

SARDINIA LANDSCAPE, MATTERS OF THE IDENTITY...

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Abstract

Sardinia, historically characterized by a strong agro-pastoral identity, significantly sustained the two phenomena that have deeply reconfigured Italian landscape: land reclamation and tourism. For this reason, it is a paradigmatic place for the development of an operative concept of landscape as first resource.

Keywords: identity, rurality, land reclamation, tourism, planning policies

1. INTRODUCTION

Sardinia, historically characterized by a strong agro-pastoral identity, significantly sustained the two phenomena that have deeply reconfigured Italian landscape: land reclamation and tourism. Especially tourism totally changed in a dramatic way the historical structure and the balance between nature and human life.

Its physical characters fostered this condition (Le Lannou, 1941 [1]). First of all, its coastline that favoured a condition of isolation, different from other Mediterranean islands: a sequence of inaccessible cliffs and sandy dunes, rare deep and sheltered inlets, few ports. Moreover, the island suffered also for the internal isolation: a tectonic configuration characterized by a mosaic of moved tesserae, a great massif along eastern side, an internal inlay of flat horizons, highly disconnected and incised didn't encourage population displacement (only pastoral activity had oriented for a long time internal migrations during the two periods of transhumance).



Figure 1. A. Della Marmora, Sardinia in 1885, map original scale 1:50000

Until the end of XIX century Sardinia was an “unknown island”, and during the first decades of XX century not more than 300 tourists per year visited it.

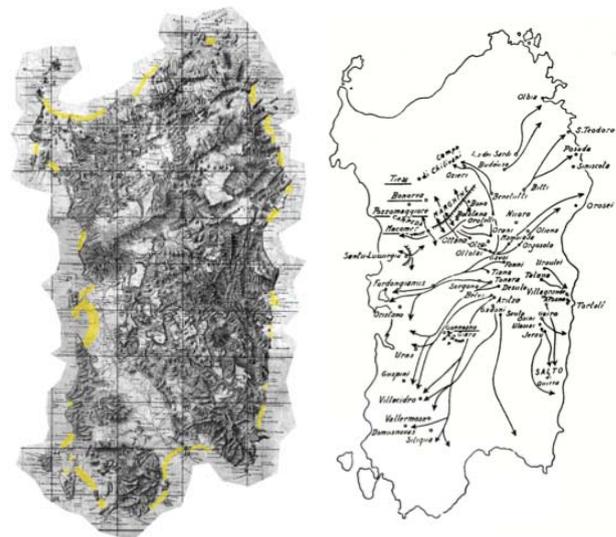


Figure 2. on the left: in yellow on the map of A. Della Marmora the parts of sandy coast; on the right a drawing of M. Le Lannou with the directions of transhumance.

Regular connections with continental Italy began only in 1835. Few roads and railways have not modified towns and villages. In the Twenties there were only 268 km of bus line, offered by SATAS (Società Anonima Trasporti Automobilistici Sardi) with great difficulties. Between the Thirties and Forties of last century only two towns had more than 40,000 inhabitants, Cagliari and Sassari. Urban life almost did not exist and human organization

was still archaic, deeply interlaced with physical geography, structured on agro-pastoral economy.



Figure 3. Photo by M. Le Lannou, Landscape near Sassari, 1930-40.



Figure 4. Photo by M. Le Lannou, Artichokes growing near Sassari, 1930-40.



Figure 5. Photo by M. Le Lannou, Olive grove and wheat fields around Settimo San Pietro (Cagliari), 1930-40.

2. LAND RECLAMATION: A NEW REGIONAL (PRODUCTIVE) LANDSCAPE

The general conditions of Sardinia caused its inclusion in the land reclamation and urbanization policies promoted by the Fascist regime

In the island some actions of land reclamation begun before, but only during Fascism this phenomenon became structural. A law of 1923 stated that 890,000 Ha of Sardinian land had to be reclaimed (for the entire Italy the land to reclaim was 8,170,000 Ha).

An important fact was the change of reclamation typology: from hydraulic to complete land reclamation. Between 1931 and 1937 90,000 Ha of land were totally

reclaimed and 195,000 Ha were in transformation.



Figure 6. M. Le Lannou, the regional map of Land Reclamations, 1930-40

Historical cartography shows a region with the coastal strip almost uninhabited: the eastern coast, about 200 km, had no town; the population concentrated in villages and peripheral areas characterized by dispersed habitat.



Figure 7. Photo by M. Le Lannou, Dispersed habitat in Sulcis, groups of temporary pastoral houses become small settlements called Furriadroxiu, 1930-40.

