



Crisis of landscapes, landscapes of the crisis: notes for a socio-ecological approach

Fabio Parascandolo^a

^a Dipartimento di Storia, Beni Culturali e Territorio, University of Cagliari, Cagliari, Italy
Email: parascan@unica.it

Received: November 2015 – Accepted: March 2016

Abstract

The paper focuses on the relationships between landscape and the multi-faceted crisis of our times. We live in a time of *crises* for Western citizens (*cultural, ecological, political, institutional and social crises*). The landscape crisis is actually entangled in a bundle of planetary crises, and this paper represents an attempt to outline a relational and genetic approach to this subject. Landscape crisis is rooted in an underlying *territorial* crisis, and the case of the crumbling of the Italian code of space is taken as an example. The pre-modern Italian landscape has been dismantled by the irruption of a growth-first paradigm and a commodification of the social system. In a globalising process, surrounding territories have lost importance for localised communities. Contextually, mechanized monocultures and industrialized metropolitan areas have reshaped the geographical features of territories, in Italy and on the world scale. The landscape issue cannot therefore be detached from an overall process of change from traditional to modern territorialities. This approach to landscapes and landscaping aims to provide some basic tools to deconstruct the reasons for the present crisis from their foundations, in the conviction that the landscape cannot be “saved” *alone*. In fact, it is not possible to attain liveable landscapes without preserving at the same time our territories, our living planet and the natural commons essential to life.

Keywords: Collective Interests, Crisis, Global Social Order, Landscapes, Modernization of Subsistence, Natural Commons, Territoriality

1. Introduction: which crisis?

We are living in times of crisis, on which a superficial agreement is always possible, but what kind of crisis? Currently, we are entangled in continuous accumulations and overlaps of sectorial crises whose roots plunge into systemic rules and whose genesis often goes back to the first half of the last century, at least. Each specific crisis tends to be continuously exacer-

bated, above all if it has neither been addressed, nor resolved by tackling its structural causes. Crises can be periodic or temporary (for example *crises of food supplies*), others are of indeterminable duration (*political and institutional crises, unemployment crises*), whereas others appear long-term and deeply rooted in the life of the populations concerned (Italian demographic crisis).

As far as the roots and articulations of crises are concerned, I share the views expressed by Latouche (2010, pp. 51-56); I also think a long-term overview of socio-economic development is necessary (Esteve, 2004, and its references). As Western citizens we have gone – to give just some idea, but many more categories could be mentioned – through a *cultural crisis* since May 1968 and an *ecological crisis* since the 70s. *Social crises* were diffused as soon as neoliberal politics (“Reaganomics” and Thatcherism) emerged. Even if for the European masses the positive outcomes of Social Democracy and its welfare schemes are by now only a vague recollection and a cause for regret, it must be underlined that the two fundamental pillars of the Keynesian-Fordist paradigm – Economy of Growth and Consumption Society – are still functioning potently, and not only in the West but on a global scale, with effects also on landscape issues. As stated by Latouche (*ibid.*) the *multi-dimensional crisis* that is underway can be understood as a global and a *longue durée* result of the Keynesian-Fordist economic rules implemented in developed countries, as well as its subsequent metamorphosis in the present “turbo-capitalistic” economic order. Following the explosion of The U.S. subprime mortgage crisis in 2007, and after its overall and domestic effects and byproducts, a realistic way to define what is happening to our global system is to call it a *structural crisis*, or, better, a *civilization crisis*: that is, a unique but *multi-faceted crisis*.

2. Why landscapes crisis?

My starting thesis is that the crisis of landscapes is deeply rooted in the crisis of territories and territoriality. Consequently, it is important to first focus on the latter. As I will further outline in part 3 of this paper, the crisis of landscapes does not bring about, but *reflects* the swirling and unbalanced change of human territoriality and territorial relations¹.

Analyzing the landscape features of the Piedmont region, Italy, Magnaghi (2009, p. 277,

¹ On the crisis of landscape see Quaini, 2006 (pp. 43 and following). On territories and territorialities I refer to Raffestin’s remarks (2005, especially pp. 55-59). See also Turco, 1988, 2012.

translation by Author), claimed that contemporary civilization “has produced, as an effect on the territorial structure of its economic paradigms of development, above all *detractor* elements of the landscape and environment, the destruction of places, and attacks on the elements that form the long-term identity of the region” (italics by Magnaghi). Similar observations have been made by other urban planners at national level (Palermo, 2009; Bianchetti, 2011).

Considering the Italian case before the beginning of the last century, the forms of the landscapes in this country were able, on the contrary, to create admirable balances between natural and cultural components. In fact, since the Middle Ages and until the 19th century, a *code of space* had been collectively developed in Italy. A universally recognizable code worked regardless of the urban or rural location of those implementing it, and it was respected beyond all social stratifications. This cultural *production of space* (Lefebvre, 1974) was rich in meaning, and concerned at the same time architectural features, rural-urban planning and policy contexts. For centuries it had given everyone “not only the physical coordinates of his/her own life, but a living image of his/her membership, a collective identity in which to reflect, and from which to draw strength and nourishment” (Settis, 2010, p. 52, translation by Author). The disruption of this remarkable spatial and anthropological intertwining was carried forward by a growing industrialization of the real estate sector. Since the period between the two World Wars, industrial construction – a macroeconomic sector with high profit margins – has become the main agent of spatial code crumbling in Italy. This *modern style of urbanisation* became dominant in the second half of the 20th century, deeply altering and often entirely shattering the old balances (for further reading on the ancient Italian spatial code and its disruption see *ibid.*). Since the 60s, “land development” in Italy has been based on the indisputable primacy of modernism, casting out artificial materials (like concrete), the implementation of heavy infrastructures and great works (Grandi Opere), overbuilding and so on.

All these phenomena were and still are accompanied by a barely concealed – and sometimes clearly expressed – devaluation of

aesthetic and artistic values coming from the past. A good interpreter of this mentality was the Italian minister for economy, who, speaking of heritage issues in 2010, declared: “Con la cultura non si mangia (culture does not put food on the table)”. A truly exemplar sentence, which “sums up in one single joke the prejudice and backwardness of so many Italian people about anything smacking of thought, reflection, cultural development, long-term considerations of our lives” (Arpaia and Greco, 2013b, translation by Author). To refute such an unfounded claim one can simply point out some serious calculations of the potential profitabilities of manifold forms of cultural heritage. Ideological abuses of *anti-culture* and *pro-market-&-pro-technology* discourses could be easily wiped out this way (see Arpaia and Greco, 2013a). But even though shareable, these patterns of reaction remain merely *defensive* and cannot stop the ongoing process of unlimited commodification of “anything under the sun”.

