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## Dreams, changes and landscape

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In 2008, the ecomuseum of Parabiago (Italy) was founded in the Milan urban contest, characterised by inhabitants' inability to understand the value of the living heritage. Through participation processes, the people empowerment, the large use of principles of subsidiarity and co-responsibility, the ecomuseum facilitated the work of a wide network of stakeholders; this network was able to mapping the heritage, to take care of it, to manage and regenerate it. The ecomuseum is working not only to implement but also to inspire, also beyond its border, methodological, relational and social changes. Such changes, in turn, contributed to modify the landscape and make some Italian Constitution "dreams" real.

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En 2008, l'écomusée de Parabiago (Milan, Italie) a été fondé dans un contexte urbain caractérisé par l'incapacité généralisée des habitants à percevoir la valeur du patrimoine vivant. Grâce à des processus participatifs, à la «capacitation» des personnes, à une large utilisation des principes de subsidiarité et de coresponsabilité, l'écomusée a facilité le travail d'un vaste réseau d'acteurs; ce réseau a pu cartographier, prendre soin, gérer et régénérer le patrimoine culturel. L'écomusée travaille non seulement pour mettre en œuvre, mais aussi pour inspirer, même au-delà de ses frontières, des changements méthodologiques, relationnels et sociaux. Ces changements, à leur tour, ont contribué à changer le paysage et à concrétiser certains "rêves" de la Constitution italienne.

ESP

En 2008, se fundó el ecomuseo de Parabiago (Italia) en el contexto urbano de Milán, caracterizado por la incapacidad de los habitantes para sentir el valor del patrimonio vivo. A través de procesos de participación, la capacitación de las personas, el gran uso de principios de subsidiariedad y coresponsabilidad, el ecomuseo facilitó el trabajo de una vasta red de partes interesadas; esta red ha podido mapear el patrimonio cultural, cuidarlo, administrarlo y regenerarlo. El ecomuseo está trabajando no solo para implementar sino también para inspirar, más allá de sus límites, cambios metodológicos, relacionales y sociales. Tales cambios, a su vez, contribuyeron a modificar el paisaje y hacer realidad algunos "sueños" de la Constitución italiana.

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**PREFACE**

I'm writing about dreams. Many Italian dreams became law when the Republic Constitution was approved in 1947. The Constitution itself is a dream to achieve every day. Italian ecomuseums are tools to realize some of the Constitution dreams. We can explain cultural institutions such as ecomuseums through Italian Constitution: "A practice of active citizenship that, in accordance with the principle of subsidiarity, (art. 118 of Italian Constitution) aimed to take care of landscape and the heritage (art. 9) to contribute to the material and spiritual progress of society, (art. 4) and the full development of the human person (art. 3.2)" (Dal Santo, 2019).

How can we make dreams real? The inspiration of the future needs permanent change of the present. Ecomuseums and museums as "places of the muses" can inspire people to address the needs of change. Museums with insight from the past as well as with creativity of the muses, can help to forge a public vision for the 21st century (Worts, 2016).

Ideas are able to make changes if they are followed by actions and in presence of a breeding ground. According to Hugues de Varine, the living heritage is the humus, the breeding ground, and the root of the future. Everybody should take charge of it, through a voluntary process of governance of cultural, social and economic change, rooted in living heritage, with the prospect of sustainable local development (Varine, de 2005).

Therefore, both a breeding ground, the cultural heritage, and permanent changes of the present are necessary to inspire the future.

The Italian current situation, which has seen a reduction in private assets, dictates to better recognise and enhance common goods. However, on the one hand the community does not often recognise these goods as community heritage. On the other hand, the governance model is often based on the logic of bipolar administration "administrator-administered"; for this reason it does not allow the community to mobilise its resources. The community cannot express ideas and implement changes and actions for the solution of problems that, because of their complexity, cannot often be solved by the Institutions alone (Arena, 2006).

The innovation of tradition and a participation process in continue are needed. But what kind of participation do we need to change reality? We should go up the stairs of participation to the empowerment to make people able to carry out projects for the common interest (Dal Santo, 2019).

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**ITALIAN ECOMUSEUMS**

In 2014 Italian ecomuseums found a national network.

They started a constituent phase defined tools, methods and specific objectives of the network. Italian ecomuseums shared a "Strategic Manifesto" aimed to contributing in the creation, development and evolution of ecomuseum experiences that can produce virtuous models of sustainable local development. The goal is a new museology, increasingly committed to finding alternative strategies for local development.