Population density was generally lower than 25 inhabitants/km² and about 100 inhabitants/km² only around Cagliari, Oristano and Sassari.

During fascist regime were also build three new towns: Mussolinia (near Oristano, and today named Arborea), Carbonia (in the South-West), and Fertilia (in the North, near Alghero).

At the end of 1940ies a great phenomenon of internal and external migrations, upsetting territorial and settlement structure, started: demand for better social conditions, crisis of agro-pastoral system, abandonment of villages and internal territories, new attraction for urban life.

Focusing the attention on the land use, the historical data show that at the end of Second World War Sardinian

territory was classified as: sowable land 24.6%, grazing land 16.2%, uncultivated land 16.8%.

The 1951 Regional Census declares a population of 1,276,023 inhabitants with only 287,027 in large centres, And shows this economical structure: Agriculture and Fishery 51%, Industry 23,5% (most of all mines), Others 25.4%.

Two important facts for the economic and landscape regional history: the birth of the Autonomous Region of Sardinia in January 1948 and the National Land Reform promoted by the Ministry for Agriculture Antonio Segni in 1950.

The first gave to the Regional Government the power to adapt the policies to local conditions; the second provided the expropriation of uncultivated land, the development of transformation plans, the building of new infrastructures, the assignation of new farms.

In 1951 ETFAS (Ente per la Trasformazione Fondiaria e Agraria in Sardegna, Authority for Land and Agrarian Transformation in Sardinia) was created, it has been the Authority that carried out most landscape transformations during the Fifties: more than 65,000 Ha of reclaimed and cultivated land (vineyards, olive groves, citrus plantations, orchards, woody plant cultivations and windbreak plants that have designed, formed the new territorial texture), dispersed housing and 21 rural villages, 811 km of roads, 452 km of aqueducts and 594 of long-distance power lines (Brigaglia 2002, [2]).

Although these important actions, the population of towns kept on growing (+ 70% between 1951 and 1971) while that of villages kept on decreasing.

We can still speak about low-density, but with a new settlement structure.

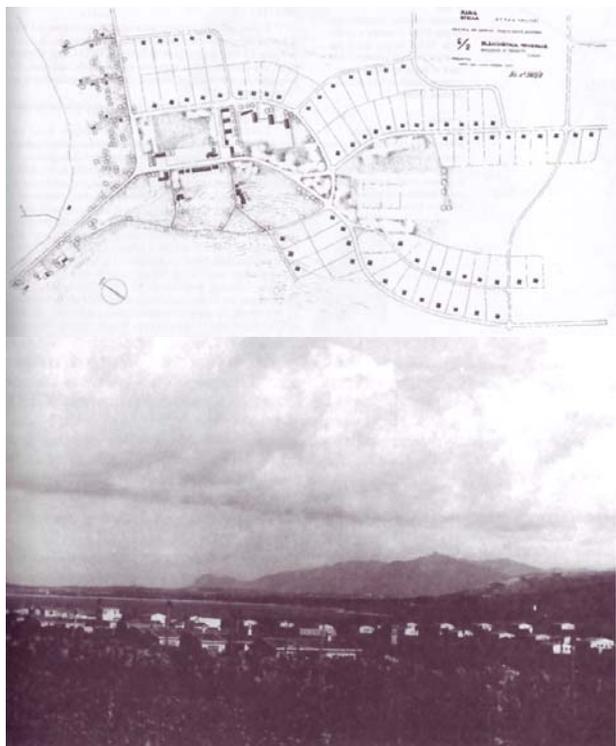


Figure 8. Plan and photo of Maristella (near Alghero), a new rural village born thanks to the Land Reform and ETFAS

