

# THE LANDSCAPE GEOGRAPHY VIS-A-VIS THE APPROACH FROM UNESCO AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

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## 1. Two geographical options

There is no room, here, to evoke the vicissitudes that the concept of landscape has passed through from the Nineteen century, when the diptych of the ambiguous terms *Naturlandschaft* and *Kulturlandschaft* debuted in German geography, to the Vidalian concept, arisen in the French geography during the early Twentieth century, to come to the approaches to some extent inspired to the general system-based epistemology, which were designed during the 1970s. What is worth mentioning here is that this evolution has been marked by two options: on the one hand, the option of considering the landscape from rationalism-inspired perspectives, which have led to design it as consisting of sets of tangible, essentially geological and geomorphologic, features inter-linked by cause-effect relationships; on the other hand, the option of considering the landscape as a set of symbols and values attributed by human communities to nature and to human prints in the Earth surface, therefore leaving rationalism in the background and focusing on cultural, essentially intellectual and spiritualist, manifestations. Till the 1970s the history of geography had been marked by many phases during which the former, rationalism-consistent, approach prevailed, and a phase, influenced by the approach from Vidal de la Blache, during which the prospect of placing human culture at the core of the consideration arose. Nevertheless, these options didn't acquire so clear features till the 1980s, when the positivism-and general system theory-inspired approaches, presenting the landscape as the result of geosystems and ecocomplexes, were rejected by the so-called humanistic geography, supporting views tailored to represent the landscape as a sort of a theatre where the existential conditions are performed.

Let's compare these two perspectives, as they arose during the 1980s, by carrying out a landscape discourse encompassing (i) the object of representation, which may be called the referent according to the semiotic language, (ii) the representation itself, which consists of what is called the sign in semiotic terms, and (iii) the values attributed to the landscape features, which may be assimilated to what, *sensu lato*, is regarded as the signified by semiotics.

## 2. The rationalism-sustained approach

The current representations of the landscape as a set of tangible features, which may be perceived and described in objectivist terms, lead to consider the Earth surface as a set of elements linked by a set of cause-effect relationships. Therefore, the landscape is framed into a structuralist vision according to which the geographer may describe it as any other geographical object, namely identifying those elements which are relevant to representation, and then exploring which elements behave as causes and which ones behave as effects. Also the self-claimed general system theory-referred approaches, such as those based on the above-mentioned concepts of the geosystem and the ecocomplex, are rooted on a structuralist basis. Moreover structuralism or like positivism which preceded it in the history of epistemology, and the general system theory, which followed it with the ambition to achieve a more satisfactory approach to reality or is rooted on the rationalist thought, and it may be regarded as a contemporary way to represent reality in keeping with the four precepts defined by René Descartes in the *Discours sur la méthode*, namely the evidence, reduction, causality and exhaustiveness precepts.

Bearing these precepts in mind, and being aware of the conceptual consequences that they may induce in the landscape representation (Tab. 1), it may be shared that, in this speculative contexts, the representation of the landscape moves from a very simple basis. As a matter of fact, only those elements and features of the Earth surface that are self-evident are assumed as worthy of consideration in the presupposition that only proceeding along this pathways the building up of scientific knowledge of the landscape may be operated. This implies only

tangible objects being framed in the geographical intellectual perspectives, therefore excluding or at least relegating in the background the intangible elements and features. As a result, symbols, as well as values deriving from symbols, are assumed as not pertinent to the representation.

This approach is worthy of some discussion. First, it is conflicting with that approach, widely diffused in anthropology and other social sciences, according to which culture is an uninterrupted creation of symbols attributed to the external reality, including places of which the Earth surface consists of, and this circumstance is the cardinal reason by which human species differs from any other species living in our Planet. Secondly, this approach is contextually consistent with the evidence and reduction Cartesian precepts because it implies considering only tangible, therefore self-evident, elements, therefore reducing the object of representation by excluding the intellectual and spiritual features.

By conforming to this couple of precepts, the geographical representation consists of signs designing the order characterising the tangible features of the Earth surface.

Tab. n. 1. The rationalism-inspired approach to landscape

ENUNCIATION	PRINCIPLES	SUBSEQUENT APPROACH TO THE LANDSCAPE
Considering only objects that are self-evident, and rejecting what is not perceived clearly and distinctly	EVIDENCE	Only the tangible and self-evident features of the Earth's surface are considered
Only real spaces may be framed in the representation. Objectivism, in the Kantian and Cartesian senses, is assumed as the leading background	REDUCTION	The landscape is decomposed in its components: the geomorphologic hydrologic, and other physical components and then human settlements and land uses and so forth. Each component is investigated in itself
Only biological diversity may be fully considered. Only those simplest elements aspects of social diversity that ones. The may be framed in objectivist a way as to models and measured, are acceptable causality relationships	CAUSALITY	The representation of the landscape up by moving from its toward the most complicated elements are ordered in such make self evident the by which they are linked. In so doing an analytical pathway is operated
Attention is concentrated on biological diversity. The flora and fauna species, together with land uses, are taken into consideration. Maps of these elements are built up in order to represent the spatial diversification deriving from their location and extent	EXHAUSTIVENESS	Representation is finalised by assembling all the cognitive components in a unique framework, in that taking care that anything has been omitted

This may be operated by supposing that these features are mutually linked by cause-effect relationships, and by moving from the consideration of the simplest relationships towards that of the most complicated ones. The more the representation is constituted by networks of signs ordered according to this Cartesian approach and located in an Euclidean space, the more it emerges as a scientific product, a simple, understandable product, which is able to lead not only to a correct assessment of the landscape but also to a scientifically valid knowledge building. In accordance with this methodological attitude, representation acquires a metaphorical role vis-à-vis the tangible features of the landscape. Such a metaphorical role of the modern representation is due to the fact that representation is not a mere re-production of the landscape by following the similarity principle, namely by mirroring the landscape features, but it consists in the production of a set of inter-linked signs designing a rationalist view, which is related to reality by the proximity principle.

Representation moves from the sign to the signified, the latter essentially consisting of the explanation of the landscape. In its turn, explanation leads to the enunciation of theories, and the building up of landscape-supported ideologies and narratives. Explanations, theories, ideologies and narratives are claimed as true because they derive from a scientific representation, and the representation is scientific because it is consistent with the causalism principle. Truth in knowledge, together with validity in representation, are connected by a feedback relationship: the more the representation is correctly based on the causalism principle, the more it is valid; the more representation is valid, the more the signified, meant in a broad sense, is true; the more the signified is true, the more representation may be claimed as scientifically valid. This approach strengthens the linkage between science and action, because the more the signified is validated by the rationality of sign, the more it is assumed as justifying any coherent action to the landscape. The more determinist, namely mono-semic, is the linkage between the rationalist representation of the landscape and the subsequent explanation, the more intense is the justification of the action induced by the explanation. Where shaped by so scientifically-supported actions, the landscape may be better represented in rationalist terms. Hence the virtuous circuit of the landscape modern representation comes to the fore. The validity of this circuit, together with its survival against refutation-processes, is rooted on the circumstance that only scientific, namely causalism-based, knowledge is admitted, and any other knowledge sources, namely the art and religion sources, are pushed away. In this respect, a characteristic, which connotes the modern knowledge building as a whole, emerges. The representation acquires persuasive features as a result of a double reduction process: the reduction provoked by leaving out the subject, and the reduction caused by leaving out any source of knowledge where it is supposed to be incompatible with the causalism precepts. The final result of this sign-based, and explanation-aimed, process is the construction of a strong landscape discourse, which is only referred to reason and is not able to refer to imagination.

