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Gloria Pugnetti and Alexandra Kruse, European Culture expressed in Agricultural Landscape - Perspectives from the Eucaland Project

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Decolonizing Architecture, Jerusalem (Palestine)

Since the thirties of the XX century to nowadays, the concept of “monument” and “cultural heritage” itself significantly evolved, extending its range from the single and circumscribed item, to a whole context and/or geographic area.

The idea of “monument” moved from its initial meaning of exceptional and exemplar work of art to the value as “storage of material memory”, allowing this way a more extended group of significant and sensitive cases to be admitted to this category, widening their perspectives and possibilities in terms of protection and development.

The UNESCO World Heritage Convention of 1972 signed a milestone within this discipline, stressing the world-wide value and responsibility of cultural heritage and finally pointing out the relevance of landscape as human legacy, then confirmed and enhanced by the European Landscape Convention of 2000. Finally the discipline came to agricultural landscapes, detected as fundamental source of identity, primary mean of support for economical and social development, actual living know-how archive and mirror of the historical relationship between the physical features of a place and the human community living within it.

Through the years the awareness and interest toward landscape and cultural heritage increased, involving a growing number of partners and nations (thirty-nine countries adhered at now to the European Landscape Convention) and giving rise to several experiences, programs, studies as on local as on international scale, which produced a variety of charters, documents and policies.

The European Union and the United Nations did much about the preservation of landscape, significantly contributing to the development of its interdisciplinary feature; after over thirty years of activity and research, the multiplicity of methods and results needed to be collected and arranged in a more organic view which could allow a comparison and a balance of what has been achieved until now and which are the possible perspectives and scenarios.

The Eucaland (EUropean Culture expressed in Agricultural LANDscapes) Project was been developed with this specific purpose, investigating thirteen European countries since 2007 to 2009. The approach to the issue started from ideally breaking up the activity on agricultural landscapes in six fundamental steps, which cover the discipline from its conceptual bases to the outputs dissemination. The project has been, this way, arranged in teams, dedicated to the investigation on specific topics: *1. landscape description, 2. landscape history, 3. landscape classification, 4. landscape assessment and policy, 5. landscape planning, 6. dissemination.* The structure of the books itself traces and follows the Eucaland Project’s one.

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The *Landscape description* focuses on the conceptual and theoretical bases of agricultural landscape in its meaning of common heritage with social and cultural value, reporting its components, the psychological and social influences on human well-being and the perspectives of development for the future. The following topic bases on agricultural landscape as deposit of historical memory, which face is shaped by the social and cultural development within a geographic contest; this section compares the different evolution of agricultural landscapes across Europe, highlighting and interpreting constants and differences among the development of human societies. The landscape classification ideally works as intermediate phase of arrangement and interpretation of the results from the two previous parts, outlining families of landscapes interpreted as product of history.

The last three categories pertain to the more operative implication of the subject, surveying administrative, operative and communicative activities. The research on landscape assessment and policies investigated what at now produced by international institutions (UNESCO, ICOMOS, IUCN) and European Union: what is interesting to point out, is that currently still no single document has been dedicated to the specific issue of agricultural landscape, which is still present in a fragmented way in several indications and policies issued by various institutional sectors. The assessment of landscape planning activities aims to recapitulate the Eucaland Project partners' situation about the level of sensitivity and awareness reached by institutions, actors and local communities, tested through direct interviews and best practice experiences. The dissemination of results constitutes the final, but still fundamental part of the Eucaland Project: as for any other program, the survey of outputs and activities of popularization verifies in which measure the chance for exchanges and improvements of ideas, awareness, strategies and partnerships is caught.

The volume *European Culture expressed in Agricultural Landscapes - Perspectives from the Eucaland Project* constitutes a report and a commentary to the final outcomes of the project itself, a very meaningful operation which embodies not only a concrete occasion for arranging organically and synthesise the huge amount of information risen from the program, but also a valued effort of dissemination of what is considered the very last update about the doctrine of agricultural landscape in Europe.

Especially the parts dedicated by Eucaland Project and the book itself to landscape assessment and policy and landscape planning pointed out the non-homogeneity of terms, definitions and goals between the various signing parts: this fact embodies a potential source of misunderstanding and criticality which should be faced and developed in order to create a shared ground and vocabulary for the future negotiations and international initiatives.

Because of the fast but also somehow scrambled evolution the relatively young discipline of agricultural landscape is currently living, such kind of publication looks particularly meaningful and commendable, since as it works as effective update addressed to a variegated international audience.

The choice of the authors for a very neat and linear register and an efficient and clear index arrangement looks particularly correct and makes this publication more forceful, structuring a huge amount of notions and examples in an accessible way. The arrangement of the themes recalls somehow the idea of a manual or guide: the structure of the chapters makes actually possible to consult directly specific aspects of the agricultural landscape doctrine and its onset in the various regions of Europe.

The volume aims to take stock of the current situation after the Eucaland Project not just in order to picture the achieved goals, but most of all to render a chiaroscuro portrait of potentials, lacks and critical points that could contribute envisioning future strategies and actions.

The reading of this book hands not simply a clear ensemble of notions and information, but also interesting proactive cues for further actions within and between various sectors, since much still has to be done for a proper development of the agricultural landscape discipline.