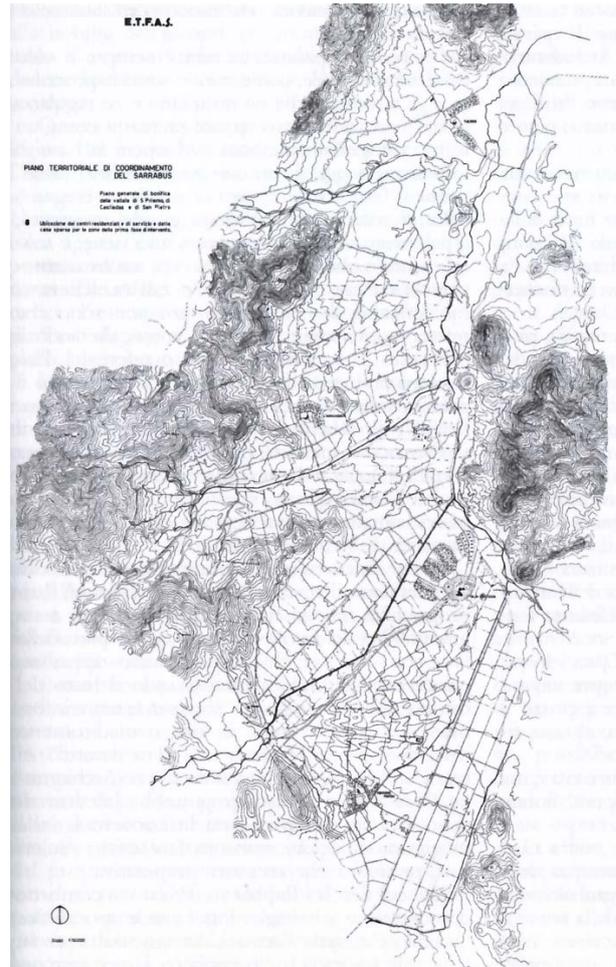


Figure 9. ETFAS, Territorial Plan for Land Reclamation of Sarrabus (South-East of Sardinia)

3. TOURISM: NEW IMPACT – FAST CHANGES – DESTRUCTURED LANDSCAPE

In the Sixties, new social and economic conditions: Sardinia discovered Tourism, a very aggressive phenomenon that subverted the original earth-sea relationship.

In 1955 the first tourist investment in Gallura by Giuseppe Mentasti (San Pellegrino mineral water), who bought the little island of Mortorio. In 1961 a group of investors were looking for a new tourist paradise, after overcrowding of Côte d'Azur: Karim Aga Khan, Giuseppe Mentasti, Patrick Guinness (beer), John Duncan Miller (banker), René Podbielsky and André Ardoin (counsellor of prince Karim) signed the first agreement to transform Monti di Mola into Costa Smeralda. A great investment, 700 thousand million lire to transform a territory with only 100 rural houses (stazzo): the original 200 rooms became 100000 rooms!

Hotels, services and villas: the territory divided into building lots, productive nature transformed in mute nature.

Costa Smeralda stimulated the conquest of coastal strip and became a great machine that created contemporary

holiday and organized a new form of physical and symbolic territory only for Tourism: a great semiotic apparatus able to model collective imaginary (Bandinu 1980, [3])... Farmers asked themselves “what’s the use of this land?”: the investment of buyers, so much money, seemed extra-economic, over the logic of local economy... They didn’t understand the difference between agro-pastoral concept and refined tourist capitalism. In Costa Smeralda were made “theological whims of goods” (Marx): nature had to be transformed in “specialities”.



Figure 10. Landscape of Gallura with the typical rural house (“Stazzo”) before Costa Smeralda



Figure 11. One of the most famous Hotel of Costa Smeralda, Hotel Pitritza in Porto Cervo

The new landscape showed organic architectural forms in a nature rebuilt with the same flora, the same colours, the same stones: an ecological code too much epidemic, that didn’t understand the DNA of Monti di Mola and created a new habitat unable to re-interpret traditional territorial and architectural structure of Gallura.

Planning policies were inadequate, so the best form of landscape protection was professionalism and sensibility of architects. This model of Tourism carried out a strong environmental, social and economic imbalance: from economy of subsistence to cultural models of wealth and luxury, strong economic imbalance between coasts and internal areas.

At the end of Sixties the cost of building began to rise, but everyone would like to build the maximum cubature. This fact generated another problem: the number of “second houses” (too small to be defined villas!) rose

together with local population density: along the coast too many inhabitants, cars, refuse...

This phenomenon has increased without limit until 1976, when was promulgated the first law of coastal protection (Regional Law 10/1976), that forbade building within a strip of 150 metres from shoreline. Other laws more restrictive in these thirty years haven’t be able to stop speculative tendency. At the same time depopulation of internal areas and villages proceeded, while around most important towns urban planning hasn’t be able to control new building in terms of quality and urban morphology. In the metropolitan area of Cagliari we have today 25% of regional population, with a range of density from 50 to 3,247 inhabitants/km²: building development has linked up the capital with the surroundings towns, obliterating last traces of agricultural landscape and making almost unrecognizable ancient urban structures. Around Sassari, new buildings, dispersed housing, have contaminated a precious olive groves ring.

In short, urban and landscape policy hasn’t controlled the transition from traditional architecture to Modernity, and the effects of Tourism on natural and cultural resources. The results: a general lost of quality, a great damage to landscape structures, urban textures, architectural heritage.



Figure 12. Aerial view of Costa Smeralda: today this situation is common along the entire coastal strip of Sardinia.