### **3. The non rationalist-sustained approach**

At this point, it could be helpful to wonder what kind of landscape representation would arise where both these reductions are overcome, i.e. where the subject is considered as the fulcrum of the landscape representation, and also those representation's sources which do not conform to the cause-effect precept are considered. In such an approach, a basic reversal is operated because the subject replaces the object in playing the role of referent of the landscape discourse. Moreover, the landscape is assumed as a set of symbols attributed to the places because of the cultural atmosphere wrapping up the subject, and because of the emotion induced in the subject by his existential interaction with the external reality. Literature has based the investigation of this dimension by considering the recent philosophical approaches to emotion, according to which this subjective condition is regarded as a source of knowledge associated to reason, and by proposing the concept of *genius loci* to denote the symbolic and value endowment of the individual places. This perspective leads to replacing the Cartesian principle of evidence with the principle of pertinence, in that stating that the source of knowledge building does not consist of what is self-evident and clearly definable in the reality external to the subject, but it consists of those symbols and values that are regarded as relevant to the representation ó namely, of those elements which are chosen only on the basis of their pertinence to the goal of knowledge building.

Moving from this basis, the representation of the landscape is referred to the endowment of symbols attributed by the subject to those places of the Earth surface that are concerned with his experiences. In this respect, the sign, meant as a general semiotic product, acquires the features of a symbol. It is meant as a particular type of sign which is potentially marked by some ambiguity, and which acquires specific signifieds in accordance with the emotional relationships established with the subject. In this intellectual construction, the refusal and replacement of two other Cartesian precepts occurs. The reduction precept is replaced by the holism one, because the symbol-consisting representation does not need the referent to be decomposed but it requires the referent, namely the place, to be perceived, and emotionally embraced, as a whole. This replacement is associated with another one: the rationalist precept of causality is replaced by the teleology precept because the representation is not keen to identify the cause-effect relationships but rather to consider the referent on the basis of the

cultural profile of the subject, in accordance with the attitudes of the subject vis-à-vis the individual realities.

In keeping with this epistemological design, the symbol has a metaphorical role vis-à-vis the referent, but in terms differing from those congenial to the rationalist representation. Following the Cartesian approach, the sign is a metaphor of the referent to the extent to which it provides a rationalist model of a reality regarded in objectivist terms: its cardinal role is to discover and to represent the order which is hidden in the world. In keeping with the subject-referred approach, the symbol is a metaphor of the referent that does not consist of a rational model of a reality external to the subject, but as the design of how the landscape is perceived and imagined by the subject. It does not design the object in itself, but the object mirrored into the subject, or the subject projected towards the object.

Being an ambiguous sign, the symbol is linked with the signified through a poli-semic, plurivocal relationship: the individual place may be marked by various symbols according to the cultural milieus and individual perspectives from which it is considered, and the individual symbol may lead to various signifieds according to the individual emotions and imaginations. This makes the knowledge building as not conforming to the rationalist precept of exhaustiveness, but rather to that of aggregativeness, because it is not based on all the elements of the referent but only on those that are determined by the subject. It is assumed as partisan. Hence a cardinal consequence: the signified, meant as the final target of knowledge building, does not consist of explanations but rather of comprehension. The final result of this symbol-based and comprehension-aimed process is the construction of a weak landscape discourse, which is much more referred to imagination than reason.

As can be seen, the above-presented approaches are marked by a radical conflict with the rationalism-supported vision which, in the field of landscape representation, has been carried out by positivism (landscape essentially reduced to geomorphologic features), by structuralism (landscape considered as the manifestation of webs of elements and their features), and finally by the general system-theory (landscape considered as the morphology of geosystems and ecomplexes). This conflict moves from the definition of the referent, and berths to the conceptual design of the signified. Following the rationalism-based approaches, the landscape consists of the morphological endowment of a spatial structure. Therefore the representation of the Earth surface per se leads to investigating the spatial structures of which it consists, and the specific representation of the landscape leads to investigating those forms that are congenial to structures. Following a non-rationalist approach, the representation of the Earth surface from the perspective of the subject leads to discovering mantles of symbols and values.

#### **4. The concept of cultural landscape**

The history of the geographic speculation of the landscape has been characterised by designing couples of concepts, which to some extent have conducted to opening diverging approaches to the description of the geographical features of the Earth surface and in so doing they have exerted a sharp role in triggering discussions, in stimulating concept building and empirical research implementation.

Naturlandschaft and Kulturlandschaft, as is well known, the first couple of concepts emerged in the Nineteen century, when the German geographers countered the concepts of Naturlandschaft and Kulturlandschaft, which has been mentioned before. It is no use noting that these terms have not been specifically referred to the landscape, but more in general to territory.

Nevertheless, it is worth noting that, to some extent, a number of geographers have referred them only to the landscape, therefore inducing the idea that the landscape could be approached by two distinct perspectives, respectively based on the consideration of natural and cultural features, and in so presuming the existence of two distinct realities.

Tab. n. 2. A non-rationalism-inspired approach to landscape

ENUNCIATION		
Considering what is relevant to the need of representation. Assuming as reasonable to change the range considered according to the intention of the representation	PERTINENCE	The symbols and values attributed by the culture of local communities to the places are considered focusing on those that are relevant to represent the landscape as a product of the existential dimensions of human life
Considering the object as a whole and relating it to its external environment	HOLISM	The landscape is regarded as the manifestation of <i>genius loci</i> , namely the cultural identity conferred to places
Avoiding considering the objects un themselves and demonstrating the existence of laws regulating their relationships. On the contrary, focusingh on their behaviour and on the relevant goal which they move towards, and on representing the pathway they follow to reach their targets	TELEOLOGY	The landscape is represented in terms of symbols, and the values that, according to the social and cultural contexts, the symbols lead to. Either symbols and values can be comprehended but not explained
Knowledge is constructed by no deliberately selecting only those elements of reality that are useful for the representation. Any exhaustive enumeration of elements is refused	AGGREGATIVENESS	The landscape representation has objectivist relevance. It is partisan per se

This approach has justified not only the presupposition, similar to a postulate, that these two perspectives not only involve the representation-building (semiotic dimension) and the explanation-building (hermeneutical dimension), but also the presupposition that the natural landscape and the cultural landscape are two distinct realities (ontological dimension). In this framework, two distinct attitudes have emerged. The natural landscape has been considered by geographers as a reality that may be represented by efficiently using the cause-effect precept, therefore achieving results which may be regarded as undoubtedly correct. By way of contrast, the cultural landscape has been considered as not apt to be framed according to the cause-effect precepts, therefore its representation has not been regarded as scientifically correct. As a final result, for long the investigations of the natural landscape have attracted more attention than those of the cultural landscape.

