

Proceedings of the XVII - IPSAPA Interdisciplinary Scientific Conference.  
Volume VI.

## UTOPIA CONFRONTS DYSTOPIA IN THE ACTUAL LANDSCAPE-CULTURAL MOSAIC

**Livio Clemente Piccinini<sup>1</sup>**

**Placido Rapisarda<sup>2</sup>**

1 University of Udine, Italy

2 University of Catania, Italy

**Keywords:** *Landscape-cultural mosaic, Utopia and dystopia, IPSAPA/ISPALEM, public and private utility, endogenous and exogenous city evolution.*

This is the third book derived from IPSAPA/ISPALEM conference of year 2013, devoted to Utopia and Dystopia in Landscape-Cultural Mosaic. It is mainly addressed to papers that develop case studies and is structured according to the three leading keywords: vision, value, vulnerability that were discussed in the second volume. In the call for paper it was required drawing not only on the dreams of beautiful projects but also on the disappointment of unrealised ones and on the distortions that rise when different tendencies clash; the case studies therefore have been mostly presented in a critical way, so that the label “utopia confronts dystopia” reflects at best their content.

The old equation “public interest” = “praiseworthy”, “private interest” = “deplorable”, must be compared with the equation “public enterprise” = “waste”, “private enterprise” = “gain”. Both equations of course do not hold, but undoubtedly some truth can be found. In this framework the place of utopia and dystopia, keeping in mind all the three keywords, is not easily found, since the handy and appealing equation “utopia” = “public projects”, “dystopia” = “private projects” cannot be derived, especially if we consider also value.

It seems rather that as far as the evolution of the landscape-cultural mosaic is concerned synergies and contrasts between public and private powers must be studied, analyzing also the potential transitions. It must be recalled that public interest for landscape is somehow a recent acquisition, since many important infrastructures were completed when attention was directed to the actual costs rather than to the prospective losses of value. For example many railways in Italy are situated along the beaches, dividing them from the towns; only in Western Liguria tracks were withdrawn constructing new ones, leaving interesting paths at disposal for bike tourism. It can be objected that the construction (more than 100 years ago) was due to private companies and not yet to the national system of railways. Nonetheless the authorization was public, and also the towns were satisfied with a railway station in a good position, in spite of the whole of tourist consequences: actually many of these places became

reachable only after the construction of the railway, as it still happens in the Cinqueterre (Eastern Liguria).

Private interest for many centuries did not damage the landscapes, because traditional agriculture created pleasant settlements, and cared the soil against floods and landslips. Parks and country palaces were important - even if expensive - masterworks of the main architects, and still give a particular value added to many country sites both in Italy and abroad. Private interest became a real damage when urbanization exploded and caused a savage speculation in the main cities. In the country the diffusion of private vehicles allowed a massive sprawl, that in the two Po Valley belts, especially in Veneto and Emilia, got even worse because of joint industrial sprawl. In tourist resorts self control was possible only in some of the already famous sites (Sankt Moritz, Chamonix, Cortina...), otherwise an uncontrolled expansion took place, impoverishing landscape value, even if some strategic complementary resources became available, thus improving at first the global value of the resorts. Anyhow it must be observed that landscape becomes an assessment only when it is recognizable, otherwise can be replaced by other landscapes as it happens in the movies, where usually beautiful, but generic, landscapes are substituted by landscapes and scenes in less expensive countries. Identification is mostly due to the action of the man, and in particular to landmark buildings, that do not need to be beautiful. Eiffel Tower is perhaps the most celebrated example, since it was supposed that it had to be dissembled after 1889 World Exposition. Also natural landscapes need a careful and standardized presentation in order to become recognizable and thus unique. The classical postcard of Naples from Posillipo towards Vesuvius (pine inclusive), makes both Naples and Vesuvius recognizable in a unique way.

Of course an artificial operation can be performed (Ejarque *docet*), provided a big contractor starts and controls the operations, and a minimum critical level is reached. Costa Smeralda in Sardinia, Val d'Isère in France, Cervinia in Val d'Aosta, Cancun in Mexico are successful examples. But there are many examples not so successful, or even completely fallen. It is useless to recall them, because they did not emerge, hence cannot be recognized as testimonials by the majority of the readers.

