

DEFINITE SPACE –

*FUZZY RESPONSIBILITY*

# BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS



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# **BOOK OF PROCEEDINGS**

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## LATENT CONFLICTS AND PLANNING ETHICAL CHALLENGES IN THE SOUTH-EASTERN SICILY “LANDSCAPE OF EXCEPTION”<sup>1</sup>

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**Keywords:** immigrants, rural areas, landscape planning

### Abstract

*In the last 30 years Southern Italy has changed from being a region of emigration to one of immigration, in main cities as well as in rural areas. Accordingly, South-Eastern Sicily is recently experiencing remarkable physical, social and economic changes, with significant transformation of its agricultural landscape.*

*Statistics of the last 20 years show high levels of development of the agricultural sector, with remarkable innovation and internationalization of production. At the same time non-official statistics show a higher concentration of - often illegal - immigrants in rural areas. On the other hand, landscape planning and management ensure more “sustainable” local development.*

*The difficult immigrants’ conditions of life and their work in the agricultural sector of the greenhouses produce: (I) new and differentiated rural lifestyles, as social result of the socio-economic relations between different ethnic groups (“globalization” of the countryside); (II) a “landscape of exception”, as spatial result of the power relations between the “space of the powerful” and the “space of the powerless”, produced by a suspension of the rights/norms that is paradoxically legalized (Agamben, 2005).*

*The paper focuses on the cause-effect relationship between landscape planning, agricultural economic development and exploitation of immigrants’ labour, highlighting that landscape configuration/regulation produces forms of surveillance, subjugation, exploitation and exclusion (Mitchell, 2002). The paper describes (latent) conflicts and power inequalities in agricultural landscape, highlighting the ethical challenges and dilemma of landscape planning in rural areas, where issues of social justice, sustainable development and suspension of norms are strictly intertwined.*

### 1. Introduction

As highlighted by Yiftachel (1998), “planning as oppression” exists in a variety of settings and affects a range of social relations in space. The Marxist planning theorists analysed the relationship between planning and power in light of the exercise of political domination based on the exploitation of the working class by the capitalist class (Hoch, 1984), which are mainly due to the economic contradictions of capitalist economic power.

Alternative interpretations of power in planning beyond the Marxist analytical framework have been undertaken more recently. Under the influence of cultural studies many scholars have analysed the impact of urban policies and regional developments on ethnic groups in order to assert ethnic control.

The most comprehensive analysis has been done by Flyvbjerg (1998), who analyses the dualistic (and asymmetrical) opposition of rationality and power. This turn towards the dark side of planning theory – the domain of power – which has been largely explored by Yiftachel (1994), Flyvbjerg (1998), Gunder and Mouat (2002) and Kamete (2012), highlights the unethical implications of such a

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<sup>1</sup> Although the article should be considered a result of the common work and reflections of the three authors, F. Lo Piccolo took primary responsibility for sections 2, 4, 5, and V. Todaro took primary responsibility for section 1 and 3.

relationship (Yiftachel, 1995; Flyvbjerg, 1998; Bollens, 1998). These authors have investigated a dark side of planning where a political power uses planning as a tool of oppression of weak groups (Sandercock, 1998; Hillier, 2002), leading to subjugation, exclusion, and social and environmental injustice.

However, a further example of a model for “utilization” of planning in the exercise of power and as an instrument of oppression of the weaker party, is the one, paradoxically, linked to its “suspension”.

In geographically marginal, and, from the institutional standpoint, often precarious territorial contexts, such as certain areas in southern Italy, and in particular socio-economic conditions, one occasionally comes across the phenomenon of so-called “suspension” of norms (often regarding planning-instrument contents) and unanimously acknowledged regulations, this often being the result of a perverse alliance between economic and political power.

In these cases a determined economic power, firmly rooted in the local area, manages to control the political sphere by “freezing” the system of rules that might otherwise damage it. Furthermore, with regard to southern Italian rural contexts, the presence of a great immigrant flux generally adds an extra dimension to this state of affairs.

In these contexts landscape is transformed into playing the role of exercising power rather than the role of achieving fair and equal development; the economic power produces subjugation, domination, exclusion, and surveillance through landscape transformation. This paper argues that in this context landscape turns into a “landscape of exception” (Lo Piccolo and Halawani, 2014). This paper demonstrates how landscape is not free from conflicts and power inequalities; these are reflected vigorously in the organization of landscape. A particular example of the relationship between power and landscape is the case of the South-Eastern Sicily, that is discussed in this paper. This paper’s aim is to analyse the instrumental use of (planning) techniques and laws in order to reproduce such power relationships. In order to explain by which mechanisms oppression actually occurs we will use Agamben’s concepts.

## **2. Theoretical and conceptual framework**

### *2.1 Power relations in the domain of (planning) laws using Foucauldian and Agambenian approaches*

Flyvbjerg (1998) has dealt with power and oppression in planning practice in light of Foucault’s theory of power. Pløger (2008) applies the Foucaultian analyses of “governmentalities” to planning, arguing that “planning is governmentalized through institutionalized hierarchical procedures distributing power in space and time and represents institutional ways of thinking”.

Intensively analysed by Hillier (2002), Michel Foucault’s theories on the relation between power and knowledge offer a comprehensive framework through which to criticize the role of knowledge that appears to be neutral and innocent from control. Although the work of Foucault is essential in understanding the relationships between power and knowledge, the ambiguous and instrumental use of “the law” is another key element in the relations between planning and power.

The exercise of power (and oppression) occur in the domain of “the law”, although law is suspended, manipulated and unequally applied; this is what exception means according to Agamben (2005), who conceptualizes the concept of exception by connecting it with: suspension of laws, circumvention of constitutional principles, and misuse of norms.