Natural landscape, geographical landscape óIn some geographical milieus, particularly in Italy during the first half of the Twentieth century, the couple “natural landscape, geographical landscape” the latter called also “anthropogeographical landscape” came to the fore. Following the discussions held in the framework of the 1938 International Geographical Congress (IGC), the geographical landscape was assumed in a broad sense, as a combination of physical and human features. This distinction was regarded as parallel to that of the natural region and the geographical region. It resulted from the efforts, carried out especially in the framework of the Vidalian speculative construction, to represent the Earth surface as a mantle showing the manifestations of the interaction between human communities and nature.

Perceptible and geographical landscape, as can be realised, the distinction between the perceptible and geographical landscapes is essentially based on ontological elements, namely on the number and typology of elements under consideration: the “perceptible landscape” implies geomorphologic elements being essentially considered, therefore reducing the landscape representation to a geomorphologic description of the Earth surface. By way of contrast, the “geographical landscape” implies also human elements being considered, therefore combining the geomorphologic description with that of human settlements and land uses. Another perspective from which to consider this conceptual duo is referred to the knowledge building process. This approach implies two phases being identified. The first

phase consists of the perception of the landscape, and leads to design the “perceptible landscape”, just regarded as the representation of the Earth surface as it is perceived by human senses. The second phase implies the perceived elements being processed by human reason, therefore leading to some abstraction, consisting in the representation of the order hidden in the perceived landscape. This is the “geographical landscape”. It may be assumed that these two phases correspond to the empirical and rational, model building-oriented, phases of the intellectual approach to our external reality. The perceptible landscape-referred phase belongs to a pre-scientific process, while the geographical landscape-referred phase lies with the fulcrum of the scientific process.

Cultural landscape as a type of geographical landscape, at this point, the couple “geographical landscape, cultural landscape” may be introduced. An approach, which catalysed extended consensus in the mid Twentieth century, consists of considering the geographical landscape as an articulated category embracing a potentially indefinite number of types, moving from the agricultural landscape to end with the cultural one. In keeping with this perspective, the cultural landscape is regarded as a type of geographical landscape. Its existence in the menu of geographical representations just derives from the circumstance that it leads to represent a sub-set of those elements and features, which the Earth surface consists of. As a result, this approach is based on two background statements. The first statement has ontological relevance, because it is presupposed that the cultural endowment of the Earth surface has the same intrinsic nature of any other geographical element, namely it has a tangible nature, therefore excluding the consideration of any spiritual, intangible, feature. The second statement has epistemological relevance, because it is presupposed that the cultural landscape may be approached by adopting the concepts and methods in use for representing any other kind of landscape ó in short, the rationalist approach is presupposed as pertinent. It is no use saying that these two background statements are bonded by mutual profound coherence.

Cultural landscape and geographical landscape as distinct objects, by way of contrast, the cultural landscape may be assumed as something radically distinct from the geographical landscape. This approach implies the “geographical landscape” being conceived as some “visual appearance”, namely as the set of features that are identified in the Earth surface without relating them to the existential and spiritual conditions of the subject. Hence, the interplay between the subject and the object is not called to the fore. Differently, the “cultural landscape” is conceived as a “integrated visual appearance”, according to which the landscape may be regarded as a mantle of signs attributed to the places that mirrors the ideals, values and intellectual experiences of the subject. The geographical landscape, namely the visual appearance of the Earth, consists of forms from which some inputs are addressed to the subject, in that bringing about some perception, representation, knowledge. By way of contrast, the cultural landscape, namely the integrated visual appearance, is marked by the opposite pathway, since it results from the intellectual and spiritual endowment of the subject which is mirrored into reality. In the former case, the representation is presumed to refer to the object, while in the latter case it is presumed to refer the projection of the subject into the object.

Where this approach is shared, it derives that the cultural landscape is a conceptual category radically distinct from that of geographical landscape, even when the latter is meant as including also cultural elements. As a matter of fact, the representation of the cultural landscape consists in representing how the subject is projected toward the spatial reality, how he imagines his being-in-the-world in the Heideggerian sense, a representation marked by strong intellectual connotations, which lies memory and project, past and future, existence nature transcendence. To sum up, this approach leads to a triptych of statements. It is excluded that the cultural landscape is (i) the result of a specific perspective which the geographical landscape is considered from, (ii) a specific type of the geographical landscape, and (iii) the cultural content of the geographical landscape. The cultural landscape is distinct from the geographical landscape on the basis of the representation, therefore according to the level of consideration and knowledge building. The geographical landscape is a product of the rationalism-rooted knowledge building, in particular of the structuralism approach ó which is a cardinal manifestation of rationalism ó according to which the Earth surface, including its cultural features has to be represented following the Cartesian precepts (Tab. n. 3). In this

respect, this approach may be regarded as congenial to the modernity speculative apparatus. By way of contrast, the cultural landscape is a product of a non-rationalist, and post-structuralist approach, according to which the Earth surface is not represented as a web of elements (Tab. n. 4).

### 5. The distinction between these two concepts merits some specification

In the case of the geographical landscape, a reality that is postulated to be external to the subject, consisting in places which the Earth surface is constituted by, has the primacy upon the subject. Places are regarded as realities per se, namely in an objective sense, and they are represented according to the Cartesian logic, namely as points located in an Euclidean space, and mutually connected by cause-effect relationships. As has been mentioned, only those elements that conform to this scientific approach may be included in the landscape representation. As a result, the elements from religion and art are excluded. The knowledge building process leads to explanation, and the relevant geographical discourse is dominated by logoi: it starts from the referent, provides rational representation of it, and leads to univocal-determined explanations.

Table 3. The rationalist and non rationalist approaches compared

REPRESENTATION		
on a rationalist basis reality external to the subject tangible reality focus on space real spaces considered	REFERENT	on a non rationalist basis inherent to the subject intangible reality focus on space hyper-real space considered
rational sign rational metaphor rational proximity to the object	REPRESENTATION	existential sign non rational metaphor non rational proximity, similarity
object-referred explanation theory	SIGNIFIED	subject-referred comprehension discourse
objectivist knowledge knowledge intrinsically strong discourse	RESULTS	subjectivist knowledge knowledge intrinsically non true weak discourse
reality	LANGUAGE	human existence
context		text
determination		no-determination
univocal		plurivocal
ethics		aesthetics
physical environment		symbolic texture
scenic aspects marginalized		scenic aspects deeply considered
skyline less considered		skyline deeply considered
land uses		symbols relating to land uses
colours less considered		colours deeply considered
sounds and smell not considered		sounds and smell considered
cultural homogeneity		cultural heterogeneity
historical memory not considered		historical memory deeply considered

### 6. The UNESCO approach: cultural landscape

The relevance of the two diverging, epistemologically conflicting, approaches from geography is marked with a self-evident relevance to the policy-concerned approaches from inter-governmental organisations. This political relevance is not only due to the circumstance according to which geography was the first disciplinary milieu where scientific concepts of the landscape were designed, and where the discussion of the relationship between the geographical (or natural) landscape and the cultural landscape was focused on, but it is due also to the fact that the couple of above-presented options to this subject arena are of close relevance to the design of strategies and actions, essentially consisting of planning and management. For these reasons, bearing in mind this struggle that geography has been marked by, first the approaches from UNESCO, and then the approach from the Council of Europe, may be regarded with the aim of exploring what potential or actual interaction may be found between the geographical and institutional arenas. It is no use saying that this discussion will be concerned only with the conceptual level.

