

# Landscape Identity resources

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## SUMMARY

We would like to underline the importance of our role in ‘reading’ the landscape as stated in the world renowned European Landscape Convention drawn up in Florence in the year 2000 and ratified by all EU member countries. Importance is given to the interpretation of the Art. 1 of the Convention and, more specifically, to the tight relation between our role and the society as far as the interpretation of the landscape goes. The experience gradually reached by our older colleagues, enables them to recognize the landscape identities of our territory as they know its memories, its materials, its influences, its structures and so on. All these elements must be used to their full potential as preparatory tools, not only for city planning, but also for simple construction projects –that happen on a daily basis in our job-. It is through keeping our professional service at its best that our category will be able to serve the society in its main functions. By living up to our potential, an important recognition to our professionalism will be obtained. Through sharing our knowledge and experience, we will be able to ‘narrate’ our landscape and understand its vulnerability and pressures. We will also be able to evaluate various ways of safeguarding it or transforming it by using the most modern techniques but, most importantly, by always respecting the identity of each landscape.

## ITALIAN SUMMARY

Occorre evidenziare quanto sia elevato il potenziale della nostra categoria di Geometri nella lettura del paesaggio fatta attraverso i contenuti della Convenzione Europea sul Paesaggio del 2000 stilata a Firenze e ratificata da tutti i paesi membri della Comunità Europea ma di interesse mondiale. Viene trattata l’interpretazione dell’art. 1 della Convenzione alla luce di quanto la nostra attività professionale sia ancorata alla società civile in rapporto alla capacità di lettura del paesaggio stesso, dato che i colleghi che hanno negli anni “vissuto” la loro attività professionale sanno riconoscere le identità paesaggistiche dei loro luoghi, dei loro territori, ne conoscono le memorie, i materiali, le tipologie, le influenze, i condizionamenti, la struttura ecc. ecc. dunque questi “potenziali” possono uscire fuori ed essere utilizzati per gli strumenti propedeutici, non solo alla programmazione urbanistica ma anche, ai più semplici ed elementari interventi edilizi che costituiscono il quotidiano della nostra attività. E’ attraverso la salvaguardia di una prestazione professionale di livello che la nostra categoria sarà in grado di servire ancora la società nella buona parte delle funzioni che essa stessa svolge. Un contributo alla nostra professionalità si avrà estraendo dalla nostra esperienza il potenziale prima citato che ci permetterà di raccontare i nostri paesaggi, di capirne le vulnerabilità, le pressioni, le eventuali tutele e le sue possibili trasformazioni che potranno essere pensate con nuove ed attuali architetture rispettose però delle identità dei luoghi alle diverse scale.

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## 1. FIELD EXPERIENCE

In order to give you an example we would now like to show the results of the recently performed restoration of a facade of the Parish Complex S.M. Assunta Rapolano Terme (SI) Tuscany Italy.

The building S. M. Assunta of Rapolano Terme includes a fairly large portion of land located in the south west of the historic center of Rapolano, and it is currently home of the parish that carries the same name.

The current extension of the properties of the parish represents a portion of the former Monastery of Olivetani which was built, together with the Church starting from 1646.

## 2. DESCRIPTION OF THE INTERVENTION

The project involved the restoration of the south-west facade of the parish situated on the boundaries with the historical centre of the village and in correspondence with the medieval walls of which traces remain nearby the parish. The facade creates a continuity with the building that represents the boundary of the historic center facing the surrounding countryside (the Crete Senesi). Currently these facades are characterized, with the exception of a few (which were subject to interventions that sometimes failed to respect the historical scope), by facing walls made of travertine stone (mostly gallazzone, namely "younger" travertine) and not plastered, which help to give that image of homogeneity so valuable in the perception of our town centers. Often, as in the present case, these facing walls are characterized by a sort of "imbrecciatura" which is used as a coating of the stone wall. The intervention involved: the removal of the original plaster which was extremely inconsistent, the cleaning and washing of the links and the consequent new plastering. All the removed aggregates were properly washed and put aside in the yard in order to be used again lately.

