic system, and, at the same time, the localism, marginalized in respect which represents the dominance, the modernity of the globalization.

The degradation of the periurban landscapes is often caused by the realization of operations planned by the town-planning and by "spontaneous" transformations out of its control with the creation of new "hybrid"

landscapes between town and countryside, where the abandoning of agriculture is linked to both the "deregulated construction" and the "planned design" of the suburbs, and to the post-industrial areas to be requalified even through expensive operations of cultural landscape "deconstruction". The superposition of the landscapes "consciously" designed " by experts and those created "spontaneously" by the communities depends from the fact that the "landscape is a composition of spaces created or modified by man to serve a community, it is not a natural element of the environment, but a synthetic space, an artificial system of spaces placed over the surface of the earth. (Brickerhoff Jackson, 2003).

The "inhabited landscape" (Brickerhoff Jackson, 2003) is the one created by spontaneous transformations, mainly determined by the actions of the resident populations who continually interacting with their life contest, build, maintain, destroy the landscape, willingly or unwillingly. In many cases the micro-transformations, although with a precise character, can have a wider significance than the single action since all the small actions together cause general changes of the landscape. The landscapes of everyday life are characterized by the proliferation of spaces and uses which have nothing equivalent in the traditional landscape (empty buildings in towns, industries in the open country) and are reused with great ease.

Case Study: Calcinara-Sestri Ponente west of Genoa, Liguria, Italy
The landscape in Calcinara-Sestri Ponente west of Genoa represents the features of the current cultural landscapes after the effect of globalization.

Today this landscape is considered an "island" of neglect and degradation caused by the industrial activities, which have occupied the most favorable areas for the industrial activities from a morphologic and logistic point of view. The fragmentation of the coastal landscape began in the second half of the nineteenth century with the construction of the railway line along the coast and shortly afterwards with the development of the industrial and harbor activities; the landscape which was characterized by seaside villages and villas became an industrial suburb, eliminating the components of the landscape without interest from the point of view of "modernization". This process consequently has altered the relationships between the inhabitants, induced to participate to the industrial and harbor productive processes, and the landscape, with serious repercussions on the health of the population due to polluting emissions lasted for decades, with the loss of the "memory of the places" and of the local knowledge linked to agriculture and sea activities.

Calcinara-Sestri Ponente represents, in a paradigmatic way, the contemporary post-industrial landscapes, where "forgotten" portions can be found, abandoned by the public administration, not used any more, as well as others shortly abandoned and at the same time rests of the coastal historical villages, of the systems of villas-gardens, of the historic agriculture in which new potentialities and relationships between inhabitants and contests can be seen.

The most severe critical state in Calcinara-Sestri Ponente is caused, first of all, by the stratification and concentration in a linear strip of reduced extention of the infrastructures of the mobility including the railway line, the urban roads and the motorway which have caused the physical separation

and the perception of division between the coastal line, the flat zone and the hills in the back. The road infrastructures of connection between the east and the west of Genoa are no more adequate to the progressive increase of the traffic and cause a critical situation in road traffic; their chaotic collocation makes the crossing of the coast and the pedestrian circulation difficult because they have to continuously get over the obstacles represented by the mixing of different infrastructures (railway, road, motorway).

The progressive degradation and the loss of integrity of the complex agricultural systems linked to the systems of the coastal villas, caused by the abandoning of the traditional agricultural activities and by their substitution with unregulated urban sites, by the inappropriate occupation of the free areas, by the disorderly placing of stores, greenhouses and industrial buildings has determined a mixing of incongruent and superimposed elements where different functional interferences can be found.

The gardens of the villas have been seriously altered and the vegetation has been drastically reduced, numerous valuable architectural elements have been lost. The destructuration of the landscape system has caused its vulnerability, in particular as far as the control and the regulation of this hydrographic pattern, concerned, particularly difficult in case of floods.

Figure 1. *Villa Negrone (Vinzoni, 1773).*

The transformation of Sestri Ponente from holiday place to industrial area has inevitably caused the abandoning of Villa Negrone; the progressive reduction of the agricultural activities has caused the advancing of weeds making the ancient terracings practically inaccessible.

The urbanization and the realization of the esplanade of the Erzelli (project ITT) have modified the hydrologic system interrupted and destroyed the complex system of collecting and canalization of the spring waters along the walls of the property of Villa Negrone. Part of the agrarian landscape of Villa Negrone has been transformed in a "urban jungle" hardly accessible and difficult to be passed through due to the tangle

Figure 2. *Negrone's villa and property (Catasto Napoleonico, 1810).*
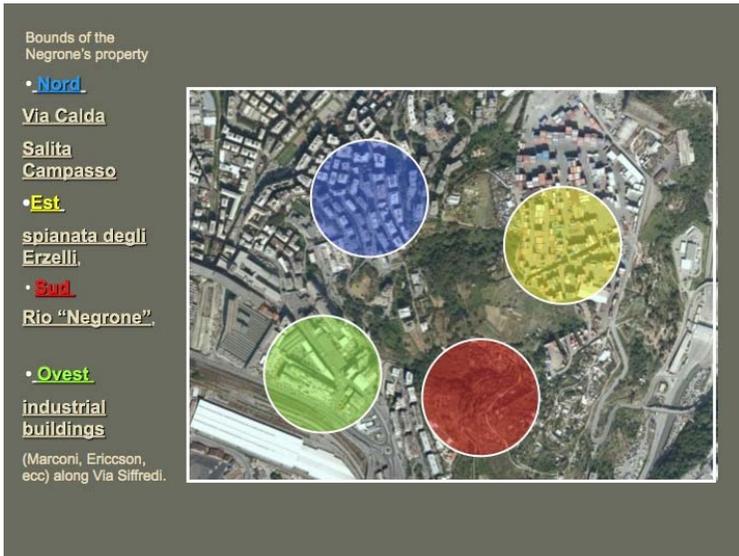
*Figure 3.* *Bounds of the Negrone's villa.*