As is well known, the UNESCO action for the protection of cultural heritage started in 1952 with the adoption of the Universal Copyright Convention, and it has proceeded by adopting a sequence of international and legal materials (Tab. n. 5). Nevertheless, for the matter that is here under discussion, the basis may be found in the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The main reason of this focus is due to the fact that this legal material provided a definition of cultural and natural heritage, therefore posing the basis not only for a multitude of initiatives but also for the evolution of UNESCO approach to how to intend the culture and the landscape. According to Article 1 of this Convention, cultural heritage consists of three sets of objects:

- monuments: architectural works, works of monumental sculpture and painting, elements or structures of an archaeological nature, inscriptions, cave dwellings and combinations of features, which are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- groups of buildings: groups of separate or connected buildings which, because of their architecture, their homogeneity or their place in the landscape, are of outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science;
- sites: works of man or the combined works of nature and man, and areas including archaeological sites which are of outstanding universal value from the historical, aesthetic, ethnological or anthropological point of view.

Tab. n. 4. Geographical landscape and cultural landscape compared

GEOGRAPHICAL LANDSCAPE	CULTURAL LANDSCAPE
SPECULATIVE BACKGROUND	
disjunctive epistemology	conjunctive epistemology
cartesian logic	post-structuralist logic
explanation	comprehension
primacy of ethics	primacy of aesthetics
primacy of tangible	primacy of intangible
science	science, art and religion

KEYWORDS OF REPRESENTATION	
<i>logos</i>	<i>mythos</i>
referent	symbol
object	subject
signified	signifieds
causality	holism
determination	no-determination
univocity	plivocity
spatial structure	genius loci
space	place
model	discourse
rational	meaningful
homogeneity	identity
sense	consent



Tab. n. 5. Key materials from UNESCO

MATERIAL	YEAR	OBJECTIVE
Universal Copyright Convention	1952	To ensure a world protection of the intellectual patrimony
Convention on the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict	1954	To prevent the cultural patrimony is damaged or lost because of war conditions
Convention on the Means of Prohibiting Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property	1970	To prevent the cultural patrimony is transferred from a country to another therefore endangering the cultural identity of the individual countries
Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural and Natural Heritage	1972	To set up and implement the World Heritage list and, lato sensu, to the joint protection of the cultural and natural heritage
Convention on the Protection of Underwater Cultural Heritage	2001	To ensure the Protection of the the Underwater Cultural heritage hosted in the continental margin

The nature of cultural heritage may be better understood by comparing the above definition with that of natural heritage. According to Article 2 of the Convention, also natural heritage includes three sets of objects:

- natural features consisting of physical and biological formations or groups of such formations, which are of outstanding universal value from the aesthetic or scientific point of view;
- geological and physiographical formations and precisely delineated areas which constitute the habitat of threatened species of animals and plants of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science or conservation;
- natural sites or precisely delineated natural areas of outstanding universal value from the point of view of science, conservation or natural beauty.

As regards the present discussion, three conceptual connotations are worth mentioning. On the one hand, the Convention provides a clear distinction between what is “natural” and what is “cultural”. This approach had a positive role in making efficient the strategy from the UNESCO, which required the individual actions to be tailored to specific and clearly defined objects. On the other hand, the background design of the Convention seems to be aware of a possible double approach to the cultural and human cultural heritage: first, the approach congenial to common sense, which is inclined to distinguish what is ‘natural<sup>a</sup>’ from what is ‘human<sup>a</sup>’ in terms of tangible features; secondly, the approach congenial to the structure of science, based on a rigid distinction between the disciplines of the nature and those of society, according to which the natural heritage is pertinent to the former disciplines, and the cultural heritage is pertinent to the latter ones.

The Convention approach moved from considering only tangible features and objects. The consideration of intangible features may emerge indirectly, because the protection of the individual tangible elements, e.g. an archaeological remain, leads also to the protection of symbols and values congenial to this object. Nevertheless, the lack of an explicit consideration of intangible culture has provoked the rise of some conceptual questions. A conceptual discussion was indirectly encouraged during the 1980s, when it became self-evident that a chief issue of the UN policy would have been the protection of cultural identity ó particularly that of small communities which were going to be increasingly endangered by the impacts from climate change, and by some emerging economic processes, such as mass tourism. Hence the need to consider also the intangible aspects of culture started being perceived as relevant to the UNESCO policy. By this nature, that perception ought to pose an epistemological question.

As a matter of fact, where the consideration of culture is restricted to its tangible components, knowledge may be built up by using positivism-and structuralism-rooted theoretical endowments. Introducing the consideration of intangible elements requires other epistemological fundamentals to be adopted, therefore challenging the scientific approach, and making the decision-making processes complicated. Il va sans dire that such an epistemological discussion cannot be found in the UNESCO materials of that time.

The components of tangible cultures, as they are specified in Article 1 of the Convention, include artefacts, places and spaces (“areas”, according to the UNESCO terminology). Although this regulation attributes less consideration to spaces than that reserved to artefacts and places, the inclusion of the former in the Convention had an important epistemological role because it implicitly has encouraged the design of actions dealing with spatial structures embracing a variety of elements, which by their nature would need for holistic approaches.

As a result, the 1972 was a turnaround point in the history of UN policy because two concurrent events, namely the UN Conference on the Human Environment and the adoption of the UNESCO Convention under consideration, gave shape to the contextual approach to the environment and culture and, in so doing, two arenas came to the fore, which have acquired increasing importance in policy and science. As regards culture, the UNESCO Convention, although marked by conceptual lights and shadows, had a triggering role at both levels. At the political level, it provided the legal ground where the world heritage list was created, and has been implemented. At the scientific level, it gave unprecedented inputs to speculation of the essence of culture, of its ethical relevance, and of its role in a changing framework of civilisations.

Twenty years after that intriguing double debut of the UN, a turnaround phase initiated as a result of the materials adopted by the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), and on the basis of the intense discussions that, during the 1980s, were convened in both the scientific and political arenas of UNESCO (Tab.n. 6).

At the end of 1992, just a few months after the UNCED, UNESCO resolved to include the “cultural landscape” in the operational fields defined by the 1972 Convention. From the juridical point of view, this inclusion was justified by stating that the cultural landscape may be regarded as embraced by the broad concept of “combined works of nature and man”, to which Article 1 of the Convention refers. In the view of UNESCO, as it was presented by the UNESCO Expert Group in 1992 (<http://www.unesco.org/culture>), the cultural landscapes “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.

