

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EVOLUTION OF LANDSCAPE PROTECTION SYSTEM IN APULIA (IT) AND WALLONIA (BE)

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In response to the numerous and rapid changes that our landscapes are undergoing, a growth of protected areas, diversified in number, size, and type, has appeared over the last decades, so that today, landscape protection relies on a multitude of protection tools (Brown et al., 2005). Based on a mixed method including analysis of legislative and strategic documents and semi-directed interviews with active landscape stakeholders, our communication proposes a comparative study of the evolution of the landscape protection systems implemented in Apulia (Italy) and Wallonia (Belgium) – two regions where the word ‘landscape’ has the same root (pay-), but whose cultural traditions and the processes of territorialization and anthropization that have affected these regions have led to development of different policies and instruments to protect the landscape. The analysis aims to better understand how the landscape is defined and taken into account in these laws and protection tools.

In both regions, landscapes are protected through several national and regional laws that were created in particular historical contexts. These various laws reflect the richness of meanings that have been given to landscapes. First, the aesthetic interest of landscapes was promoted in the laws defined in the first half of the 20th century. Then, the protection was extended to exceptional natural goods, leading to the designation of landscapes to be protected for their aesthetic, natural, and even historically exceptional values. At the beginning of the 21st century, the European Landscape Convention led the different signatory countries to broaden their own definition of landscape and to adapt landscape policies (notably their protection policies).

Our comparative analysis shows that, despite somewhat different regional protection systems, both in Apulia and in Wallonia, we observe a growing interest in overcoming the protectionist and static vision of the landscape (characterized by a passive regulation of constraints) that has shown strong weaknesses. Tools such as ‘Piano Paesaggistico Territoriale’, ‘Parco Agricolo Multifunzionale’ in Puglia, ‘Charte Paysagère des Parcs Naturels’ or ‘Grand Site Paysager’ in Wallonia reflect a more integrated approach for these landscapes of regional concern. However, due to diverse and sometimes divergent interests, changing the perceptions of local populations, politicians, landowners, and the private sector on protected areas remains a major challenge. This lack of awareness leads to a dominant restrictive vision of the landscape and, finally, to a weak implementation of actions or projects that could draw a series of benefits from the protected landscapes.

Brown J. et al. (Eds.) (2005). The protected landscape approach: linking nature, culture and community. Gland, Switzerland and Cambridge, UK: IUCN.