These strategies are related to the local communities' desire for change, as well as to a practice that encourages the management and use of cultural, environmental and landscape heritage, with the purpose of local and community development. An ecomuseum differs from other cultural institutions, since it is progressively built on a special heritage: a group of people, whose sensitivity and energy are mobilised to reach sustainable development (Dal Santo, 2019).

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**THE PARABIAGO LANDSCAPE ECOMUSEUM**

Parabiago is a town of about 30.000 inhabitants near the City of Milan (Italy) with a sick landscape. Biological diversity loss, unbalancing and physical separation between human and natural habitats, dysfunctions of landscape apparatus are symptoms of diseases of the "invisible landscape": social relationship, a consuetudinary use of places and resources, rules and procedures for cohabitation and reciprocity and last but not least the "placelessness" syndrome: inhabitants don't appreciate the "small scale" living heritage that characterize the city landscape. It is necessary to operate directly on diseases to intervene indirectly on symptoms. Since these are cultural diseases, the cure needed concerns the community (Dal Santo, 2017).

The landscape ecomuseum of Parabiago was born in 2008 to answer the diseases described above. It is a cultural institution established inside a local Agenda 21 project, a volunteering process started by the Municipality of Parabiago in 2002, aimed at the sustainable local development and based on the active participation of citizens. The ecomuseum is managed by the Municipality of Parabiago. It was accredited by Lombardy Region, according to the regional legislation (Dal Santo, 2009).

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## MAPPING THE HERITAGE

The realisation of a parish map was the first programmed action in the phase of planning of the ecomuseum. The parish map both documents the present of a place, and helps people to understand the past that made it; it also helps the community to improve and enhance places and landscape. In the map, it is possible to detect the wishes of the community (Clifford, Maggi, Murtas, 2006).

The parish map of Parabiago, one of the first in Lombardy Region, was started in 2007. A working group constituted within the forum of citizens met regularly to design the map. The working group first composed a questionnaire that was submitted to the citizens (about 400). Citizens were asked to indicate the heritage elements characterizing Parabiago's landscape and those that have highest value for them. Moreover people could suggest the heritage elements that should be reclaimed and enhanced by the ecomuseum.

The working group recorded the cultural heritage in according to results of a survey and to maps realised by local schools (about 270 students involved). An inventory of the heritage was made with the elements to include in the map, according to cultural and social criteria. The map was printed in 2008 and distributed to all the families of Parabiago. 16,000 copies were printed (including subsequent updated reprints).

The parish map does not end with its printing. It is a participatory process, a permanent and updatable "archive", of the tangible and intangible heritage of a territory.

To update and implement its contents, a multimedia map was realised. It contains the follow-ups related to the heritage included in the parish maps of Parabiago. After this map the ecomuseum used the tool of the participatory mapping to realize with other local partners parish maps of the Mills Park (2009), the routes map of the Olona river valley (2018) and the Parabiago students parish map (2019)<sup>1</sup>.

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## EMPOWER PEOPLE TO TAKE CARE OF LANDSCAPE

The Ecomuseum of Parabiago was designed, and is working, not according to the traditional logic which consists in the institution planning and acting "for" the community, often excluding people from the decisional and design processes. The plan and the work of this ecomuseum are carried out "with" the

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<sup>1</sup> Maps and the used methodology are available online at <http://ecomuseo.comune.parabiago.mi.it/ecomuseo/MAPPE.htm>

community, according to the logic of the participatory planning and active citizenship. A public participation forum was created. Owners of lands and the cultural heritage, municipalities, museums, parishes, water treatment companies, associations, farmers, traders and artisans, public and private educational institutions and single citizens, were encouraged to inform, to discuss and interact, to shape the idea of the ecomuseum, to design a multiannual action plan and activate their resources, knowledge and skills to realise the planned actions.

For the Parabiago Ecomuseum, the process of participation is at least as important as the results and the outcomes of the planned action. In fact, the interaction of the local actors is essential in order to create a sense of place and community.

The aim is not only the realisation of participatory activities, but also triggering cooperation agreements with citizens, for the care, management, and regeneration of the cultural heritage and the landscape in accordance with article 118 of the Italian Constitution. In this way, the ecomuseum becomes a facilitator that makes people able to release energies, and share resources inside the community itself, for the common interest. The agreements were both formal and informal. To regulate and promote the shared administration, the Municipality of Parabiago that manages the ecomuseum, in 2016 approved the Regulation for the active participation of the community to promote the resilience processes for the care, the regeneration of urban spaces, social cohesion and security<sup>2</sup>.