In my opinion it is also useful to wonder *why* cynical attitudes like that mentioned above seem to be so *advantageous* to common sense. Digging just a little deeper, you find that within the conventional settings of Italian social and territorial action, a major problem is always lurking. It lies in significant institutional pressures and considerable business interests in promoting technical innovations, aiming to enhance the speed and competitiveness of goods production systems. Nothing strange, fundamentally: we all know that after all “it’s the market, baby” (cf. Bonora, 2009). This is to be expected *exactly because* a commodified social system is incorporated in a hegemonic *growth paradigm*. Nevertheless, all this creates a clear contrast. An ultimatum: on the one side lie the economic benefits for the minorities of powerful private industrial and/or financial companies, and on the other public, collective or community interests for landscape conservation, in terms of ecological and social wealth. Which should prevail: unbridled speculation or proper planning?

I only give a small example illustrating my thesis (clearly many could be suggested, taken from a wide array of socio-spatial domains). The Landscape Plan approved in 2014 by the Regione Toscana was soon boycotted by important members of the local business community because of

the restrictions it placed on new agricultural models. Entrepreneurs and their representatives complained that the limitations would prevent the implementation of “winning innovations” in farming techniques. Market competitiveness dictates, in fact, unceasing changes in yield types, namely the increasing extension of vineyards in *rittochino* (along steep slopes), managed with intensive mechanization (straddling machines) and extensive use of chemicals to reduce the periods of cultivation (Figure 1). It is moreover clear that this arrangement in intensive monocultures does more than further simplifying landscapes by reducing their ecosystem services. It also compromises multi-functionality and tourist attractiveness in the areas concerned, increasing soil erosion, hydro-geological risks and negative impacts on public health because of the polluting effects of this farming model (Pandolfi, 2013; about rural territories’ development in Italy see Parascandolo, 2006).



Figure 1. Changing rural landscape in Tuscany: on the left side, the most recently-settled vineyards, in tall steps and straight cyclopean walls. Source: Pandolfi, 2013, p. 84.

3. Landscape relations with “traditional” and “modern” territorialities

To grasp the relationships between the landscape crisis and the underlying crisis of territoriality, it will be useful to start from a fundamental insight into political ecology, which could be stated as follows: “The well-being of human beings largely depends, in the last in-

stance, upon the quality of the relationships which they maintain with the natural world” (Villalba, 2010, p. 96, translation by Author) – “natural world”, i.e. *extra-human nature* (Moore, 2015), I would add. From this assumption, an important corollary arises: if the modes of representing and transforming the world employed by the members of a social system involve increasing environmental imbalances and deteriorations, negative impacts on human conditions and on the overall resilience of the social system itself may possibly be delayed with various devices, but sooner or later they will inevitably emerge.

Chiefly during the last two centuries, modern civilization (which for a long time has been a solely Western European and North American enterprise) has triggered radical social and ecological changes on regional and global scales, whose huge impacts historically affected the nature of the world system both in the past and in contemporaneity (Crosby, 1986; Jaffe, 1994; McNeill 2001; Moore 2007). In order to produce the *healing procedures* required for the multidimensional crisis of our times, it is essential “to take the bull by the horns” and identify the *imperialistic genesis* of most organisational models devised in the West. It is widely accepted that instrumental rationality represents one of the fundamental features (I would suggest the most remarkable) of Western modernity. Thus, it is important to recognize firstly the genetic role of utilitarianism in producing the complicated and inconvenient situation of our times.

From my perspective, I will focus on a typical utilitarian socio-economic and socio-ecological scheme devised and disseminated worldwide by Western modernity: the full technologisation and commercialisation of subsistence (that is of *life economy*). The expression “subsistence” refers to a set of fundamental, reproductive and vital daily activities, related to natural assets: water, food, wood, textiles or building raw materials, metals used for simple tools, etc., all satisfying basic needs and actions (eating, drinking, clothing, sheltering from weather, farming, etc.). In a subsistence economy all the fluxes of “stuff” tend to come from a territory, large or small, but as much as possible situated close to a given settlement, to be directly consumed or otherwise processed and transformed (generally using

artisanal techniques). This organisational model is specific for village communities, but also micro-regional societies composed of aggregates of towns and campaigns followed this pattern, each town autonomously counting upon its respective *terroir*, *Umland* or *contado* in order to put in place the great part of the systems that supply it. Observing the history of village customs but also ancient town rules and statutes in Italy and in Europe, it is in fact possible to detect their *strong roots in local environments* (Decandia, 2000, pp. 51-124; Agostini, 2015). The model of reference is the auto-sustainability and self-regeneration of local life, as far as possible (for a general introduction see Mies and Benholdt-Thomsen, 1999).

In a subsistence system, each local collectivity bases its material reproduction on diversified withdrawals of environmental assets available in the territory of community relevance. Every territory is divided into water bodies and limited (and changeable) agricultural, grazing/forest areas, etc., all generally known and used by small scale peasants or shepherds, according to cultural traditions and grassroots (or possibly class-specific) know-how.

In these vernacular societies and economies (on the meaning of “vernacular” see Illich, 1980) *respect for environmental constraints in the activation of resources is essential*, in order to avoid the scarcity of basic items essential to the local reproduction of human life. In each local community, tendencies to competitive and individualistic behaviours have to be reconciled with the irreducible need to cooperate, simultaneously for survival and for self-centred forms of *buen vivir* (Spanish expression; Italian: *ben vivere*, *buona vita*; for an actual example: Gesualdi, 2009). As a general rule, models of collective responsibility in proximity of resource management took on the function of regulating the impulse toward private gain².