They should be selected on the basis both of their outstanding universal value and of their representative attitudes in terms of a clearly defined geo-cultural region and also for their capacity to illustrate the essential and distinct cultural elements of such regions”. This conceptual approach excludes to regard the cultural landscape as “a landscape considered with peculiar attention to its cultural features”, in that referring to the epistemological dimension of knowledge building. It excludes also to regard the cultural landscape as “consisting of the cultural features of whatever landscape”, in that referring to the ontological dimension of knowledge building. The cultural landscapes, which UNESCO focused on, are identified on the basis of two background principles, both concerned with ontology.

First, the landscape is regarded as “cultural” because it includes culture-relevant objects pertaining to tangible culture. Secondly, the UNESCO conceptual design of “cultural landscape” does not include any cultural landscape but only those landscapes that may be claimed as “excellent” because they have so peculiar characteristics as to be included in that part of the world heritage which is worth being transmitted to future generations. This background definition criterion is parallel to, and closely consistent with, that through which the world cultural sites have been identified. As a matter of fact, the reason why an individual site is included in the World Heritage List (WHL) is its excellent, unprecedented cultural value.

Moving from this speculative approach, in 1992 it was stated that the concept of cultural landscape “embraces a diversity of manifestations of the interaction between humankind and

its natural environment” (Expert Group, 1992; <http://www.unesco.org/culture>). In this framework, three cardinal categories were defined by UNESCO.

Tab. n. 6. Culture-relevant key inputs from the international arenas during the 1980s

SOURCES	YEAR	INPUTS
Man and Biosphere Programme by UNESCO	1971	The concept of sustainable development sketched. The inter-generational equity concept adopted, implying cultural heritage transmitted between generations.
Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change Programme (HDP)	1986	
Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development	1987	The sustainable development concept shared including social equity, including intergenerational equity. Cultural heritage regarded as relevant to development.
UN General Assembly Resolution 44/228	1989	The Report from the above-mentioned Commission adopted. The UNCED convened.
UNCED Preparatory Committee, Nairobi, First Session	1990	The UNCED preparation discussed and initiated.
UNCED Preparatory Committee, Geneva, Second Session	1990	The UNCED preparation continued.
UNCED Preparatory Committee Geneva, Third Session	1991	The UNCED preparation continued.
UNCED Preparatory Committee New York, Fourth Session	1992	The UNCED preparation concluded.

The clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man is the first category. It “embraces garden and parkland landscapes constructed for aesthetic reasons which are often (but not always) associated with religious or other monumental buildings and ensembles”. (Ibidem).

The second category is the organically evolved landscape. As can be seen, this category is conceptually broader than the previous one because, in principle, it embraces the landscapes that “result from an initial social, economic, administrative, and/or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. Such landscapes reflect that process of evolution in their form and component features”(Ib.). According to the UNESCO approach, two subcategories are identified. On the one hand, the relict (or fossil) landscape, meant as a landscape “in which an evolutionary process came to an end at some time in the past, either abruptly or over a period. Its significant distinguishing features are, however, still visible in material form”. On the other hand, the continuing landscape, which retains an active role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress. At the same time it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time.

Conceptually diverging from the above mentioned conceptual designs is the third category, which the UNESCO landscape-relevant strategy is concerned with. It relates to the associative cultural landscape, meant as consisting of landscapes worth being safeguarded “by virtue of the powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent” (Ib.).

Moving from the “clearly defined” landscapes to the “organically evolved”, and to the “associative cultural” ones, and increasing consideration of intangible culture may be found. This consideration is conceptually rather absent in the first category, weak in the second, and self-evident in the third one. Whatever category belongs to, an individual cultural landscape is included in the WHL only where its functionality, intended as the organic linkage marking its elements, and its intelligibility, meant as its perception from the social context, are self-evident.

## **7. Diversity, differentiation and sustainability**

The approach to the UNESCO categories of landscape may continue by considering the criteria designed and operated to identify the individual landscapes, and to evaluate whether they have so peculiar features as to be included in the WHL. Nevertheless, this consideration could divert attention from the conceptual level, which the present discussion is concerned with. To keep the conceptual discussion, it is worth considering that the inclusion of the landscape into the ontological coverage of the 1972 Convention had the triggering role of implementing discussions about the interaction between culture and nature in the framework of the individual landscapes. In 1993, namely just one year after the launching of the cultural landscape, the Cultural Landscapes Colloquium, convened in Montreal (May 10-13, 1993) by the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), led to stress that the landscape has to be represented by focusing on ‘the cultural mosaic within the landscape’, that it is to be considered that ‘diverse peoples have interest in, or place value on, such landscapes, to include the spiritual, the sacred and life processes’, and therefore that ‘the protection of cultural landscapes cannot be disassociated from issues of social, political and economic viability’ (Final Declaration; <http://whc.unesco.org/culture>).

The analyses of the landscapes carried out in the context of UNESCO have given shape to, and have diffused, the persuasion that a threefold role may be attributed to this experience. Discussing how culture and nature have interacted in the individual places therefore focusing on the interaction that may take place during the evolution of these two components of the Earth surface has given shape to the first advantage, which is essentially concerned with speculation. Another advantage is related to policy because, where culture and nature are jointly considered, conservation and development strategies of the local systems may better conform to the principle of sustainability. Finally, the prospect of bettering the behaviour of local communities and tourism vis-à-vis the landscape by attributing adequate consideration to culture, and to its integration in nature, may solidify.

As far as the monitoring of landscapes for their inclusion in the WHL has been operated, discussions of the role of the cultural landscape in a view of protecting cultural diversity has acquired increasing relevance to the point that the Final Declaration of the International Workshop on “Cultural Landscapes, The Challenge of Conservation” (Ferrara, Italy, 11-12 November 2002) attributed a cardinal role to this prospect. Therefore, the concept of cultural diversity has arisen, and now it is expected to catalyse attention and discussions aimed at defining it, and implementing its operational role. In this respect, it would be useful if considerations would move from the debut of the “diversity” concept, as it emerged in the framework of the 1992 UNCED. In that occasion, the concept of biodiversity marked the Convention on Biological Diversity. It was defined as “the variability among living organisms from all sources including, inter alia, terrestrial, marine and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part; this includes diversity within species, between species and ecosystems” (Article 2). As regards the species variability, it may be reminded that the ecological literature is inclined to consider it as the ratio between the rare and dominant species, and that, basing on this concept, many quantitative methods have been designed to monitor and evaluate this essential component of living world.

During the late 1990s, discussions of the impacts from globalisation processes on the lifestyles, and on economic organisation of indigenous peoples particularly discussions held in the framework of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) have opened the way to consider the socio-economic diversity as a focal element for sustainable development. Discussions have emphasised two consequences of the loss of diversity, both of close relevance to the landscape concept. As far as globalisation has brought about the diffusion of mass cultivations and breeding, the indigenous patterns and techniques of land uses have been

reduced, and many of them have disappeared. This process, which has essentially involved the inter-tropical latitudes where developing communities are concentrated has brought about, first, the loss of local practices, which were essential components of the local cultures. Contextually, a loss of biological, genetic and species, diversity has taken place, and it has diffused due to the dismissing of traditional cultivated species and animals. Hence, the loss of cultural identity has been associated to a loss of biological diversity, and these losses are expected to be increasingly associated in any regions where globalisation processes will operate. This circumstance leads to attribute a focal relevance to the landscape concept, because it is a speculative arena where the awareness of the interaction of culture and nature may strengthen and diffuse.