We decided to use a breached plaster which seemed to us more respectful of the identity given that most of the fronts of the historical centers of both villages of Rapolano and Serre, with particular reference to those that face the open space, are, or rather were, (since now what I call globalized plasters are more commonly used) "in breach", which is a plaster made of inert materials (typically found in these places) mixed with lime. This mixture was often used both like mortar plaster or as plaster itself.

Even the suburban historic town in the north-east of the territory of Rapolano Terme characterized by the geomorphology of Pliocene was equally characterized by this type of external finishing of the walls and especially in the east part of the territory, right behind the historic centers of Rapolano and Serre. In that area there were a large number of quarries from which breach was extracted.

Having to work only on the portion owned by the parish, which covers half of the south west of the complex S.M. Assunta, in order to reduce as much as possible the inevitable difference

in the results of the scene due to the different deterioration of the two facing walls between the two neighbors fronts separated by the main door (obvious difference also in the current state), we decided to use the technique of "troweled plaster breached" as this technique does not give full coverage.

But here we would like to highlight what drove us up to even appearing "stubborn" in wanting to give back to the facing wall overlooking the landscape of the Crete Senesi, its own "facade".

### **3. RECOGNITION OF LANDSCAPE RESOURCES**

It is since the war that the landscape of the territory of Rapolano Terme, just like that of so many other places, changes its exterior appearance, (I would like to add that this has been happening since cement have started to prevail on lime) not only in cases of large housing transformation interventions but also for the simple and mundane extraordinary maintenance. "plaster breached", so full of identity, is now removed and replaced with plaster of lime mortar and frequently painted with vinyl or similar materials. We can speak about built landscape in general as the 'plaster breached' was used for walls in both farmhouses and urban houses.

This type of plaster used the typical sand/reddish ocher from the hills of Rapolano Serre and Trequanda rich in color depending on the amount of manganese present. The quarries are located in areas of breccia campite red (jasper) and blue (marls) in the corresponding slide.

From a landscape point of view, the territory of Rapolano Terme is essentially divided into two main groups, one located to the east and stated by the PS as "the upper Pliocene" the west "of the Crete Senesi". In the table of functional subsystems of the P. S., the hills of the Pliocene are in green, travertine floors in pink, whereas the clays to the west are yellow and blue.

The historic center of Rapolano Terme, where the S.M. estate is precisely located, is basically cut between these two different landscapes. The quarries of rubble are behind the old towns of Serre and Rapolano in the portion of the Pliocene.

I would also like to specify that a specific national law on the use of relatively small amounts taken from disused quarries and used for restoration, is already available, but the technique used in the intervention is still to be considered the best as it actually uses the same original colour.

These considerations show that always throughout its history the building transformations that have affected the territory of Rapolano Terme have been characterized by the use of different materials on the territory itself, representing an excellent example of "short spinneret process", so that the local materials have determined the composition of different landscapes: the presence of rubble has meant that this was used for the walls, as in our case, that of travertine has been an important resource of Rapolano also from an economic standpoint, it made it famous in the world, for the countless examples in the field of architecture and construction, the production of clay bricks. In the image you can see the furnace of Poggetti, which is an historical furnace as far as the production of bricks is concerned, and that we hope it will again become active, even though, in the province of Siena, the most important furnaces were discharged.

In conclusion, back to our intervention, we can argue that what pushed us towards the choice of rubble as a finishing, nowadays so rarely used, was the recognition of the fact that this is an essential element of the landscape identity of Rapolano Terme and its District.

The identification of the landscape identity resources is the real push that drove us in this direction. We would like to remind you that the identity of the landscape basically means that the population becomes able to perceive, through 'reading' the landscape, that sense of belonging that can be given only by identity elements. And from this the importance of the thousands faces of Europe therefore the importance of recognising, even in degraded landscape, all the identity elements that can be present. The landscape convention held in Florence in 2000 wanted to show various ways of reading the landscape through highlighting and proposing a new way of reading the landscape which belongs more closely to us, to our capability of changing it until it shows its full identity. It was then this awareness more than anything else, to convince us to choose this path we have taken. This must be our piece de resistance through a serious training campaign aimed at transforming this potential in a real resource.

## CONTACTS

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