² Far from being “idyllic”, as clearly expressed in McC. Netting’s (1981) account, village community systems achieve forms of local subsistence via self-managed life strategies, based on reciprocal collaboration and set around local agro-ecosystems. For case studies on (micro-) regional levels see:

Compared to the “traditional” schemes of subsistence and neighbourhood economics, the ambitions and operation modes of the urban-industrial civilization that emerged in Northwest and Central Europe, and subsequently consolidated in the “Neo-Europes” (Crosby, 1986) and particularly in the North American subcontinent, were, and still are, completely different. These social and political ensembles of nation-state contexts reached full maturity during the 19th century. Their peculiarity, compared to historical social formations of the *ancien régime*, is that state powers actively supported new commercial, industrial and professional interests, and therefore pointed to the establishment of wide ranging market systems and institutionalized technical expertise. Throughout history, the latter have led to huge technical and economic rescaling processes (first at domestic level but also, increasingly, at international and transnational levels). All organisational patterns of production, distribution, consumption and disposal of material goods and all collective knowledge needed to perform human life on the planet, have been re-moulded and restructured in function of these overall processes³.

New approaches to production and the exchange of goods and the associated forms of social organization gave rise to legal reforms opposed to the economic self-sufficiency of rural communities and to multiple, polycentric and independent forms of town-country relationships. Especially in agriculture, various sequences of *commodification waves* and related changes in cash-crop regimes were made possible by, among other causes, dramatic increases in productivity, achieved by farming systems subjected to corporate profit maximization. Completely new production models replaced traditional agricultural systems (characterized by high intensity of ecologically sustainable – but not very *productive* – human labor). These new models have altogether disrupted local relations of interdependence between men, soil, plants and

animals, and established capital intensive and external input intensive patterns of production, based on the significant use of chemicals and machines. Cycles of so-called “Green Revolutions” imposed ecologically unsustainable farming techniques, characterized by minimal human labor but high production of goods, profits and waste. The territorial disempowerment of local societies goes along with their integration into conditions of dependence and subordination in economic production mechanisms. The latter are embedded in strategic domestic or transnational trade exchange systems, guided by market economy forces and supported by central governments and multilateral organizations⁴.

In the long run, the result of these disruptions was the *uprooting* of self-regulated systems of subsistence. The term “uprooting” points to the disintegration of social vitality aimed at the communitarian self-management of daily life activities.

In Europe, especially during the second half of the XX century, a true *war* on localized subsistence was carried out (Illich, 1980; Mies and Benholdt-Thomsen, 1999), and the residual “organic” relations between settlements and their surrounding countryside faded more and more, until a typical condition of our times was achieved: in each settled community, flows of incoming raw materials for basic supplies came only in a very small part from the surrounding territories.

Shared practices of subsistence in regional and micro-regional human societies have been dismantled. Self-managed territoriality and localized subsistence that once produced both “good governance” in human settlements and landscapes worthy of being looked at and represented by artists have been dissolved. This is why in Europe we find ourselves today in a

Jelen, 1996; Parascandolo, 1995. For a community level example: Parascandolo, 2004.

³ For in-depth discussions about these issues see Sachs, 2004; each item of this work is provided with a comprehensive bibliography.

⁴ For an integrated (social, economic and political) historical perspective, all the quoted processes can be referred to the concept of *world-economy* (see Wallerstein, 1981, 2004). The *world-systems analysis* has been recently revised with a “holistic” approach: the *world-ecology* (see Moore, 2007, 2011, 2014, and 2015 for an Italian translation; see also Torre, 2013). For reading specifically on the global evolution of agro-food regimes, see McMichael, 2005.

typically modern and even post-modern condition, in which landscape is nothing but a nostalgic image of a territory which no longer exists (Raffestin, 2005, p. 58). Debray is therefore right to say “The art, the landscape, the peasant. It is losing them that you discover them” (Debray, 1992, p. 263, translation by Author). The artisan, perhaps, should be added to this short but significant list.

Natural resources consumed for energetic sustenance and for the development of modern citizens’ economic life tend no longer to be locally territorialized. In an era of processed food hegemony (McMichael, 2005), they are located *elsewhere in the world*, following dispersed, fragmented and gain-oriented tangles of value chains and supply chains.

Of course I do not mean to deny the existence of interesting cases of short chains of essential goods supplies, ever more present in Western Europe. However, they continue to be exceptional compared to the *systemic rules* of mass production, which produce socially and ecologically unsustainable models of economic relations (Deléage, 2013; Parascandolo, 2013). This has happened because the whole world has been unified and standardized by a global system of industrial enterprises and wide range trades conjoined with to the individualistic property order⁵.



Figure 2. Italian contemporary territories (1). Regional scale: megalopolitan and monocultural landscape in lowland Northern Italy, province of Bergamo. Photo: F. Parascandolo, 2014.

⁵ For comprehensive introductions on these themes see Barcellona, 1987; Goldman, 1998; Sachs and Santarius, 2007; Harvey, 2010.



Figure 3. Italian contemporary territories (2). Local scale: shared experiences of urban synergetic agriculture in two Sardinia’s towns. Above: Piazza “Su Cuzone”, Nuoro. Photo by Farming Committee, 2014. Below: garden of “Mama Terra” Association, Sassari. Photos: F. Parascandolo, 2014.

In *this* world any reality, be it social, ecological or a mixture of both is – or is expected to shortly become – homologated to the performative rules of modern instrumental rationality (on social-ecological intertwinements cf. Moore, 2007, 2014). In a world of products and services conceived and sold for solvent consumers, world-ecology has become inseparable from world-economy, as if they were two sides of the same coin (Deléage, 1992). It is precisely in this kind of world that the usual relations between human beings, the living and their natural matrices (air, water, land) can be entirely questioned. What repercussions has the industrial and commercial production system caused on the planetary web-of-life? Are the relations imposed on humanized spaces environmentally healthy for living beings, including humans?