It is useful to identify four standard models to which reference can be made: YY, a realized utopia due to the synergy of public and private utility; NY, dystopia between public inutility and private utility, YN dystopia between public utility and private disutility, NN dystopic consistence of public inutility and private inutility. It must be remarked that in the long period public utility may change, as it happened with drainage of marshes, that at present is regretted by ecologists since it reduces dramatically biodiversity. The contrary holds too, since abandon and carelessness have preserved natural neighborhoods that have allowed the creation of parks of great biodiversity and landscape value.

Exogenous transitions from one reference state to another are frequent, but endogenous transformations are even more interesting since they unavoidably transform one state into another without declared exterior causes. These transitions in particular show that inconsistent states cannot last in the long period. On the other side there is an intrinsic instability also in synergic situations (both positive and negative), so that transitions arise, usually conflicting (Paradise Lost syndrome), caused by one only of the two parts, but in some cases also synergic transformation may arise. The direction of the change is usually unpredictable, and depends on fuzzy chains of situations according to complexity models that include the presence of catastrophes and of bifurcations and depend on the strength of multipliers both of signal and of power. A further endogenous cause of change is the change of position of the actors. In some cases a private subject becomes (almost) public, generating parallel powers: it happened with church and monastic orders, it happens nowadays with multinational corporations and with powerful lobbies. On the contrary public interest can reduce to (almost) private when local objectives prevail on the common wealth (NIMBY), or when a dictatorship arises without the counterpart of balancing powers. Also opinion leaders may fall into this category and modern mass media including social networks play the role of power amplifiers.

The utopian state YY (utility for both parts) in some cases can happen. Theoretically public benefit and private benefit should be consistent in a cooperative scheme. Sometimes the construction of new infrastructures that allow a well-balanced town development are accepted, apart a small number of *laudatores temporis acti* (supporters of the past), since also the new constrains and the expenses that can arise are compensated by the increase of value of the private buildings. Of particular interest for the landscape is the recovery of small hill or country centers that, though implying a complete turnover of their social functions, allow new life and seemly urban recovering. The location is usually not far from cities or from important touristic resorts. In some cases the excess of uniformity in the new quarters, even if well planned, leads to unpleasant effects of flatness and for the first years they retain a flavor of artfulness.

Historically a curious fact happened: the expensive building of city walls had a general consent for many centuries not only as a defense insurance but also as a power token. Le Goff remarked that a wall ennobles the skyline, leaving only monumental emergencies such as churches, steeples, belfries, town towers, and hiding everyday miserable buildings. But since nineteenth century the razing of the historic walls was considered a token of freedom and modernity, and a change (or the loss) of the skyline was accepted. A further inversion took place in the last eighty years, when again the walls are considered as a pledge of nobility that must prevail on modernization.

Cases of NY dystopia (inutility for public, utility for private) are very common and are usually due to the desire of a greater private rent that prevents a

balanced development of the urban texture. The landscape can suffer from a not reversible damage caused not only by the lost of country lands but also by the excess of its segmentation. The absence of planning allows expansion along the lines of least resistance, making urban limits undefined and fuzzy, according to Megalopolis scheme. In some cases the lack of rules may be intentional, in order to create a short period competitive advantage in territories that otherwise would not be appreciated. This case happens often immediately outside of the boundaries of big cities where small independent towns are much more indulgent. The need of a metropolitan planning thus becomes evident, but the change of laws usually cannot be immediate, so that a dystopic transition time is available both for privates and for satellite small towns. The reaction very often leads public administrations to the excess of rules and ties and generates the contrary dystopia YN (public utility, private inutility), where evolution is hindered by new impositions. The most disturbing dystopia comes out from the continuous change of rules and the requirement of following them even for previous buildings or town plans. The continuous change of plant rules officially due to safety is another heavy dystopia that has highly increased since the national rules have been integrated by regional laws and EC general norms. Both dystopias contribute to the fall of boundaries between city and country, in view also of the territorial segmentation of administration.

The totally negative NN case (inutility on both sides) is widespread across Europe, with few exceptions. Country areas lying on hills and mountains that do not reach economic sufficiency not even through tourism, and are not of public interest (regional and national parks) tend to decay and abandonment. The lack of public utility is in tuning with private inutility, a situation that can arise also in urban world, both in the centers and in the outskirts, especially industrial areas scattered with technological survivals. Interstitial areas between motorways, railways, rivers (!), fall in this category, even if some low level activities like car demolition or old fashioned waste management may take place. These areas, both urban and periurban, on the contrary, may be actual mines for the future, because they save a network of recoverable paths, provided public administration prevents irreversible decay, in particular contamination.