Moving from these considerations, an evolutionary pathway may be designed in which i) the concept of diversity arose in the biological context in the occasion of the 1992 Convention on the biological diversity, ii) it was extended to the socio-economic context during that decade, and finally iii) more recently, it has been diffusely referred to the cultural context in the framework of the speculation on the landscape. The more the concept of diversity has been related to the socio-economic and cultural contexts, the more the interaction between human communities and nature has been perceived as a subject endowed with both speculative and social justifications. At this point, the design of a conceptual triptych may arise, which concerns:

- the ecological perspective where diversity is meant as genetic, species and ecosystem diversity, therefore designing the three levels at which the general concept of biological diversity should be referred. It va sans dire that, as a result of the strong progress in bio-engineering, which has occurred after the Rio Conference, and of the expanding application of genetic treatments, the general concept of diversity, together with the associated concept of ecological diversity, have acquired unexpected and extended ethical values;
- the socio-economic perspective where diversity is referred to the peculiar features and patrimony of the individual economic organisations and social systems. Economic efficiency could be better designed if the protection of this humankind patrimony were included in its conceptual extent. This progress would lead to implementing the economic efficiency by framing it in ethics;
- the cultural perspective where the ethical peculiarities and cultural heritage of the human communities would be considered as a basis to pursue social equity. Also this conceptual implementation would be endowed with significant ethical values.

At this point, it may be considered that, according to the thought which supported the UNCED, also sustainable development is to be assumed as a system of three goals, namely, ecological integrity, economic efficiency, and social intra- and inter-generational equity. As a consequence, an epistemological linkage and loop arise. Linkage consists of considering the three perspectives from which diversity may be regarded as three parallel, instrumental concepts vis-à-vis the three components of sustainable development. The loop implies that the more the individual concepts of diversity are assumed as foci for representing spatial realities and for designing actions, the more the associated individual components of sustainable development may be efficiently operated. As a result, the more effective the policy, the more science is encouraged to explain and represent reality referring to the concept of diversity. This approach may constitute a cardinal point for approaches marked by three features:

- ecological integrity would be explicitly referred to the key properties of the ecosystem relevant to its interaction with the human communities, namely: diversity, productivity, and resilience;
- economic efficiency would be explicitly found in the pursuit of human development and security as they have been designed by UNDP;
- social equity would be explicitly referred to both intra-and inter-generational relationships, and it should be also proclaimed as including the protection of the cultural heritage and ethnic values of human communities.

The more the concept of diversity is adopted to conceive political approaches, and the more it is used as a key tool for management and planning designs, the more it requires to be

discussed. In this respect, it may be useful to concisely recall that, according to the geographical thought, this discussion may move from the consideration of the differentiation processes which the Earth surface has undergone because of natural and human factors. During the 1930s, geographers started representing the Earth surface according to a structuralist approach, namely as a reality consisting of elements whose spatial location and geographical distribution varies, therefore giving shape to areal differentiation. As a result, the Earth surface may be represented as a mosaic of areas, each of them being marked by a set of natural and human elements, and by a set of relationships between elements. The combination of elements, together with its spatial variability, are regarded as the source of the Earth surface differentiation. Moving from this approach, it is supposed that the individual area is uniform due to the presence of the same elements in its whole geographical extent, and that it is homogeneous due to the presence of the same relationship patterns.

This approach focuses on spaces, and it is based on the uniformity and homogeneity concepts. The final goal consists of discovering the order that, under the shape of spatial regularities, is congenial to geographical realities. This leads towards two outputs: i) representing the landscape as resulting from the uniform features marking the individual areas, and ii) designing classifications of landscapes. By way of contrast, when attention moves from diversification to diversity, the representation focuses on places with the aim of capturing their peculiarities. Uniformity and homogeneity are not pertinent concepts, and the landscape is perceived as an area where places have acquired their identity because of the presence of some factors that have brought about some cement.

Tab. n. 7. The present configuration of the World Heritage included in the UNESCO strategy

COMPONENTS – CHARACTER - RELEVANCE TO THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE				
	Tangible	Intangible	Natural	Cultural
Site	*		*	*
Historical settlements	*		*	*
Cultural landscapes	*	*	*	*
Sacred natural sites	*		*	*
Underwater cultural heritage	*		*	*
Museums	*		*	*
Mobile cultural heritage	*		*	*
Craftsmen	*			*
Documentation	*			*
Movies	*			*
Oral traditions		*		*
Languages			*	*
Festivities		*	*	*
Rituals and beliefs			*	*
Music and song		*		*
Arts of spectacle		*		*
Traditional medicine and pharmacopœa		*		*
Literature		*		*
Culinary arts		*		*
Traditional sports		*		*

The landscape is self-evident not because it is marked by a uniform geographical distribution of elements and relationships between elements, but rather because it is marked by close interaction between culture and nature. In this conceptual framework, each landscape is a unique reality, and the geographer abstains from building up typologies.

There is no doubt that the design of excellent landscapes by UNESCO is closely consisting with this idea, therefore calling to the fore that part of geographical literature which, since the early Twentieth century, has been inclined to represent the Earth surface basing on the personality of places.

## **8. The UNESCO approach: tangible and intangible culture**

The consideration of how the landscape concept adopted by UNESCO is closely linked with those directions of geographical speculations that aim at discovering the identity and personality of places rather the order of spaces may be regarded as a constructive basis, from which to move towards the second innovative approach, namely the protection and valuing of intangible culture. As a matter of fact, there is a close speculative linkage between the representation of the Earth surface as a product of the interaction between culture and nature which is the background result of the inclusion of the landscape in the menu of UNESCO World Heritage and the inclusion of intangible culture in the global UNESCO strategy.

In this respect, the circumstance according to which these two inclusions took place in the 1990s, in the intellectual atmosphere triggered by the UNCED, and the circumstance that, at both the conceptual and operational levels, these inclusions have been marked by a concurrent implementation process, is meaningful to the point of attributing a turnaround role to the present phase.

This role is marked by a self-evident feedback: the more the landscape is regarded as resulting from the interaction between human communities and nature, the more the consideration of the intangible components of culture is encouraged; the more the intangible culture is focused on, the more contributions to the approach to landscapes are successful.

The materials from UNESCO show that the tangibility and intangibility concepts were designed by considering the content of culture, namely by essentially referring to the ontological dimension of the discourse of culture, and at the same time by considering the role of culture, i.e. by focusing more on the hermeneutics than on ontology.

From the perspective of the content, the “tangible, intangible” couple was assimilated to the “material, immaterial” couple, because the tangible culture was regarded as consisting of any aspect of the cultural endowment which is marked by some physicality from the monument to the underwater remain, paints and sculptures while the intangible culture was referred to any intellectual and spiritual manifestation, from literature to religious beliefs, music and oral traditions. In this respect, it may be noted that many cultural manifestations denote a close association of tangible and intangible components (Tab. n. 7). This is, for instance, the case of culinary arts, where the materiality of ingredients and tools is closely associated with the immateriality of traditional local knowledge and rites.