Actually, over the *longue durée*, all the radical and extensive transformations I have

mentioned have proved themselves very slightly or rather not at all compatible with the safe regenerations of planetary living cycles. For the last decade or so, the issue of *climate change* has acted as a full-blown scientific detector of the environmental costs of societal and terrestrial landscape remodeling carried out by “developed” human beings (for a bibliography see the one reported in <http://climate.nasa.gov/evidence/>). The use of non-renewable fossil energy for industry, commercial transportation, construction and functioning in civil and military sectors, and precise organizational choices in the agro-food system (including of course the industrialization of livestock farming), taking into account their cumulative effects, have been the proven cause of the current massive increase in global greenhouse gas emissions, ocean acidification and other forms of pollution. The impact of modern technology has changed the chemical composition of the atmosphere and the earth's climate. It is estimated that around 1750 the preparatory period of the new era (called “Anthropocene”) began. The climatic instability period which opened approximately around 1950 with “global warming” demonstrates the by now *geo*-logical and no longer simply *bio*-logical role played by the human species on the planet. Irrespective of their interference with the conditions of reproducibility of life, technological processes triggered firstly by the West and then performed by a transnational *hyper-modernity*, led to a planetary era of collapse in biological diversity and to a planetary mass extinction of living species (Kolbert, 2014). The scientific proclamation of Anthropocene is therefore the ultimate test of the unsustainability of most of the techniques deployed worldwide since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution (Chakrabarty, 2009).

To pull the threads of the previous discussion: the territoriality crisis of our times is rooted in an unceasing series of technical and technological revolutions. Historically, these revolutions tended to increase political centralization in knowledge systems and in the organisation of human life, as well as realizing continuous expansions and the rescaling of production and consumption systems. These processes were juridically supported by land privatization reforms (or land nationalizations in collectivistic states). For the last century or so,

therefore, a distinctive “duopoly” has invasively reshaped the geographic features of Western cities and countrysides: *mechanized monocultures* and *industrialized metropolitan areas*⁶. After the Second World War, this destructive *modern alliance* was ramped up almost everywhere in the world, disrupting traditional spatial codes, landscape orders and ecological balances in the name of social development and economic growth. In this respect, political-economic shifts and spatial fixes run in parallel and have resulted in the impairment of civic and grass-roots systems and forms of socio-ecological wealth.

4. Technical domination or domesticating subsistence? On driving forces in landscape shaping

How does modernity conceive landscape? A good way to answer this question is to consider the design device called *landscaping*. A wide, panoramic and “dominating” view is regarded as a valuable landscape. For the wealthy who can afford it, material elevation seems to match a sort of “moral” elevation, and certainly a higher social status. In this way people tend to inhabit *images*, and not only real places. The act of landscaping incorporates an abstract conception of space and landscape, mirrored by the economic value of land rent. As a consequence, the hierarchy of real estate market prices is directly related to units and amounts of space available to sight. In some sense, the home life value of privileged people seems to be enhanced by the procedures of differentiated accessibility

⁶ Among various studies on industrial agriculture's criticalities I limit myself to the quotation of a now “classic” reference: Shiva, 1993. On the “catastrophic urbanisation” spread out on a world scale by City-regions, Mega-regions, Mega-cities and Urban corridors (UN-Habitat categories), see Magnaghi, 2013 (pp. 32-36). For a postcolonial introduction to these geo-historical processes, see Jaffe, 1994. For an introduction to the biophysical consequences of industrial usage of fossil fuels and minerals, see Sertorio, 2009.

to increasing units of visible space⁷.

If this *power of dominant vision* becomes an important criterion in determining and programming desirable and enviable aspects of our way of life, herein lies the resulting “banalisation” of landscapes, driven by crowds of emulators of the privileged, also eager to own their panoramic homes. Thus, *the “touristic” conception of the world and ourselves*⁸ leads swiftly to urban sprawl, and to the congestion with buildings of fashionable coastal areas, heights overlooking cities, and so on.

But the repercussions of the social primacy accorded to vision are much greater. Reflecting on the legitimization and diffusion of drone use, it is evident that this geomatic sensor in some way *definitively reduces the world to a map*⁹. Geopolitical rationality and technical devices used to monitor and re-program configurations of “geographical objects” must be taken into

account: if the *sentient living world* is ignored and reduced to an Euclidean expanse, then ensembles of “physical and living things” (biotopes, biotic communities, habitats, organisms and their embodied experiences – see Weber, 2013) can be recoded in terms of Cartesian-Newtonian space.

Depending on the nature of command chains involved, various kinds of algorithms can cybernetically interpret and attempt more or less vertically to control theatres of resources and strategic criticalities. From precision agriculture to the rationalization of services (such as car-sharing or car-pooling systems in the field of sustainable mobility), to targeted killings by

means of drones¹⁰, a very large range of options becomes possible. Framed in an abstract quantitative grid, the world understood as a vast *res extensa* becomes a sort of huge *videogame*, although this is a very reductionist overview.

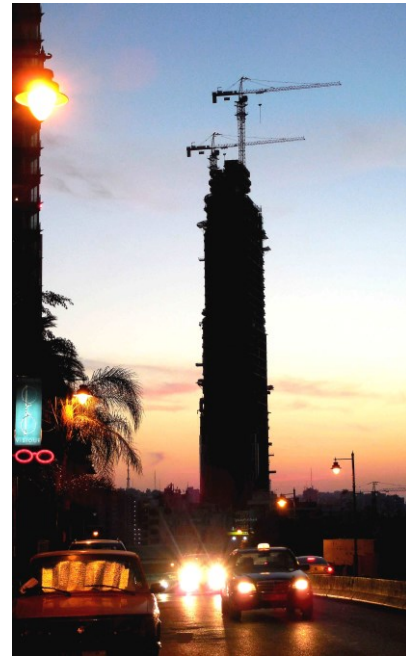


Figure 4. Landscaping strategies in a relatively small but emblematic world city: Beirut, Lebanon. Above: a recent skyscraper. Below: a sign panel that evokes an urban transformation underway¹¹. Photos: F. Parascandolo, 2014.

⁷ For further reading on landscaping (*empaysagement*) as a simulation process see Raffestin, 1998, 2005 and Debarbieux, 2007. For the objectification of nature in landscaping and the negation of its living essence and biological balances see Clément, 2005, quoted in Tornaghi, 2014.

⁸ See Parascandolo, 2002 for a case study on touristic representations of landscape. For a sociological approach to individual experiences in Western “touristic society” see Perna, 2014 (especially pp. 78-84).

⁹ For further reading on the evolution of conventional cartographic rationality see Farinelli, 1992, 2009.

¹⁰ On remotely controlled violence and its profound implications on modern human condition see Chamayou, 2013; for an introductory essay: Belpoliti, 2014.

¹¹ For further analysis see Makhzoumi, 2011.