The reopening and reuse with cultural purposes of the Saint Ambrogio's church, the cleaning and reuse with natural purposes of the Riale irrigation ditch, the fish restocking of the Olona river, the cleaning of its banks and the opening of views on the watercourse, the care and regeneration of the municipal lands, many cultural initiatives to bring people closer to heritage, are examples of the activities carried out with the community, through the cooperation agreements. Thanks to a renewed socialisation between the partners interested, some elements of heritage and landscape have obtained a new life or a new use. For example, the Cistercian's church and S. Ambrogio's abbey, once closed to the public, are reopened for guided tours, historical re-enactments, concerts, educational activities and work experiences for students of the nearby high schools.

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<sup>2</sup> The activated cooperation agreements and the used methodology are described at [http://ecomuseo.comune.parabiago.mi.it/ecomuseo/partecipa\\_ev.html](http://ecomuseo.comune.parabiago.mi.it/ecomuseo/partecipa_ev.html)

## EMPOWER PEOPLE TO TAKE CARE OF LANDSCAPE

Farming is not the main economic activity in Parabiago, but agricultural lands are very important feature of its landscape and a link between man and nature.

The Ecomuseum developed cooperation agreements to plan and implement actions about this issue.

The Ecomuseum proposed a project on the theme of the Milan EXPO “Feeding the planet, Energy for life!” to the local community in 2015. The short food supply chain of the Parabiago bread was activated by many local stakeholders; loaves are made in local bakeries with whole wheat flour; they are produced with mother yeast, Parabiago water and salt; the flour made from soft wheat of an ancient variety called “San Pastore” is stone milled in the last water mill in the area; 170 hectares of agricultural fields are cultivate with the conservative agriculture which intervenes in a minimum manner on the ground; it preserves biodiversity and humus, it provides cover crops after the harvest and avoids the development of weeds; the fields are fertilized by the compost produced in a local farm from vegetable waste coming from the public and private gardens of Parabiago. Local bakeries sell the bread that is also served in School canteens. In this process, the life cycle of products is extended and CO2 emissions are reduced (fig. 1).

This was the first of many products with trademark that certifies that the product is made in Parabiago (Municipal Denomination of Origin, De.C.O. is the Italian acronym)<sup>3</sup>. They are all characterised by the tradition (how products were once grown and produced) and innovation (how to product both local food respecting the environment and, at the same time, ecosystem services i.e, the landscape) (Fanzini, 2019).