The system bears continuous transitions. Some of them are exogenous and depend heavily on social, economic, cultural changes, such as the return of an ecological sensibility, but many others can find an endogenous explanation. It is possible to give a short sketch of possible exits, both downwards and upwards. Starting from the most negative NN situation (degraded areas, interstitial areas, potential tourist resorts without suitable infrastructures...) a good asset is the low price for the buyer, since most of the owners are usually rather than uninterested, resigned to failure.

Not always the low price is an asset in itself, since many causes may join together to prevent a resurrection (resurrections as is well known are not so

frequent!). A public intervention is usually required as a start up, and it may consist also in legislation or finance allowances, sufficient to start a private interest for the enterprise, generating restoration and innovation. In the recovery of degraded central areas this start is sufficient, in the other cases usually much more is required, and big regional or national intervention are required, or multinational agencies must intervene in the case of prospective tourist resorts. In the best cases a jump from state NN to the glorious state YY may be achieved. When the top level cannot be achieved a loosening of constrains is required in order to encourage private capital, hence it is possible that a dystopic situation of type NY (private utility and public disutility) arises. If later the public intervenes in too strict a way and the private has not yet reached a reasonable remuneration he can get rid of the investments, hence a passage to the opposite dystopia YN can happen. On the contrary when the public intervention is well timed safeguard can be appreciated, since it raises the present and future value of the investment. In this case a transition to the optimal state YY is again possible. Dystopic situations where one of the parts has disutility bear the risk that also the part that has benefits drops the plan, since a loss of value may arise. Public cannot sustain for ever an initiative that is not appreciated, while private investments without certainty of rules may become too risky and thus prove unsuccessful. The delicate balance of the optimal situation YY is continuously confronted with the small changes that the parts are compelled to perform for answering exogenous novelties or new endogenous requests or improvements. In Italy it is said that "*Il meglio è nemico del bene*" (The search of better things spoils good things). The balance is essentially unstable, and can be maintained only by a careful (and lucky) control, hence in an unpredictable interval it has a very high probability of falling down into dystopic states.

The papers of the book are mainly optimistic, hence aim at describing successful paths, showing difficulties in the starting point solved by private and (mainly) public interventions.

## 1 Vision and project (Vision)

The first section allows some criticism because it contains, among others, beautiful ideas not fully developed into a project, and shows cases where recognized best practices did not lead to successful exits. Some papers show experiments that can be considered as seeds of best practices, but their portability is usually not yet studied, as it was obvious in this first phase. The constrains of the actual location appear clearly in most of the papers, and the exits beyond forecast show two cases, one on the evil side and one on the good side. 9 papers have been chosen for this section.

1A From the Idea to the Project

**Maurizio Droli** (*Udine*)

Rating rural hamlets for their business start-up potentials: reality or utopia?

**Luca Renato Fauzia** (*Enna*)

Designing through the myth: the “Gorgo Nero” stories for re-foundation of the borough S. Giovanni in Piazza Armerina (Enna)

**Vincenzo Pollini** (*Napoli*)

Utopia for Pompeii: Tripod

1B Flexibility and rigidity of territorial projects

**Fiorella Felloni** (*Milano*)

The utopia of the contemporary urban project at “human scale”. The case study of a thermal city

**Antonio Passaro** (*Napoli*)

Revival of tourism in coastal areas of Campania. Strategies and projects

*Short papers*

**Alessandra Barresi, Gabriella Pultrone** (*Reggio Calabria*)

Research and experimentation paths for a new urban quality

1C Beyond Forecast, in Good and in Evil

**Gian Marco Girgenti, Gino Cassarà** (*Palermo*)

Balestrate: an urban analysis

*Short papers*

**Vincenzo Bagnolo** (*Cagliari*)

A nuraghe...in town

**Luigi Mollo, Carlo Giudicianni, Rosa Agliata** (*Napoli*)

Fragments of past in the contemporary contexts: rural architecture in the Basque country

2. Local Values, Global Values (Value)

The role of different scales and the consequent solution of dystopias arising from erroneous evaluations is considered in the first part, while in the second nature and especially rivers show the great role that they have as power multipliers. Nature need not always be considered as a *continuum*, since it can be structured in networks, both physical and conceptual: examples are given in the third part. 10 papers are assigned to this section.

2A Exaltation and Neutralization of Values in the Contact of Different Scales

**Roberto Bresciani<sup>1</sup>, Maurizio Droli<sup>2</sup>** (*1 Trento; 2 Udine*)

The value of street furniture as a resource for business and tourism development. The case of Dro municipality in Trentino.