Clear traces of the conflict existing between technical domination and domesticating subsistence can be found in the expansionism of modern city planning. In fact, if we extend the famous expression by Le Corbusier about the house as a “machine for living” to the scale of the territory, we understand that in modern *zoned landscapes*, all the areas sealed by concrete and asphalt, as much as the agro-industrial ones, can be represented as huge “machines”, respectively programmed *to produce* (transforming – and often deteriorating – the planet’s resources to make goods), *to consume* (through goods and services functional to either working or non-working activities), *to move* (transporting commuters, resources, energy, materials and information on infrastructure networks, etc.), and so on. As Tornaghi (2014, p. 6) lucidly argues, we need to track

“the history of planning ideas and their specific development into national planning systems, which accounts for application of modernist concepts of health and functionality to urban living space, and for citizens’ deprivation of the right to determine the shape and functions of their living environments. [...] It is arguably with the artificial separation of life spheres (i.e. dwelling, working and leisure) in modernist planning ideas that criteria of hygiene and sanitization merged into planning systems and forms of urbanization based on blueprint urban zoning and disempowerment of local communities from place-making”.

These functional routes, hubs and areas, and the landscapes in which they are configured, are part of a “second nature”, more and more “mutant” and “hi-tech” because they are built by *Homo technologicus* as by “a god”¹². Important consequences of these decisive territorial metamorphoses are of course reverberated in food systems.

¹² The terms in inverted commas are from Marzo, 2006 (p. 216). For interesting considerations on the evolution of the “states of nature” on earth by a firstly *organic* phase, then a *mechanical* one, and finally an increasingly *cybernetic* phase (and also *bio-industrial*, as suggested by Marzo, *ibid.*, p. 112) see Moscovici, 1968.

As a result of the aforementioned, today’s technologies could just as easily achieve totalitarian and science-fiction versions of Benthamite *panoptikon* (Foucault, 1975) as they facilitate the developing of horizontal communities using tangible or intangible assets (natural commons or open source user systems, “smart sharers”, etc.). But the exercise of domination thinking does not seem to encourage the ruling classes’ willingness to favour locally self-managed models of resource use, and even less to foster democratic patterns of knowledge, or support legal reforms for the assertion of political subsidiarity. In other words, after at least one hundred and fifty years of scientific progress applied to every field of social organization, we can observe that technological innovation has been developed to satisfy the interests of power concentrations rather than those of the so-called *masses*¹³. Accordingly, innovations have continuously eroded or suppressed decentralized forms of subsistence and the *food sovereignty* of common people¹⁴.

If landscapes are less technologically “updated” and more biodiverse (either natural or domesticated), they are however marked by specific features of *vitality*. These characters can be read both in a subjective sense (because they may generate significant experiences of interconnection between human beings and nature), and objectively (because they are compatible with the regeneration and the co-evolution of species and living organisms). As Parascandolo and Tanca (2015) observe, everything happens

“as if on the planet two antithetic and mutually exclusive tendencies were at stake. On one side it is going on ‘business as usual’, the conventional process of privatization and technicalization tied to the socio-political and techno-scientific paradigm dominant in Western Europe since the XVII century. On the other side it is emerging the opposite

¹³ On the evolution of applied sciences see Facheux, 2012. On ethics and politics as “hidden dimensions” of technology: Marx, 1997.

¹⁴ See Illich, 1980, and the contributions in Sachs, 2004. On issues related to food sovereignty and its recovery see Desmarais, 2007; Etc Group, 2013; Stedile, 2013 (especially part III).

logic, that of re-inclusion and re-vitalization, oriented to a local, territorial and landscape social action, fulfilling human needs and preserving the metabolic salubrity of the natural world”.

In my view this dialectic of “technologisation *versus* vitalisation” can help us understand many aspects of the present crisis. *Enlivenment* was the expression used by the biologist and philosopher Andreas Weber (2013) to indicate a process of (re-) vitalization of human actions towards the planet. It could lay the foundations of a new model of civilization, whose operational paradigms will no longer be founded on owner individualism and/or statist centralism, but on the participatory use of the commons essential to life. The term “enlivenment” echoes and at the same time transcends the term “enlightenment”. Weber certainly does not deny the yearning for fundamental rights and individual emancipation personified by the West, but proposes to still pursue them without manipulating nature and localized human communities, and without exceeding the limits of endurance of both in the name of controversial ideals of development.

In 1944 Karl Polanyi, an academic student of economic history, published a book whose relevance was not immediately recognized: *The Great Transformation* (Polanyi, 2001). More than 70 years later, his reading of the dominant socio-economic system and its evolutionary trends has proved correct. Polanyi was interested in what was left of the real world, and of social organizations, when they were subjected to market domination. What would happen if the latter were given the right to dictate all the organizing rules of everyday life? Polanyi, among other statements, wrote that

“Robbed of the protective covering of cultural institutions, human beings would perish from the effects of social exposure. [...] Nature would be reduced to its elements, neighborhoods and landscapes defiled, rivers polluted [...] the power to produce food and raw materials destroyed. [...] Leaving the fate

of soil and people to the market would be tantamount to annihilating them”¹⁵.

Significantly, Polanyi coupled landscape with neighbourhood, and soil with people, creating meaningful pairs. In fact, an “unplugged”, communitarian and sustainable organization of human existence is essentially a matter of appropriate neighborhood rules to be applied to spatial action and natural resources managing¹⁶.

5. Conclusions

Reviewing this paper I come to dwell once again on the *landscapes of the crisis*. I use this expression as a metaphor to indicate the complex set of problems of a world in which human territoriality has been intensely “westernised” (Latouche, 2005). The fierce tumult and the crisis within the modern world-system may be taken as an opportunity to make a break through the flow of human activities on the earth. But this can be realized only if the *ontological dimension* of the crisis is also understood. The alternative visions to be created, and the *healing procedures* to be undertaken should be based on the “recognition that both humans and non-humans share a common membership of the selfsame web of life” (Avallone’s introduction in Moore, 2015, p. 21, translation by Author). Some alternatives are already under construction. They start from the critical appraisal of modernisation processes and arrive at the building of *new ideas of communities*, based on the ecological conversion of the economy (Viale, 2011), on greatly increased sharing of non-monetary social relationships (Barcellona, 1990; Bertell et al., 2013; Gesualdi, 2009), on the search for an “earth-centred and people-centred paradigm of green economy” (Shiva, 2013).