In this respect, it should be evaluated whether, by considering the components of culture, it could be useful to move from the diptych “tangible, intangible” to the triptych “tangible, intangible, combined” where the third concept, i.e. the combined culture, indicates those cultural manifestations that consist of a cardinal intangible component (the software component), which reveals itself through a tangible basis (the hardware support).

In “combined cultures” the software, intangible component plays a cardinal role, in that giving shape to the cultural connotation of the tangible support, which it is based on. This circumstance leads to discuss the second perspective, namely that of the role of the culture, which was the basis from which UNESCO moved to design the distinction between tangible and intangible culture. According to UNESCO the cardinal role of tangible culture is to trigger and to maintain memory. “Memory UNESCO states is vital for creativity: that holds true for individuals and for peoples, who find in their heritage (...) the key of their identity and the source of their inspiration”. In this respect, the “world tangible heritage serves as a stimulus for everybody’s memory. It cristalizes in its manifestation the specificity of a culture as well as its universal vocation” (<http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage>). This approach may be conceptually framed in the discourse of the geographical knowledge building, which has been discussed above. As a matter of fact, tangible culture may be regarded as the referent, pertaining to the ontological level of the discourse, while memory is triggered by the symbols attributed to the referent. It consists of signs and, in this view, it pertains to the semiotic level of the discourse. Individuals and social groups attribute values, i.e. signifieds, to symbols

according to their personal and collective cultural milieus and atmospheres. As a result, a feedback arises: the more tangible culture is protected and managed, the more memory is a triggering ground where symbols grow up; the more memory is kept awake, the more its productivity in bringing forth values and signified strengthens; the more the signified endowment is rich, the more it encourages the local community to safeguard its tangible culture.

“It is no easy to map out the boundaries” of intangible culture. Moving from this premise, UNESCO states that this component of culture “may be defined as embracing all forms of traditional and popular or folk culture, i.e. collective works originating in a given community and based on tradition. These traditions are transmitted orally or by gesture, and are modified over a period of time through a process of collective recreation. They include oral traditions, customs, languages, music, dance, rituals, festivities, traditional medicine and pharmacopóia, the culinary arts and all kinds of special skills connected with the material aspects of culture, such as tools and the habitat” (<http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage>). It is self-evident that this conceptual design embraces either tangible and intangible culture, and what has been suggested being called as “combined culture”. It is worthy of consideration that UNESCO designed the concept of intangible culture by adopting two cardinal criteria. According to the first criterion, only that culture which has become the common heritage for one or a plurality of communities is included in the UNESCO protection strategy. As a result, only that culture which has profound historical routes is worthy of consideration from this perspective. This approach calls to the fore the social perception because only those cultural manifestations which are perceived by the local community as components of the cultural identity, and as a permanent source of ideals and values, may be framed in the UNESCO strategy. As a result, the concept of intangible culture is marked by the triptych “collective, traditional, socially perceived” character. Hence, the second criterion arises. “For many populations (especially minority groups and indigenous populations) UNESCO points out the intangible heritage is the vital source of an identity that is deeply rooted in history. The philosophy, values, moral code and ways of thinking transmitted by oral traditions, languages and the various forms taken by its culture constitute the foundation of a community’s life”. (<http://www.unesco.org/culture/heritage>).

## **9. The landscape according to the Council of Europe**

In 2000 the Council of Europe adopted the European Landscape Convention (ELC). This legal document is worth catalysing remarkable interest, at least for a couple of background reasons. It is the first legal tool in the history of multi-lateral conventions which regulates the landscape in a vast, continental space focusing on planning and management on the local scale, therefore serving as a potential basis for convening other similar initiatives in other parts of the world. This justifies looking at the Convention design from the perspective of considering what kind of concept was assumed as a basis for establishing so a wide political collaboration, what objective is expected to be pursued, and what are the differing and coinciding conceptual features vis-à-vis the UNESCO approach.

The starting basis of such a conceptual exploration is the definition of landscape which the Convention is rooted on: “Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (Article 1). In order to be properly discussed, this landscape design requires to jointly be considered with the objectives of the Convention that, according to Article 2, “are to promote landscape protection, management and planning, and to organise European co-operation on landscape issues”. The combination of these points, the former being concerned with the knowledge building, and the former being concerned with the use of knowledge, may lead to a critical view of this legal tool.

The European Landscape Convention assumed the landscape as a tangible reality, which is constituted by those features that the interaction between nature and human communities has brought about over time, to the extent they have served as ‘factors’<sup>a</sup> shaping the Earth surface. As a result, the referent of the landscape discourse is a complex of relationships between elements, which are mutually linked, therefore producing features and processes. It is no use noting that this concept is not so far from the more general concept of territory, and from the concept of geographical space. It also derives that the landscape is postulated as a reality that



may be assessed and represented in some objectivist terms. Where moving from the referent to the sign, namely to representation, the role of social perception arises, because the landscape is designed according to how it is perceived and appreciated by the local community. The metaphor of which presentation consists is rational for a couple of reasons: on the one hand, because the landscape is assumed as the result of relationship between tangible features, which may be seen following structuralist, rationalism-consistent criteria; on the other hand, because rationalist representation is required to operate planning and management, which constitute the final objective of the Convention. At his point it is meaningful that the social perception, which nourishes representation, is supposed to serve as the source for any evaluation of the landscape. This may be deduced by a significant statement of the Convention, according to which the “landscape quality” is the teleological referent of any action and it means “for a specific landscape, the formulation by the competent public authorities of the aspirations of the public with regard to the landscape features of their surroundings”.

The signifieds which this representation leads to, and which pertain to the hermeneutical level of the discourse, consist of the values that human communities has attributed to the landscape over time, in a view of using them in accordance with a social project, which is mirrored in the representation. Therefore, a mono-semic, deterministic links is postulated by the Convention spirit between the sign and signified a character that makes this legal tool as a product closely congenial to the spirit of modernity. This character is marked also by the a close link, which is postulated between the signified and the action, namely the spatial praxis, because the signified is assumed as the source a socially-justified source to design actions addressed to the landscape.

The latest circumstance is strongly emphasised by the Convention, which states that any action should be framed in a triptych of operational arenas, namely protection, management, and planning, which are defined as follows (Article 1):

- Landscape protection means actions to conserve and maintain the significant or characteristic features of a landscape, justified by its heritage value derived from its natural configuration and/or from human activity;
- Landscape management means action, from a perspective of sustainable development, to ensure the regular upkeep of a landscape, so as to guide and harmonise changes which are brought about by social, economic and environmental processes;
- Landscape planning means strong forward-looking action to enhance, restore or create landscapes.

