Rossella Salerno
Representation devices for understanding and communicating landscapes identities

In this paper, I'm going to speak about some new forms of representation, digital and visual representation, to analyze and communicate landscape characters and values. I think that is a close relationship between methods of representations and objects to be represented. In other words, in my opinion is not possible dealing with representation from a technical point of view only, but I think that technical devices communicate instead contents and messages.

For that reason , I have to refer myself, first of all to the Italian cultural context, that is the Italian tradition of studies about landscape: so this is my starting point. In the second part of the paper I will talk about techniques of representation to day, referring to a precise example.

First question: what does rural landscape mean to day, in Italy?
In the Italian culture, a basic text on the subject is Emilio Sereni, *Storia del paesaggio agrario in Italia* (1961), that begins a line of historical geography studies, carried on by Lucio Gambi. Both focus their attention on history signs without falling in a unifying ideology of modernism yet, or on the other side on a total culture of preservation. Their point of view considers both heritage and new emerging life and needs forms.

Further, another point of interest for this paper, is the relevance that historical iconography and cartography have as holding a sense that supposed objectivity of present-day cartography hasn't. So landscape is a visible aspect of deep structures, is a sediment of a historical - economic and historical-cultural process.

Great attention, at last, is put on cultural images of landscape playing an important role in the historical construction of territory and its landscape.

Second question: does rural landscape still exist? And if yes, what are its forms?
During about last five hundred years, Italy has been characterized by mixed cultivation in row, mostly along the Po valley and in Central Italy. That represents the trait of modern Italian agriculture, something in between the previous production for self-consuming and free market.

This third way shaped an environment rich in views, varied and different, giving to past travellers, but at the same time at to-day ones, charm and beauty and a great attraction. I quote, on this topic, Maurice Aymard, *'La transizione dal feudalesimo al capitalismo'*, in *Storia d'Italia. Annali*, vol. I, Dal feudalesimo al capitalismo, a cura di Ruggiero Romano e Corrado Vivanti (Torino: Einaudi, 1978), pp. 1131-92.

The features of agriculture widely contributed in shaping landscape image. There is in fact a relationship between material landscapes and immaterial landscapes.

Landscape images helped to set up the "little homes" (piccole patrie) of communities.

Landscapes represented in paintings describe places owing to inhabitants' cultural heritage but to wider communities too. Beyond the intent and the consciousness of the painters, the iconography about landscape features, let us see landscape forms as public space produced by community and, at the same time, as image shared by the same communities that with them identify themselves.

I am going to do some examples to explain this process of cultivating and, at the same time, of forming of landscape image.

The *Allegoria del Buon Governo* of Ambrogio Lorenzetti is the best known model for the persisting forms of the Sienese country. The photographs we see, come from a study of Antonio Paolucci *"the landscape as portrait of ancient Italy"* (2000) where he shows as painting gave inspiration to Italian landscape: the same, painting represented or guided a way of seeing and constructing the territory.

In the picture of Lorenzetti, landscape is described trough its specific and realistic aspects : it represents a typical suburban panorama of Italy in the Age of Commons.

Ambrogio Lorenzetti, *Allegoria del Buon Governo*, metà XIV sec.

The four pictures below depict how Sienese countries are now and perhaps are the same giving inspiration the artist. The charm is not so much changed: cereal cultivations are expanded, trees instead reduced so mixed cultivations but the tones of colours and a sense of order was not lost.

Antonello da Messina, *Crucifixion*,
1475, Antwerp, Musée Royal de Beaux-Arts
and detail
Rural landscape now, near Messina; in the background
Peloritani Mounts

Antonello da Messina, Crucifixion, 1475, Antwerp, Musée Royal de Beaux-Arts and detail Rural landscape now, near Messina, planted with citrus trees ; in the background Peloritani Mounts.

If these are images both true, material and immaterial at the same time, describing contexts internationally known, the emerging question in Italy regards "fragili" (frail) contexts, those are searching for a new sense of landscape.

One of the most relevant point in urban and landscape changing, in last twenty years, in Italy, is represented by new settlement spreading on wide parts of territory much less formerly built-up and in any case rural areas still. In these areas a new landscape and a new social and economic environment set up, both characterized by original and specific traits compared to traditional city (città compatta). These areas are called in different ways: urban country (campagna urbanizzata), peri-urban space, new peri-urban city, edge city (urbanizzazione periferica), sprawl. All these terms underline how old opposition between city and country is now over, and so those ones between urban and rural, metropolitan areas and not built areas too.

As Arturo Lanzani, a town planner teaching at Politecnico of Milano, wrote in *I paesaggi italiani*, (2003), the new terms underline all, beyond a image where urban and rural areas are unbroken, a reality "other", intermediate. All these changes, as a result, are in relationship with identity problems of places. Even if I subscribe to the opinion of those seeing at landscape as a possible place of life together instead of a identity place; as a medium and a support for people cohabiting without sharing same values and cultures, rather than material and symbolic expression of local society and culture (See R. Salerno, C. Casonato (edited), *Paesaggi culturali/Cultural Landscapes. Rappresentazioni Esperienze Prospettive*, Gangemi Editore, Roma 2008).

By that I don't mean that is not important identifying how landscapes are featured. Above all, the question I would ask, in this paper is: what happens when a rural landscape is so changed that is quite impossible to recognize it?