¹⁵ Polanyi, 2001 (pp. 76, 137), quoted in McClintock, 2010 (pp. 197-198).

¹⁶ For in-depth studies see: Olwig, 2015 and its references; Jackson, 1984; Ostrom, 1990; see also Besse, 2012. About appropriate rules for natural resources management (especially soil): Navdanya International, 2015.



Figure 5. Italian workforce in 1951¹⁷.

Sources: *Piccola miniera. Testi sussidiari riuniti per la Classe Quarta*, Milan, Fratelli Fabbri Editori, 1952, p. 205; ISTAT, various population censuses elaborated by Author.

But how should we deal with the multidimensional crisis underway if the ruling classes continue to implement the imperatives of modernisation only through measures for enclosing commons (Ricoveri, 2013) and for *making profit* from territories? What room for negotiation with official institutions remains today to an active citizenship seeking a participative government of commons, landscapes and settlements on a local level?

¹⁷ Today, peasant communities have disappeared, since the number of those who directly provided their own and others' sustenance has collapsed. The employment structure has undergone a complete upheaval and has been hugely "tertiarised". The massive increase in agricultural labour productivity has allowed an intense technicalization and commercialisation of subsistence, while people not directly producing their own food have become the immense majority. Employment data updated for 2013 are roughly: 3,6% in agriculture; 7,1 % in construction only; 20,2 % in other industries; 20,4% in trade, 48,7% in other kinds of services. Is this a *safe* model of society?

A colossal contradiction weighs upon the world of today. The continuing advance of "anthropocenic" landscapes, intensive in goods and technology, triggers a vortex which is destroying natural resources, ecological habitats, local identities, social cohesion and opportunities for democratic self-government, further increasing climatic instability and environmental insecurity. This expansion is nevertheless still economically attractive to many centers of power standing at every dimensional scale (regional, national and global). Landscape technicalisations are encouraged by the "powers that be" because they are propitious to business and produce increases in GDP. But due to its social impact and ecological footprint, every additional act of unsustainable technicalisation is a losing battle in the framework of a *war* brought to natural and human communities by the predominant social order.

If we speak of war, we should also consider the forms of *resistance*, organized by the members of tens of thousands of movements and committees which all over the world are struggling to defend their resources, habitats and cultural identities. Trying to resist territorial processes of privatization and technicalisation comes at times at a heavy personal costs. Therefore, according to Perna:

"[they] are the partisans of the XXI century [...]. Unlike those who fought against Nazism and Fascism in Europe, they do not have to face armed troops who want to take over their territory politically, but technicians, economists and politicians, businessmen and multinational companies that say they want to bring 'progress'" (Perna, 2011, p. 97, translation by Author).

In today's world the whole paradigm of modern life is questioned, due to the evidence of its three-level intoxicating effects: on human societies, on individual well-being and on life's support systems (McClintock, 2010). The destructive technicalisation of places, human societies and nature is still called "progress" because it is essentially based on a *growth-first* pathway to development. At the beginning this approach was adopted only by the West, but in

the long run it has become a “global” ideal. This *belief in the virtues of growth* is actually the ideological hard core of the globalised social order. However, when the veil of rhetoric is lifted and the developmentalist imagination is deconstructed, spaces open for the regeneration of our awareness, and landscape can recover its operational sense (Besse, 2012; Olwig, 2015). Nevertheless, the landscape cannot be “saved” alone, of course: no liveable landscape is possible without first preserving the territories, and without preserving with them our living planet (Parascandolo and Tanca, 2015).

Finally, it is worth mentioning that the preservation of landscapes and territories is a logical outcome of the protection of the commons essential to life. Accordingly, as living human beings, local inhabitants and citizens of terrestrial states, we should all have the right to protect territories and natural commons recognized. (Magnaghi, 2012, Ricoveri, 2013; for in-depth studies: Ostrom, 1990; Bollier and Helfrich, 2012). This is a much more urgent and immediate-right than the obsolete and often counterproductive “right to development”. I believe that we should write it in our national constitutions, and state it as an inalienable human right, but also regard it as a binding responsibility for each and everyone of us.

References

1. Agostini I., *Il diritto alla campagna. Rinascita rurale e rifondazione urbana*, Rome, Ediesse, 2015.
2. Arpaia B. and Greco P., *Con la cultura si mangia*, Milan, Guanda, 2013a.
3. Arpaia B. and Greco P., “Pane e cultura”, *Doppiozero*, 2013b, <http://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/anteprime/pane-e-cultura>.
4. Barcellona P., *L'individualismo proprietario*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 1987.
5. Barcellona P., *Il ritorno del legame sociale*, Turin, Bollati Boringhieri, 1990.
6. Belpoliti M., “Teoria del drone”, *Doppiozero*, may 2014, <http://www.doppiozero.com/materiali/biblioteca/teoria-del-drone>.
7. Bertell L. et al. (Eds.), “Davide e Golia: la primavera delle economie diverse (GAS, DES, RES...)”, Milan, Jaca book, 2013.
8. Besse J.-M., “Tra la geografia e l’etica: il paesaggio e la questione del benessere”, in Aru S., Parascandolo F., Tanca M. and Vargiu L. (Eds.), *Sguardi sul paesaggio, sguardi sul mondo. Mediterranei a confronto*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2012, pp. 47-62.
9. Bianchetti C., *Il Novecento è davvero finito. Considerazioni sull’urbanistica*, Rome, Donzelli, 2011.
10. Bollier D. and Helfrich S. (Eds.), *The Wealth of the Commons. A World Beyond Market and State*, Berlin, 2012, <http://www.wealthofthecommons.org/contents>.
11. Bonora P., “È il mercato bellezza! Deregolazione, ‘sprawl’, abuso di suolo, immobilismo di ventura: una crisi annunciata di postmoderna immoralità”, in VV.AA., *Le frontiere della geografia*, Turin, UTET, 2011, pp. 69-85.
12. Chakrabarty D., “The Climate of History: Four Theses”, *Critical Inquiry*, 35, 2009, pp. 197-222.
13. Chamayou G., *Théorie du drone*, Paris, La Fabrique, 2013.
14. Clément G., “Landscape Design and the Biosphere: Conflict or Complicity”, in Richardson T. and Kingsbury N. (Eds.), *Vista. The Culture and Politics of Gardens*, London, Frances Lincoln, 2005, pp. 74-78.
15. Crosby A.W., *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1986.
16. Debarbieux B., “Actualité politique du paysage”, *Revue de Géographie Alpine*, 95, 4, 2007, pp. 101-114.
17. Debray R., *Vie et mort de l’image. Une histoire du regard en Occident*, Paris, Gallimard, 1992.
18. Decandia L., *Dell’identità. Saggio sui luoghi: per una critica della razionalità urbanistica*, Soveria Mannelli-CZ, Rubbettino, 2000.
19. Deléage E., *Ravages productivistes, résistances paysannes*, Lormont, Le bord de l’eau, 2013.
20. Deléage J.P., *Histoire de l’écologie*, Paris, Seuil, 1992.
21. Desmarais A., *La Via Campesina: Globalization and the Power of Peasants*, Winnipeg, Fernwood Publishing, 2007.
22. Esteva G., “Sviluppo”, in Sachs W. (Ed.), *Dizionario dello sviluppo* (It. Ed. Tarozzi