*Short papers*

**Serena Abello** (*Torino*)

Cultural transitions: shape and context. Landscape of defence in the territory of Alessandria

**Valentina Cattivelli** (*Parma*)

Between cities and countryside: some examples of control of urban-rural relations. Vienna and Helsinki cases

**Maria Gabriella Errico** (*Napoli*)

Landscape/wellness: the therapeutic garden

2B Nature as an Active Player in the Realization of Utopias

**Anita Calegari** (*Pavia*)

Landscape of Oltrepò Pavese: Canevino, the place of *miracula Santi Columbani*

**Raffaella De Martino** (*Napoli*)

Guadiana river park: planning assumptions for sustainable territorial development

**Rejana Lucci** (*Napoli*)

The Sarno river as a plot of the public centers in the urban system of the plain

2C Information Networks and Changes of Value

**Laura Blotto** (*Torino*)

Architecture and landscape of the ancient religious paths in the Var

**Giuseppina Cassalia, Maurizio Malaspina, Claudia Ventura** (*Reggio Calabria*)

The enhancement of cultural landscape mosaic in the strait of Messina area: the *ecodistretto* project

**Marina Fuschi, Alejandra Meda** (*Chieti-Pescara*)

The network of cattle tracks in Abruzzo: historical heritage, cultural restoration and development of the territory

3. Construction, Deconstruction and Renewal (Vulnerability)

In this section important techniques required for a promotion from down states to high states are discussed. Our age seems to be a network age, and networks may supply the instruments for social, tourist, cultural promotion. A great advantage is that new conceptual nets can share great general-purpose nets at reasonable prices, hence what otherwise, and in other times, was a huge work now becomes affordable. A cultural project guide is anyhow required, and the papers of this section highlight the choices performed in some projects, at different stages of evolution. The comparison between theoretical scheme and actual realization is always on the stage, and jointly represents one of the main subjects of interest of the section. 10 papers belong to the section.

3A Utopia Guides Culture, Culture Guides Utopia

**Clelia Cirillo, Luigi Scarpa, Ugo Zannini, Giovanna Acampora, Marina Russo** (*Napoli*)

Eighteenth-century fragments of the rural landscape: the farmhouses of the Ager Falernus in northern Campania

**Antonella Versaci<sup>1</sup>, Alessio Cardaci<sup>2</sup>** (*1 Enna "Kore", 2 Bergamo*)

Re-composing memory. The former bourbon prison of Syracuse: from the panoptic utopia to the real implementation

*Short papers*

**Paolo Mira** (*Milano*)

The augustinian church of the Saints Cosmas and Damian in Turbigo

3B The Deconstructed Landscape in Everyday Perception

**Sabrina Vecchio Ruggeri, Rosalita Vitarisi** (*Reggio Calabria*)

The architectural heritage in the rural landscape of the Gallico valley (RC)

*Short papers*

**Giuseppina Cassalia, Maurizio Malaspina, Claudia Ventura** (*Reggio Calabria*)

Clearing the memory from bushes: rediscovering the identity of places along the path of Zanotti Bianco in Aspromonte

**Luigi Corniello** (*Napoli*)

The drawing of architecture in the sign of nature. Representations between utopias and dystopias

3C The old, the ancient and the new in elite designing

**Massimo Baldari<sup>1</sup>, Maria Cristina De Salvo<sup>1</sup>, Vicente Estruch Guitart<sup>2</sup>, Bruno Francesco Nicolò<sup>1</sup>** (*1 Reggio Calabria; 2 Valencia*)

Approaches to economic evaluation of the landscape in comparison: the case of the "piana of Gioia Tauro"

**M. Bernecoli<sup>1</sup>, A. Pepe<sup>1</sup>, A. Percoco<sup>1</sup>, M. Droli<sup>2</sup>** (*1 Potenza; 2 Udine*)

The skyline of the italian rural villages: a business plan resource in the widespread hospitality? A survey of Montemurro village

**Anna Còccioli Mastroviti** (*Parma*)

Arcelli Anguissola Scotti castle and Soresi mansion house in Rottofreno: historical evidences and context values in the landscape to the south of the river Po

*Short papers*

**Fabio Converti** (*Napoli*)

Telematic networks as a tool for the dissemination of knowledge: the Unesco site of the historic center of Naples