4. 2006, NEW REGIONAL LANDSCAPE PLAN: LANDSCAPE AS IDENTITY

Regional scale is the more efficacious to control the great complexity of landscape, with excellent natural components and a valuable cultural heritage from Prehistory to Modernity.

After inadequate laws and actions, new Regional Planning Policies, interpreting European Landscape Convention through the Regional Landscape Plan (Piano Paesaggistico Regionale, [4]), have arrived to a turning point: the landscape – in its interlacement between nature and history, places and people – is the first resource for the future of Sardinia.

In Europe, “low-density” is an uncommon landscape configuration and we have to guarantee its sustainable evolution and its future recognisability as most important value for collective identity.

The first part of Regional Landscape Plan, approved in 2006, is about coastal landscape, articulated in 27 ambits.



Figure 13. Landscape Regional Plan, map of coastal ambits original scale 1:200000

The strategy of the new Regional Landscape Plan is mainly based on four principles:

1. Defence of voids: conservation of no built landscape. After decades of indiscriminate land occupation it is necessary to safeguard natural areas not only for their intrinsic value but also as regeneration areas and fundamental components of a low-density landscape.



Figure 14. Landscape of Villanova Monteleone (Sassari), photo of Davide Virdis

2. Restoration vs. new building: depopulation of internal villages and also a touristic policy have created too many unused housing. A top priority objective is the restoration

and requalification of architectural heritage. Regional Administration promotes various actions to stimulate territorial partnerships able to favour and support this objective.

3. Tourism, from impact to territorial economic resource: new forms of sustainable tourism, able to exploit the resources of internal landscape, to reduce the impact on coastal ecosystem, to advertise local products and the real identity of Sardinia.



Figure 15. Santa Reparata bay (Santa Teresa di Gallura) photo of Davide Virdis



Figure 16. Nurallao, railway station of Trenino Verde (Green Train, touristic railway for discovering internal landscape of Sardinia) photo of Davide Virdis

4. Sardinia of Excellence, node of cultural exchanges: Cagliari, BETILE 2006, the International Competition for Nuragic and Contemporary Art Museum was a strategic action to promote the exploitation of regional cultural heritage.

The aim was to create a strong node of exchange between Sardinian and Mediterranean culture, place of research, experimentation and production of art: an excellent drive for urban regeneration (Betile. Exhibition catalogue, [4]). 116 participants, prestigious architects from all over the world, 10 teams selected: Hadid, Archea, Lagnese, Obr, Herzog & De Meuron, Fuksas, Mutti, Byrne, Garofalo. Zaha Hadid won the competition with a poetic and sculptural project: a coral concretion, a dynamic and evocative form modelled by erosion that offers various points of view and allows to organize and combine every

kind of flow we can imagine for the new node of cultural exchange.



Figure 17. Zaha Hadid, Betile Museum in Cagliari, winner of International Competition in 2006, image from Betile. Exhibition Catalogue.

5. 2011, UPDATES AND OPEN CHALLENGES...

The first three points of the strategy promoted by the Regional Landscape Plan were based and developed on a very courageous action: a Regional Law that gave a stop to all building actions on a coastal strip of 2 km until the adaptation of the various Urban Plans to the rules stated by the Regional Plan.

Moreover other laws gave a temporary stop to the actions in the historical centres and in the rural lands.

This strong trend reversal in relation with the common trust in the “building economy”, has stimulated conflicting opinions and spirits.

A part of citizens have appreciated this new way of thinking about Sardinia: they have had the sensation that a new kind of sustainable economy could be developed in Sardinia thanks to its special and rich natural and cultural values and heritage.

New kind of touristic policies, able to create a new balance between coastal and rural landscape: the first one much more attractive until now, the second one much more related to the history and to the soul of Sardinia.

On the contrary, the other part of citizens have interpreted the restrictive rules and the temporary stops to building actions as a limit for regional economy, believing without doubts in the power of “building economy”, first of all dedicated to new touristic settlements and housing.

A first result of this conflict in 2009, with the election of the Regional Government: the Government that promoted the Regional Landscape Plan lost the elections and during the next two years some of their actions were stopped (i.e. the competition for the new Nuragic and Contemporary Art Museum).

The development of the Regional Plan is still open and the challenge is to try to find a way to create real conditions to demonstrate the potential of a “new” economy based on an idea of Landscape as the first resource.

In a few months probably it will be possible to present a first meaningful report/framework of the different strategies developed by Municipalities for the adaptation of their Urban Plans to the Regional Plan.

But definitely we can say that Sardinia in itself is a clear and special expression of the definition of Landscape given by the European Landscape Convention, and this fact is the most encouraging fact about the next updates about its future.

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