Figure 4. *Background.*

of vegetation and the acclivity, where traces of unregulated activities of storage and garbage recycling can be seen, as well as precarious structures used for the breeding, abusive discharges for building materials, scraps, bulky urban wastes. The inhabitants have shown the desire of improving the non-places generated by the urbanization the public administration has paid little attention to them and in the 90's reacted to the situation of discomfort and refusal with forms of spontaneous associations with the aim of improving the quality of life.
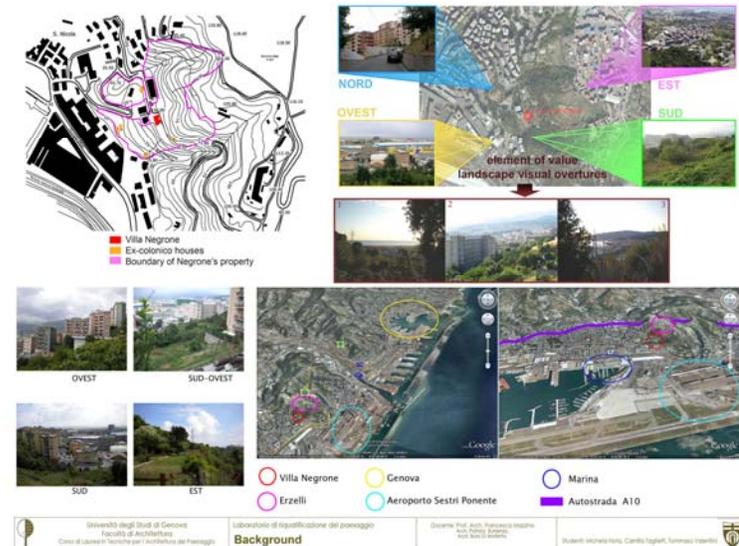
The abandoned or partially used agricultural areas can produce new landscapes and natural resources. The requalification and regeneration of Calcinara-Sestri Ponente landscape should be oriented to transform these landscapes of refusal in:

- Propulsors of a regeneration and requalification process of the periurban and urban landscapes for the construction of an ecological network with the aim of preserving and strengthen the natural elements still present and limiting the removal of green spaces which represents the most visible aspect of the environmental degradation

- Attractions for new activities within the recreational activities and the social aggregation with the evaluation of the association of volunteers' activities

- Experimental models for operations of regeneration and interventions of redevelopment with sustainable systems (semi-extensive green roofs on

the industrial and residential buildings, vertical green on the retaining walls, green parkings)

- Realizations of areas of ecological compensation easy to be maintained which help the colonization of plants and animal species, not always necessarily accessible to the population.
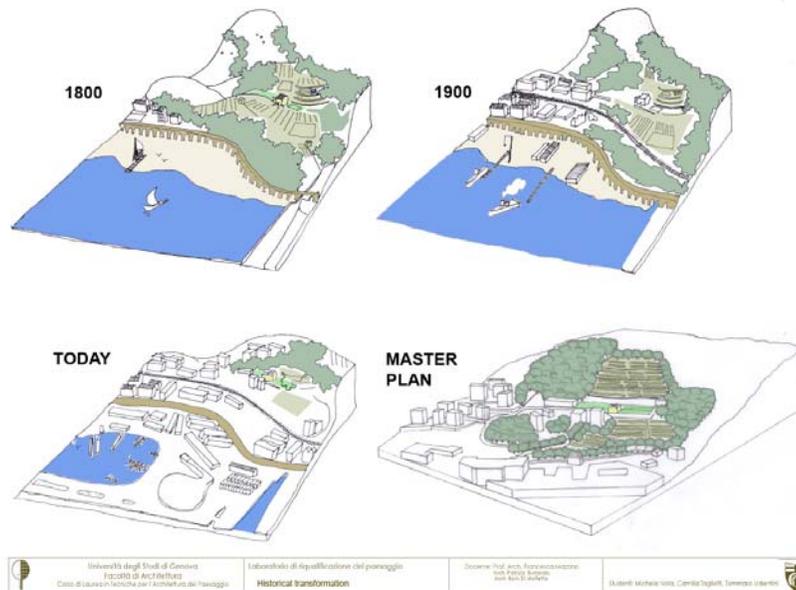

Figure 5.   *Master plan.*

References
Burlando, P. (2005). *Technology Village Leonardo, descrizione del progetto*, **Architettura del Paesaggio**, n 12.
Calcagno-Maniglio, A. (2010). **Progetti di paesaggio per i luoghi rifiutati - Sintesi della ricerca MIUR-PRIN 2007-2010 Progetti di paesaggio per i luoghi rifiutati,** Roma.
Donadieu, P. (1998). **Campagnes urbanes**, Arles.
Farina, A. (2006). **Il paesaggio cognitivo. Una nuova entità ecologica**, Roma.
Jackson, J.B. (2003). **A la découverte du paysage vernaculaire**, Arles.