The example I'm going to tell about regards the area of Expo 2015 in Milan. The work I'm showing was carried on by a staff of students and teachers, coordinated by Peter Bosselmann, Professor of Urban Design at the University of California, Berkeley. In 2006/07 he came to Milan as Distinguished Visiting Professor to help set up an Urban Simulation laboratory at the Politecnico di Milano. The Laboratory is dedicated to reasoning with change. The area of the project selected by the town council of Milano to hold the event of EXPO 2015, includes some free parts next the new fair Centre, and used at moments as agricultural soil and less for industry. The area, located upon the new Fair, occupies a surface pf 170 hectares.

"Expo Milano 2015, Italy": the theme " Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life" embraces the entire range of problems inherent in food and human nutrition in all its aspects.

"EXPO MILANO 2015, ITALY" Plan

The Fair

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Elements of Milan North-West Area
1. important roads and railways for regional, national and international mobility
2. connecting place among towns of first Milan belt: Rho, Pero, Agrate, Milano
3. The large area of Fair, project of Massimiliano Fuksas
4. park system: Parco agricolo Sud Milano, Bosco in Città, Parco delle Cave
5. several enclosed open spaces; spaces abandoned, not urban, not cultivated, neither rural
6. a large water system, that in part, will be used in a water-way to be planned.

More broadly, because of its difficult connection with close fabric of cities (tessuti urbani), the area was excluded from process of growth that instead involved all peripheries of Milan.
The issue of our analysis regarded the parcels of lands not built yet, preserved in the territory, the environmental links and the idea of landscape; in fact the EXPO can be seen as an occasion to think to this area in terms of landscape: as the European Landscape Convention suggests at art. 6, one of the most innovative, the first aim is making people aware of existing situation and potentialities of landscape they live.

How representation devices can help us to sort out landscape heritage and potentialities? Overtaking or integrating 2d maps with photographs, sketches, schemes, 3D drawings, GIS; using 3d representations or visual simulation of urban landscapes; finding communicative codes for people and not for experts only.

The example of Expo Milan 2015 area is based on Google earth, 3d model and digital simulation. The methodologies of visioning can bring out new elements of knowledge about anthropic system, coming out Euclidean boundaries of maps and let us survey and lay out qualitative relations between man and space and between space and time.
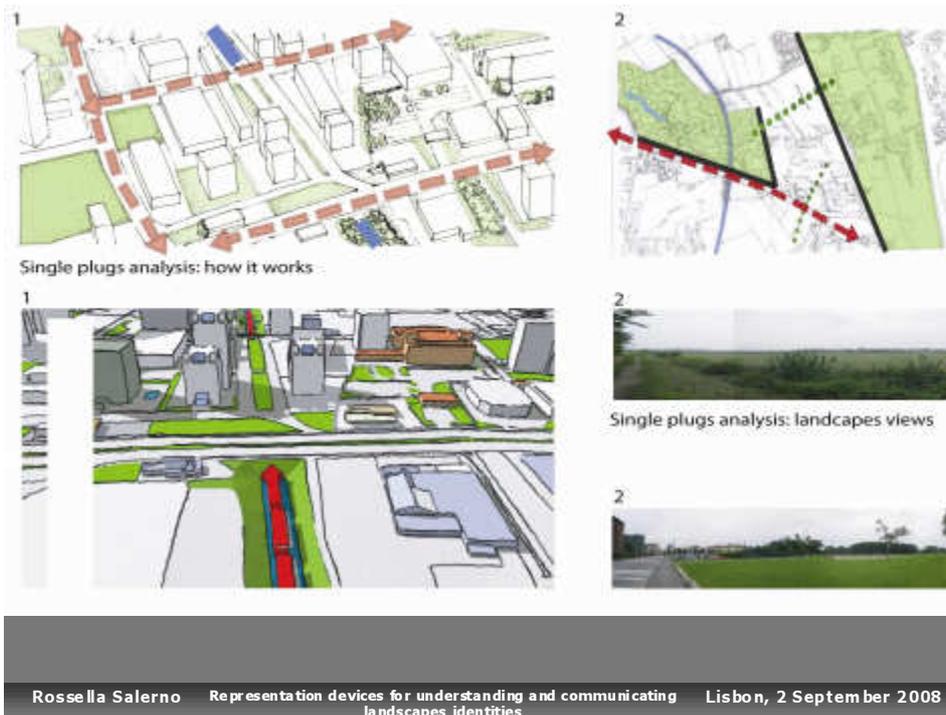
A 3d representation can help us for example to see better the relation among open spaces and built areas; so visual simulation of urban landscapes too. We consider these devices as instruments to a better comprehension of landscape context as in order to plan as to communicate their feature to people.

Such devices can integrate drawings widely used yet, for example, in the French *Atlas de paysages. Méthode pour des Atlas de paysages*, edited by Luginbül (1994)

According to the European Landscape Convention, landscape can be defined as "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors". By focusing on the perception of landscape, the main objective of our projects is making the latent landscape visible in the city areas which are distinguished by high urban and natural fragmentation.

For example using analytical drawings of less-known places we can transform quantitative data in qualitative interpretation of what is identified as "spazi aperti interclusi" "enclosed open spaces". The areas have been therefore assessed in order to plan a greenway and network of green areas which could be realized along the Expo 2015 boundaries.

It's represents a synthesis of different uses of traditional and digital techniques of representation (sketches, schemes, 2D and 3D drawings, GIS) in order to better explain what are real elements constituting open spaces enclosed, something different and more than the usual 2d cartography can say us.