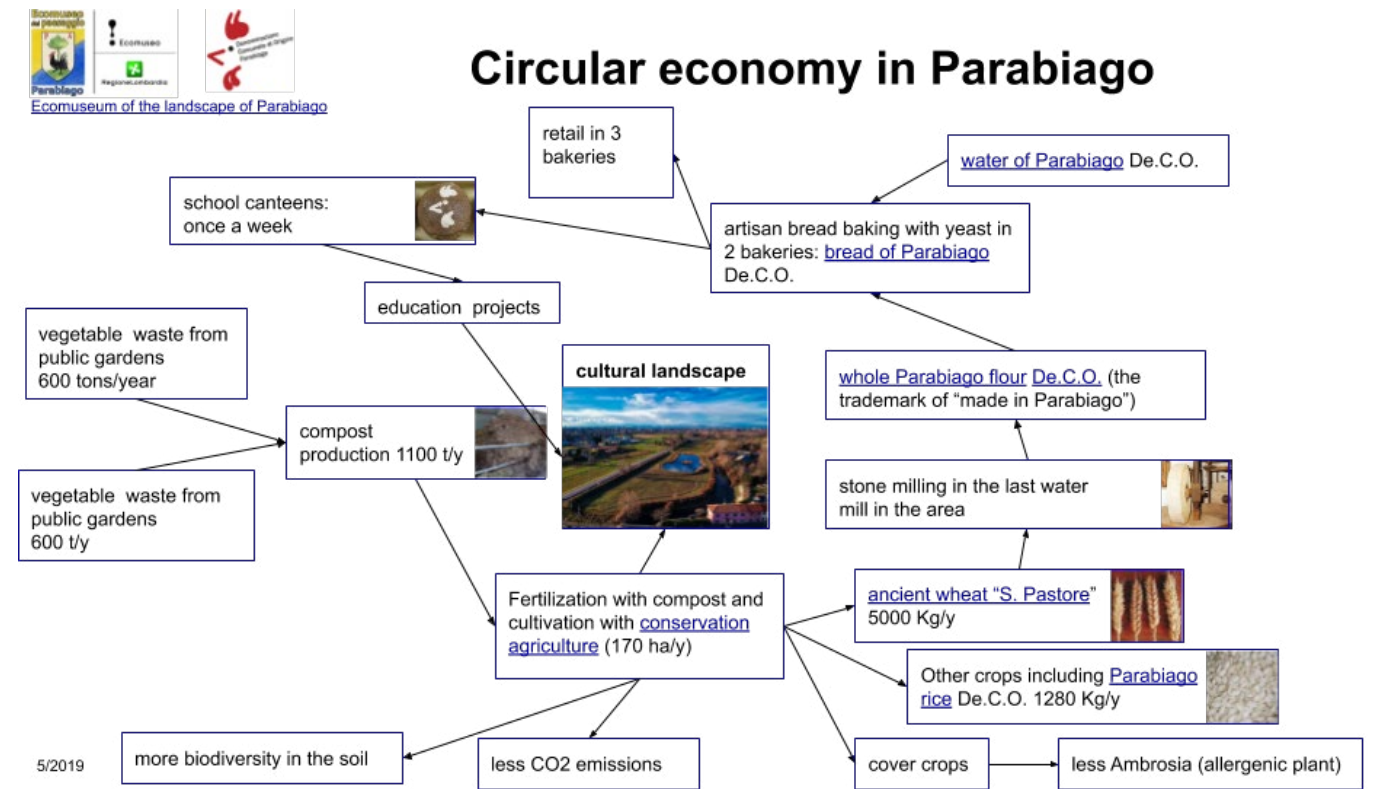


Fig. 1 The circular economy scheme of the bread of Parabiago.

## BEYOND THE ECOMUSEUM BORDER

In 2016 the Ecomuseum and the Mill Park promoted the cooperation agreement for the care and enhancement of agro-ecosystems along the Olona River and the Villoresi Canal and to supply of local products and for ecosystem services. This initiative involves a wider territory. Within the framework of the agreement, the subscribers (agricultural companies gathered in the Olona Valley Agricultural District, Municipalities, Parks, Ecomuseum and associations) committed to ensuring that, through their actions, agro-ecosystems return to their ecological, economic, and cultural functions.

The projects by the ecomuseum and the Mill Park, included in the “Olona Charter”, were incorporated into the new four-year action plan of the Olona, Bozzente, Lura, and Southern Lambro rivers Contract, approved in 2017 by the Lombardy Region, which defines the system objectives and four sub-actions: coordination of activities defined at local level with the planning of the entire basin, use, maintenance, and ecological connections (Fanzini, 2019).

<sup>3</sup> The De.C.O. products are described at [http://ecomuseo.comune.parabiago.mi.it/ecomuseo/deco2\\_ev.html](http://ecomuseo.comune.parabiago.mi.it/ecomuseo/deco2_ev.html)

## CONCLUSIONS

Helder Camara, Brazilian archbishop, said “When one dreams is only a dream; when many dream together, it is the beginning of a new reality”.

The dream of the Italian Constitution needs many efforts to be realized in the everyday life. The results obtained by the Parabiago ecomuseum can be read in relation with the changes that have been produced or triggered within the community: changes in the way work is done, cultural changes, in particular linked to the relational and social dimension, and finally physical changes the increasing the quality of landscape, both from a cultural and perceptive point of view, and from a point of view of health and safety of the agro-ecosystem.

The landscape ecomuseum of Parabiago, through the permanent participatory processes, the enhancement of skills, knowledges and resources of the territory, the extensive use or the principles of subsidiarity and co-responsibility, took over the role of facilitator to cure the invisible landscape diseases. It carried out this role within a complex network of actors: institutional, economic, nonprofit sector, and individual citizens with a wide convergence between stakeholders; the network was able to know the community heritage, taking care of it, managing, and regenerating it, realizing cooperation agreements that were implemented with great human resources. A model of governance and a territory project were originated, that were able to address and integrate physical, managerial and procedural aspects, and to bridge the general interests with interests of the private sector.

The recent monitoring carried out by the Lombardy Region showed that the Parabiago ecomuseum maintained the requirements of the regional legislation on the theme of ecomuseums. After the monitoring of ecomuseums, the Lombardy Region approved new accreditation criteria, also inspired by the work of the Ecomuseum of Parabiago.

Infact the Parabiago ecomuseums tried not only to implement, but also to inspire changes, primarily in methodological, relational and social dimensions, that in turn have contributed to change the quality of landscape, even beyond the border of the ecomuseum.

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## SOBRE EL AUTOR

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His work and research focus on landscape ecology (river restoration, landscape monitoring, biodiversity) ecomuseology, sustainable development (local Agenda 21, participatory planning and action, sustainable agriculture) and subsidiarity.