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The 50th anniversary of *The History of the Italian Agricultural Landscape* by Emilio Sereni (1961-2011)

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The important bibliographic and documentary materials held in the Library-Archive "Emilio Sereni", have recently been classified and opened to researchers next to the Fratelli Cervi's house in Gattatico, in the countryside near Reggio Emilia (Ferretti, 2011). This institution aims now to the development and valorisation of this found and, in the occasion of the 50th centenary of the Emilio Sereni's (1907-1977) most famous work, *The History of the Italian Agricultural Landscape* (Sereni, 1961) organizes an international interdisciplinary conference [link <http://www.fratellicervi.it/content/view/16/30/>] to be hold in the days 10, 11, 12 November 2011, in collaboration with the Gramsci Institute of Rome and the Italian Geographic Society (which is publishing a book on this topics), and with the support of the C.R.I.A.T. (Inter-University Research Centre for Territorial Analysis) of Bari and the Di.S.M.eC. (Department of Early-Modern, Modern and Contemporary History), University of Genoa. *The History of the Italian Agricultural Landscape*, and other Sereni's works on Landscape like *Rural Communities in Ancient Italy* (Sereni, 1955), "Notes on the Agricultural Landscape of the Emilia-Romagna" (Sereni, 1957) and *New Land and Red Cows* (Sereni, 1961), are still considered the major references for the history of the Italian landscape. They also influenced the idea of landscape as expressed by one of the most celebrated Italian geographers, Lucio Gambi, who stated that what we call landscape is not a concrete object, but a tool for the historical and geographical research, like a book containing the traces of the past societies, whose features can be read in it (Santini, 2009). Gambi stated that « landscape has the features of a built space, whose construction is to be seen and analysed mostly by the point of view of the cultural heritages, of the economic and demographic events, and of the political institutions. This construction has no pauses, as it continually rebuilds itself, leaving everywhere an heritage of objects and forms, namely varied settlings, fields and layers of cultures, workshops and instruments, roads and railways, waterways, and then a great number of toponyms and a superposition of public and private borders, as an inheritance of objects and forms which are not easily eroded, and which on the contrary are superposed, complicating every project of transformation. So the historian's work, when he deals with landscape, has some methodological similitude with the geologist's work, when he makes a vertical cut of the terrestrial surface. » (Gambi, 2000, p. 7) Sereni has also an interesting biography as a political exiled in the Fascist period and then as a leader of the Communist Party, but at present, research focuses mainly on his scientific

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production where, according to Renato Zangheri, Sereni felt himself freer in his judgments, in spite of his well-known political orthodoxy. « Sereni found the tools to employ its Marxism in a more creative way, less tied to schemes than in other fields. Research goes on freely, sometimes in a disorderly way, reaching results of extraordinary sharpness. » (Zangheri, 1981, p. IX)

New research is oriented in the analysis of the important sources surviving in the Gattatico Library-Archive, where we can distinguish three kinds of collections. The first is the scientific library of Sereni, containing more than 20.000 books and 200 journals, which can reveal, by the underlining in red and blue made by the same Sereni, which authors were the most important for his work: it's the case of some French historians and geographers who dealt with agricultural landscapes at the middle of the 20th century, like Marc Bloch, Roger Dion, Henri Desplanques, Maurice Le Lannou, André Meynier. The second is the bibliographic archive, containing rather 1.000 folders for approximately 63.000 items, notably articles and documents cut from the original publications and ordered by Sereni with encyclopaedic methodology. These documents deal with History, Geography and Landscape but also with Politics, and other disciplines like Anthropology, Natural Sciences etc. The third is the Bibliographic Filling-card, containing rather 300.000 bibliographic cards handwritten by Sereni, which present often short notes on the books and articles he quoted in its works.

The analysis of these materials constitutes an exercise of what Michel Foucault called an "archaeology of knowledge" (Foucault, 1969), aiming to retrace the concepts' transfers behind the single authors' personalities, even more in the case of Sereni, if we consider that his main work, *The History of the Italian Agricultural Landscape*, has not a critical apparatus of notes and bibliography, because the agreement between the author and its editor, Laterza, provided a book which has to be presented to a wide public. Moreover, the archive of the Gramsci Institute in Rome preserves a corpus of important handwritten correspondences between Sereni and other contemporary scientists, from 1945 to 1977.

In the next autumn, the International Conference will shelter rather hundred researchers, namely geographers, historians and architects, dealing with the cultural and scientific heritage of Sereni and his works, which are still considered very important for many present challenges, like the public politics on landscapes and environment solicited by the European Convention of Landscape and other national and international agreements.

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