Reading biocultural landscapes: a new concept for cultural tourism in rural areas, the experience of AGER

Lucio Graziano Pres. Cultural Association AGER

www.ager-landscape.org

(International agency for the protection of biocultural landscapes and for a new rurality)

Biocultural landscapes

Rural landscapes where there is a **permanence** of visible **"signs"** of a traditional symbiotic way of exploiting and inhabiting the land by man. A way that evolved for millenia producing a peasant culture based on adaptation and dependence from the environment and its resources.

An attitude that used to be reflected on agricoltural and settlement **practices** and **tecnologies** that were sometimes very ingenious, but also **on ritual,** social, religious, habits.

These landscapes are characterized by beauty, complexity, and usually high levels of biodiversity. Their natural and cultural elements (the above mentioned residual "signs") still show a **network of mutual relationships** which is the most particular and interesting feature of these territories**.**

In Italy and in Europe biocultural landscapes (SEPLs) are mostly residual fragments

In Italy, in particular, there's been a sedimentation over millenia of a moltitude of different ethnic groups and this coupled with morphological and climate diversity has produced a complex mosaic of ecosystems, settlements and farming practises with consequent diverse productive landscapes.

before agricoltural and socioeconomic revolution (from the 2° w.w.) the whole rural territory in italy could be considered a biocultural landscapes mosaic.

Today most of this plot is disappeared but, for some reasons, **only in some confined areas** you can still clearly recognize biocultural landscape ambits because their physical and immaterial elements **are still conserved**.

Sometimes even in more anthropized landscapes….

You can apply a **"biocultural approach"** to immagine landscape plot looking to the few residual tracks remaining, what does it practically mean?

"If you explore a rural territory and you encounter an element of its bio cultural landscape, you can acknowledge its dense and complicated network of connections with other elements, material or immaterial, belonging to different thematic fields (natural, social, agricultural, ethnic, etc..). This brings you to reflect on its importance and its value today, as evidence of an ancient balance and wisdom, and you feel the need to reactivate this wealth of knowledge. This way of "reading" landscape, starting from single visible details and then extending to all the connections created by them with other elements, is the essence of the bio-cultural landscape approach"

This kind of landscape reading can be the focus of:
a **cultural tourism** aimed at discovering the deep identity of a territory and its rural community.

This is AGER's main interest regarding tourism

Touristic product main phases

I.Thematic Content study √

II.Package design (rural holidays/excursions) √

III.Package organization (TO)

IV.Package promotion and selling (TO)

V.Realization √

VI.Verifying (TO)

(TO) **Tour operator**

√ **AGER competence**

Examples of activities **done or ongoing and** **planned**

Studing Activities

….That Could be finalized to...

- Content production

- Content comunication strategies/instruments elaboration

- Planning activities

Langa and Roero Biocultural landscape (Piedmont) study finalized to Magliano Alfieri's Landscape Museum's contents and to Landscape reading trekking itineraries design.

Study of Biocultural landscape of Passerano Marmorito (Piedmont - Satoyama Case Study)

**Examples of AGER activities
done or ogoing and planned**

Package design
(plannig where to bring tourists and what make them do)

Biocultural itinerary in sabina (Lazio region in the countryside of Rome) for adults (with an italian local incoming TO)

Biocultural itineraries in India and South america (with an italian outsourcing TO)

Realization

- guiding activities for "Landscape reading" holidays and excursions

- Guides training on biocultural approach

Examples of AGER activities done or ongoing and planned

Environmental guided excursions discovering biocultural landscape of Passerano Marmorito and surroundings (upper astisan biocultural landscape)

Environmental guides in school trips in Foreste Casentinesi National Park (Tuscany), in collaboration with a local TO, focused on communal use of forests by Camaldolese and Franciscan Monks and their influence on woodland landscape

Guides within food and wine tasting events in an agritouristic farm discovering Langa (Piedmont) 's wine biocultural landscape and its biodiversity

Traing project for Lazio Region's Parks personnel on biocultural approach to landscape reading

Conclusions related to AGER's experience in tourism

1. Eco/Cultural/Responsible tourism, as universally recognized, is a fundamental additional income opportunity for European rural communities practising a non intensive farming and conserving biocultural landcapes. It can prevent isolation and rural abandonment and consequently landscape degradation.

….Conclusions

2 According to our <u>still limited but quite meaningful</u> experience, Biocultural Landscape reading is a very appreciated form of cultural activity by adult tourists and families, because it brings them to a deeper understanding of the territory and the people they visit, furthermore it allows them to make sharings and comparisons with their territory of origin. It is an "exploring experience" in a wide sense and it has traits of exclusivity, which are a basic feature for a satisfying touristic experience. Particularly it can provide an added value to food and wine tourism and remarkably increase touristic proposal's quality, hopefully leading to longer stays and tourists' fidelization.

….Conclusions

3 Biocultural landscape is a complex entity that has to be investigated For this reason the **preliminary studying phase is very important**. It's not like for city monuments that have their own literature describing them. With landscape we have to select and organize informations coming from thematic fields usually treated separately enphasizing connections between elements. For this reason a critical issue is **research funding**

4 L**andscape visits with a biocultural approach need to be guided**: a guide (human or multimedial) is fundamental for allowing visitors to discover and interpret the complex network between the elements of the landscape. Often It comes to be able to "look with new eyes" rather than seeing spectacular views... For this sake a fundamental issue is **guides training or design of innovative disclosure tools for tourists,**

Thank you!

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info@ager-landscape.org

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