- A.), Turin, Ega, 2004, pp. 347-377.
23. Etc Group, *With Climate Chaos... Who Will Feed Us? The Industrial Food Chain/The Peasant Food Web*, 2013, http://www.etcgroup.org/files/030913_ETC_WhoWillFeed_AnnotatedPoster.pdf.
 24. Facheux M., *La tentation de Faust ou la science dévoyée*, Paris, L'Archipel, 2012.
 25. Farinelli F., *I segni del mondo. Immagine cartografica e discorso geografico in età moderna*, Florence, La nuova Italia, 1992.
 26. Farinelli F., *La crisi della ragione cartografica*, Turin, Einaudi, 2009.
 27. Foucault M., *Surveiller et punir. Naissance de la prison*, Paris, Gallimard, 1975.
 28. Gesualdi F., *L'altra via: dalla crescita al benvivere, programma per un'economia della sazietà*, Milan, Terre di mezzo-Altroeconomia, 2009.
 29. Goldman M. (Ed.), *Privatizing Nature: Political Struggles for the Global Commons*, London, Pluto Press, 1998.
 30. Harvey D., *The Enigma of Capital, and the Crises of Capitalism*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010.
 31. Illich I., "Vernacular Values", *Philosophica*, 26, 2, 1980, pp. 47-102.
 32. Jackson J.B., *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1984.
 33. Jaffe H., *Economia dell'ecosistema*, Milan, Jaca Book, 1994.
 34. Jelen I., "Le calendrier ecologique, fondement de la cohésion sociale des communautés alpines: le cas des Slovènes des Préalpes juliennes (Bénétié occidentale)", *Géographie et Cultures*, 18, 1996, pp. 93-118.
 35. Kolbert E., *The Sixth Extinction: An Unnatural History*, New York, Henry Holt & Company, 2014.
 36. Latouche S., *L'Occidentalisation du monde. Essai sur la signification, la portée et les limites de l'uniformisation planétaire*, Paris, La Découverte/Poche, 2005.
 37. Latouche S., "La décroissance est-elle la solution à la crise?", *Ecologie & Politique*, 40, 2010, pp. 51-61.
 38. Lefebvre H., *La production de l'espace*, Paris, Anthropos, 1974.
 39. Magnaghi A., "Territorio: dal progetto implicito al progetto esplicito", in VV.AA., *Le Frontiere della geografia*, Turin, UTET, 2009, pp. 275-292.
 40. Magnaghi A. (Ed.) *Il territorio bene comune*, Florence, FUP, 2012.
 41. Magnaghi A., "Riterritorializzare il mondo", *Scienze del Territorio*, 1, 2013, pp. 31-41.
 42. Makhzoumi J., "Colonizing Mountains, Paving Sea: Neoliberal Politics and the Right to the Landscape in Lebanon", in Egoz S., Makhzoumi J. and Pungetti G. (Eds.), *The Right to Landscape. Contesting Landscape and Human Rights*, Farnham and Burlington, Ashgate, 2011, pp. 227-242.
 43. Marx L., "Technology: a Hazardous Concepts", *Social Research*, 64, 3, 1997, pp. 965-988.
 44. Marzo P.L., *Le metamorfosi: natura, artificio e tecnica. Dal mutamento sociale alla mutazione socio-biologica*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2006.
 45. McClintock N., "Why farm the City? Theorizing Urban Agriculture through a Lens of Metabolic Rift", *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 3, 2010, pp. 191-207.
 46. McC. Netting R., *Balancing on an Alp. Ecological Change & Continuity in a Swiss Mountain Community*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1981.
 47. McMichael Ph., "Global Development and the Corporate Food Regime", in Buttel F.H. and McMichael Ph. (Eds.), *New Directions in the Sociology of Global Development*, Amsterdam, Elsevier, 2005, <https://devsoc.cals.cornell.edu/sites/devsoc.cals.cornell.edu/files/shared/documents/McM-global-dev-corp-regimeFR-pdf.pdf>.
 48. McNeill J.R., *Something New Under the Sun: An Environmental History of the Twentieth-Century World (The Global Century Series)*, New York, W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.
 49. Mies M. and Benholdt-Thomsen V., *The Subsistence Perspective. Beyond the Globalised Economy*, London and New York, Zed books, 1999.
 50. Moore J.W., *Ecology and the Rise of Capitalism*, Ph.D. dissertation, Department of Geography, University of California, Berkeley, 2007.
 51. Moore J.W., "Wall Street is a way of organizing nature: an interview with Jason Moore", *Upping the Anti: A Journal of Theory and Action*, 12, 2011, pp. 39-53.