This triptych of arenas is expected to host strategies and actions tailored to:

- recognise landscapes in law as an essential component of people's surroundings, an expression of the diversity of their shared cultural and natural heritage, and a foundation of their identity;
- establish and implement landscape policies aimed at landscape protection, management and planning through the adoption of the specific measures (...);
- establish procedures for the participation of the general public, local and regional authorities, and other parties with an interest in the definition and implementation of the landscape policies mentioned in paragraph b above;
- integrate landscape into its regional and town planning policies and in its cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic policies, as well as in any other policies with possible direct or indirect impact on landscape (Article 5). The approach by the Council of Europe excludes any consideration of the landscape as a texture of symbols and relevant signifieds. As a result, it is far from that concept of culture, widely diffused in the scientific community and deeply supported by the semiotics-inspired speculation that leads to conceive the culture as the uninterrupted creation of symbols, and subsequent values, by human communities. Even more, this approach cannot be shared by the spiritualism-based speculation on the landscape, which is essentially rooted on the consideration of the genius loci of the individual places, therefore attributing a cardinal relevance to the representation by leading intellectuals, such as poets, writers, painters.

## 10. Political and geographical perspectives compared

At this point the three perspectives namely, the scientific perspective designed by geographers, and the political perspectives that have arisen by the UNESCO and Council of Europe (European Landscape Convention) may be compared with reference to a few range of leading conceptual elements.

The concepts of landscape provided by UNESCO and the European Convention may serve as a useful basis to explore how the international political milieus that have shown specific interest in the landscape are inclined to address inputs to geography. In this respect, it should be noted that the European Landscape Convention provides a definition supporting a specific political design, while the 1972 UNESCO Convention on the Protection of Cultural and Natural Heritage did not explicitly include the landscape in its subject extent, and, *optimo iure*, it did not sketch any definition of landscape. Twenty years after the Convention adoption, the UNESCO Expert Group (La Petite Pierre, 1992) provided the definition of the cultural landscape with the aim of designing a new Convention operational field. As has been mentioned, to pursue this objective they enunciated an extensive interpretation of the “combined works of nature and man” figure. The definition of landscape (“an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”) provided in 2000 by European Landscape Convention is quite similar to the 1992 UNESCO concept. To sum up, it may be stated that these two concepts are almost coincident. As a result, as far as the starting ideas are concerned, there is a self-evident theoretical proximity of the European Convention and the UNESCO approaches: the concept of landscape from the former may be assimilated to the concept of cultural landscape from the latter.

The “cultural” adjective, which is used by UNESCO, presupposes the existence of landscapes which are “natural”, in the sense that they consist only of physical and ecological features, and they have been kept untouched by human communities. The duo “natural” and “cultural”, which may lead to a sort of duality, is not present in the approach from the European Landscape Convention, therefore it is supposed that, according to this legal tool, the natural landscape does not exist. This statement could be supposed as marked by two meanings. As a matter of fact, the natural landscape may be supposed as a “non existence” because the human influence is presumed to be practised in any part of the Earth surface; differently, it may be supposed as a “non existence” because any part of the world is embodied in the human visions and representations, therefore being marked by symbols and subsequent significations. The former approach relates to the ontological level of the landscape discourse, and it focuses on the object. By way of contrast, the latter one relates to the semiotic level, and it focuses on the subject. Due to its whole design and background objective, it may be stated that the European Landscape Convention is supported by the former approach. Nevertheless, when compared with the approach from UNESCO, the conceptual design from the this Convention seems more consistent with the speculation that has recently arisen in the geographical milieus, according to which, whatever speculative background is adopted, the landscape is something where the human and natural components are intimately connected, and where culture plays the leading role. As a result, in general the geographical speculation of the landscape seems to be inclined to attribute special interest in this newly-designed political pathway.

As regards the spirit with which the landscape concept was designed in the international and European milieus, it may be noted that the UNESCO approach resulted from the convergence of a multitude of cultural backgrounds, potentially covering all the world, while the approach from the Council of Europe resulted from the visions from the European cultural backgrounds. It may be supposed that the latter approach mirrors the way to conceive and represent realities congenial to the Western civilisation, while the former approach is much more sensitive to the whole cultural texture of the world. This difference in cultural stimuli is associated with the different geographical coverage of the legal tools. While the UNESCO criteria are applied in any part of the world, in that reflecting some universal properties of the concept which are inspired by, the European Landscape Convention is operational only in a continental space, therefore being concerned with the “regional” configuration of the concept which is based on.

How these two approaches diverge may be more clearly perceived when attention shifts to the objective of the approach. UNESCO aims at identifying a strict number of landscapes, which are endowed with so peculiar cultural and natural characters as to be worthy of protection and conservation in a perspective of serving as fulcra for the local sustainable development. The key words are i) excellency in landscape quality and value, ii) conservation, and iii) protection. By way of contrast, the European Convention aims at dealing with any kind of landscape in a whole continental space, because the background objective consists in complementing, and in enriching, the conventional protection, planning and management tools. The key words are i) protection, ii) management, and iii) planning. Where these differences, which mark the goal and the geographical approaches, are jointly considered it may be shared that these legal tools have only a few elements, essentially the conceptual starting basis, in common.

This discussion leads to consider the relationship between these political approaches and science. In this respect, it may be stated beforehand that, in general, science is required to provide two outputs: i) critical analyses of the political designs with the final objective to offer ground for improving them, and ii) to carry out empirical research for operational purposes. In accordance with this conceptual approach and objective, what subjects are worth being critically discussed has been tentatively presented in the previous sections, where the approaches from UNESCO and the Council of Europe have been considered from a geographical perspective. Therefore, here attention may shift to the latter role of science i.e., that of providing research for operational purposes. In this respect, it may be considered that, by its nature, the approach from UNESCO calls for collaboration in exploring the world landscape texture in such a way as to identify which landscapes are worth of being included in the World Heritage List, and of being preserved for future generations. This task calls for inter-disciplinary investigations, where the peculiar role of geography consists of representing the spatial manifestations of the nature-man interplay. Collaboration is essentially required at the cognitive level, because the assessment of the individual landscape, as well as the subsequent consideration for recognition purposes, prevails over the need for management and planning. As regards the epistemological background, it may be shared that the best scientific approach should consist in associating structuralist-backgrounds, which are useful for investigating the relationship between tangible culture and nature, and non-structuralist backgrounds, including the semiotics- and spiritualism-inspired ones, in order to focus on the relationship between the intangible culture and nature.

By way of contrast, the approach from the European Landscape Convention calls for scientific and technical collaboration at a double level. First, at the cognitive level, collaboration is needed in order to assess the local conditions that are relevant to protect, manage and plan the landscape, hopefully in the framework of planning-oriented approaches to the geographical milieu as a whole. Secondly, collaboration is needed at the normative level, in order to design the specific ways according to which the landscape is framed in management and planning-serving designs. Hence two consequences arise. First, geographers are involved in a wider inter-disciplinary context than that which is implicitly prefigured in the UNESCO milieu because it embraces much more planning-concerned disciplines. Secondly, due to the role of the required investigations, in principle geographers are encouraged to consider the structuralism-inspired approaches as the fulcrum of geographical investigations, therefore relegating the semiotics-supported ones in the background

#### **ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

ELC: European Landscape Convention

ICOMOS: International Council on Monuments and Sites

IGC: International Geographical Congress

UN: United Nations

UNCED: United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

WHL: World Heritage List

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