52. Moore J.W., "Metabolic Rift or Metabolic Shift? From Dualism to Dialectics in the Capitalist World Ecology", *New Geographies*, 6, 2014, http://www.academia.edu/7587034/Metabolic_Rift_or_Metabolic_Shift_From_Dualism_to_Dialectics_in_the_Capitalist_World-Ecology.
53. Moore J.W., *Ecologia-mondo e crisi del capitalismo. La fine della natura a buon mercato*, in Avallone G. (Ed.), Verona, Ombre corte, 2015.
54. Moscovici S., *Essai sur l'histoire humaine de la nature*, Paris, Flammarion, 1968.
55. Navdanya International, *Terra viva. Our Soils, Our Commons, Our Future*, 2015, <http://www.navdanyainternational.it/attachm ents/article/202/Manifesto%20English.pdf>.
56. Olwig K., "Epilogue to Landscape as Mediator: the Non-modern Commons Landscape and Modernism's Enclosed Landscape of Property", in Castiglioni B., Parascandolo F. and Tanca M. (Eds.), *Landscape as Mediator, Landscape as Commons. International Perspectives on Landscape Research*, Padua, Cleup, 2015, pp. 197-214.
57. Ostrom E., *Governing the Commons. The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990.
58. Palermo G.C., *I limiti del possibile. Governo del territorio e qualità dello sviluppo*, Rome, Donzelli, 2009.
59. Pandolfi G., "Nuove estetiche nel paesaggio della neoruralità: potenzialità e problematiche aperte", in Poli D. (Ed.), *Agricoltura paesaggistica. Visioni, metodi, esperienze*, Florence, FUP, 2013, pp. 79-105, http://www.fupress.com/archivio/pdf/2594_6387.pdf.
60. Parascandolo F., "I caratteri territoriali della modernità nelle campagne sarde: un'interpretazione", *Annali della Facoltà di Magistero-Università di Cagliari*, 18, 1995, pp. 139-186.
61. Parascandolo F., "Paesaggio e natura: verso un'identità progettuale?", in Turco A. (Ed.), *Paesaggio: pratiche, linguaggi, mondi*, Diabasis, Bologna, 2002, pp. 155-174.
62. Parascandolo F., "Norbello e Domusnovas Canales. Lineamenti di una storia ecologica locale tra il XIX secolo e gli anni '60 del Novecento", in VV.AA., *Norbello e Domusnovas Canales. Appunti di vita comunitaria* of J. Armangué i Herrero, Dolianova-CA, Edizioni Grafica del Parteolla, 2004, pp. 115-139 and 195-221.
63. Parascandolo F., "Ruralità e sviluppo del territorio in Italia: è tempo di bilanci", in Bocci R. and Ricoveri G. (Eds.), *Agricoltura. Terra lavoro ecosistemi, CNS – Ecologia Politica*, 2, EMI, Bologna, 2006, pp. 45-56.
64. Parascandolo F., "Fra terra e cibo. Sistemi agroalimentari nel mondo attuale (e in Italia)", *Scienze del Territorio*, 1, 2013, pp. 185-193.
65. Parascandolo F. and Tanca M., "Is Landscape a Commons? Paths toward a Metabolic Approach", in Castiglioni B., Parascandolo F., Tanca M. (Eds.), *Landscape as Mediator, Landscape as Commons. International Perspectives on Landscape Research*, Padua, Cleup, 2015, pp. 29-45.
66. Perna T., *Eventi estremi. Come salvare il pianeta e noi stessi dalle tempeste climatiche e finanziarie*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubettino, 2011.
67. Perna T., *Schiavi della visibilità*, Soveria Mannelli, Rubettino, 2014.
68. Polanyi K., *The Great Transformation: the Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, Boston, Beacon Press, 2001.
69. Quaini M., *L'ombra del paesaggio. L'orizzonte di un'utopia conviviale*, Reggio Emilia, Diabasis, 2006.
70. Raffestin C., "De la domestication à la simulation du paysage", Conference "Il senso del paesaggio", Turin, ISSU, 1998.
71. Raffestin C., *Dalla nostalgia del territorio al desiderio di paesaggio. Elementi per una teoria del paesaggio*, Florence, Alinea, 2005.
72. Ricoveri G., *Nature for Sale: the Commons Versus Commodities*, London, Pluto Press, 2013.
73. Sachs W. (Ed.), *Dizionario dello sviluppo* (It. Ed. Tarozzi A.), Turin, Ega, 2004.
74. Sachs W. and Santarius T. (Eds.), *Slow Trade – Sound Farming. A Multilateral Framework for Sustainable Markets in Agriculture*, Berlin, Heinrich Böll Foundation and Misereor, 2007, http://www.misereor.org/fileadmin/redaktion/slowtradesound_farming.pdf.

75. Sertorio L., *La Natura e le macchine. La piramide economica del consumismo ha la base nella miseria*, Turin, 27, 2009.
76. Settis S., *Paesaggio costituzione cemento. La battaglia per l'ambiente contro il degrado civile*, Turin, Einaudi, 2010.
77. Shiva V., *Monocultures of the Mind. Perspectives on Biodiversity and Biotechnology*, London, Zed Books, 1993.
78. Shiva V., "Will Green be the Colour of Money or Life? Paradigm Wars and the Green Economy", *Scienze del Territorio*, 1, 2013, pp. 120-128.
79. Stedile J.P., *Riflessioni sulle tendenze del controllo del capitale sull'agricoltura, le sue conseguenze e le alternative proposte dai contadini*, 2012, <http://www.comitato mst.it/node /1021>.
80. Tornaghi C., "Critical Geography of Urban Agriculture", *Progress in Human Geography*, 38, 4, 2014, pp. 551-567.
81. Torre S., *Dominio, natura, democrazia. Comunità umane e comunità ecologiche*, Milan-Udine, Mimesis, 2013.
82. Turco A., *Verso una teoria geografica della complessità*, Milan, Unicopli, 1988.
83. Turco A., "Il paesaggio come configurazione della territorialità", in Aru S., Parascandolo F., Tanca M. and Vargiu L. (Eds.), *Sguardi sul paesaggio, sguardi sul mondo. Mediterranei a confronto*, Milan, Franco Angeli, 2012, pp. 23-46.
84. Viale G., *La conversione ecologica. There is no alternative*, Rimini, NdA Press, 2011.
85. Villalba B., "L'écologie politique face au décalage et à la contraction démocratique", *Ecologie & Politique*, 40, 2010, pp. 95-113.
86. Wallerstein I., "Spazio economico", in *Enciclopedia Einaudi*, vol. XIII, Turin, Einaudi, 1981.
87. Wallerstein I., *World-Systems Analysis. An introduction*, Durham-London, Duke University Press, 2004.
88. Weber A., *Enlivenment: Towards a Fundamental Shift in the Concepts of Nature, Culture and Politics*, Berlin, Heinrich Böll Stiftung, 2013, http://www.autor-andreas-weber.de/downloads/Enlivenment_web.pdf.