Consequently this paper makes use of the integration of these approaches to create a new framework to understand the transformation of the landscape in the South-Eastern Sicily, and also to theorize the exercise of power that is produced by landscape transformation.

The paper starts by reviewing some theories of power relations starting with the work of Michel Foucault and then by exploring the concept of the state of exception developed by Agamben (2005). These theoretical references provide a lens through which we can view the manipulation of landscape



in the South-Eastern Sicily, where landscape has been employed to serve the economic power to control/dominate immigrant workers. As such this paper highlights a gap in planning literature in the way in which landscape is manipulated to play the role of an exercise of power.

The Foucauldian approach (1977), is particularly helpful in understanding the various mechanisms that are used by a hegemonic power as tools to control people and the space they live in.

The Agambenian approach is helpful in understanding the way in which a hegemonic power manipulates laws to exercise power over certain social groups. Agamben (2005) addresses the power relation between government and society: if the mandate of necessity becomes a source of law, the state can be such a superior power, if it circumvents and suspends laws and norms. Despite the fact that the law is obliterated in the state of exception the state still claims to be applying the law. In this sense the power (state) becomes the law and the exception becomes a rule.

What, consequently, happens to the space, geography, and landscape when the hegemonic power insists upon controlling them, or when it dominates the landscape while at the same time silencing or obliterating those who are powerless? The next sections examine this issue and illustrate the consequences of “hegemony” on landscape.

## *2.2 Power, ideology and landscape*

One of the privileges of power, and an integral part of rationality, is the freedom to define reality (Flyvbjerg, 1998). This general statement applies also to landscape, as a socio-cultural product not just of human interventions, but of the exercise of power. The greater the power, the greater the freedom in this respect to define and dominate landscape, and the less need for power to understand how landscape is “really” constructed.

Landscape is a material as well as cultural artefact; it is a “datum”, but it is also a representation; it is a place, but it is also its imagine. When we refer to landscape, we do not only refer to a tangible, real, object, but we refer to a multiple interpretation of it. Accordingly, in recent years, a wide international literature has developed a more diverse approach to landscape. The work of Mitchell (2002), in his book *Landscape and Power*, which was originally published in 1994, shifts the meaning of landscape from an object to a process by which social and subjective identities are formed.

Barbara Bender (1998) highlights the role of power and inequality in the (political) construction of landscape, and of the historical and geographical specificity of the social relations in play. Representations of landscape become political issues mediated through the planning system, which tends to adopt a site specific and segregationist approach (Hillier, 1998). According to Potteiger and Purinton (2002) ideologies can play a predominant role in creating a narrative of landscape. Since the narrative of landscape is not innocent of ideology, it can be used in the formation of a substantiation and enactment of territorial claims. It also has the ability to produce relations of power (Potteiger and Purinton, 2002, p. 142).

Also economic power can shape landscape and many of its features, loading it with new meanings and representations, through which new systems of authorities and beliefs are produced. Consequently, the relation between landscape, power and ideology makes the production of landscape in conditions of conflict a controversial issue, playing a role in the exercise of power.

Applying Agamben concepts to our planning examples, we highlight as planning systems and laws allow power to exert domination and control, using mechanisms of exception which are applied to landscape. In the light of Agamben’s concepts, we analyse the technical and juridical circumstances in which landscape transformations and planning emerge as an oppressive activity. What is important to note is that also a strong economic power in the state of exception does not only suspend the law and circumvent constitutional principles, but also tries to produce new laws in order to have the right to issue regulations with the purpose of exercising its control over people.

Furthermore, the work of Agamben considers the law as a paradigm of knowledge through which a government or a specific form of power can exercise power over people. Hence, the effort to

understand the manipulation of landscape in the South-Eastern Sicily is based upon the above mentioned scholars' work. The function of landscape as a medium of oppression and exploitation cannot be achieved without a system of laws in which the spatial knowledge – such as planning – is used as an instrument of power. In the case of the South-Eastern Sicily, as it will be explained in the next sections, through planning law there is an exercise of power, also when this, paradoxically, is “suspended”.

Thereby, landscape acquires new meanings: subjection, domination, exclusion, surveillance, plus the function of social control. In this sense the social control is exercised within the system of laws, and the norms which are tied to spatial knowledge (planning, architecture, geography) are instrumentally manipulated. According to Agamben (2005) the state of exception creates a new law which moves it away from ordinary norms: “the state of exception is the opening space in which application and norm reveal their separation (...) In this way, the impossible task of welding norm and reality together, and thereby constituting the normal sphere, is carried out in the form of the exception” (Agamben, 2005, p. 40).

### 3. The South-Eastern Sicily case

#### *3.1 Local context, cultural heritage, success of the greenhouses*

In the Italian national scene, South-Eastern Sicily is known as the “other Sicily”, a very rich territory from the cultural and economic standpoint, comparable to Provinces in northern Italy; an “island within the Island”, thanks to its historic “autonomy” (Chiaula, 2011) and a dynamic socio-economic context that differs greatly from the rest of Sicily (Spataro, Gentiloni and Spampinato, 1985).

Furthermore, South-Eastern Sicily features an exceptionally high concentration of natural and cultural heritage, which on one side makes it greatly exposed to the risk of deterioration, due to the decreasing resources allocated to protection and preservation interventions, but, on the other, it is very attractive for the potential synergies that can be activated especially with respect to economic private investments (Azzolina *et al.*, 2012).

Nonetheless, the most manifest features of this territory are the numberless intertwined and stratified systems of values and resources depending on one another. An intricate network of paths connects archaeological sites of the classical age, agricultural areas with farmhouses and large farms, and town centres, distorting and adapting to the morphology of the territory (Nifosi and Leone, 1985).

In particular, in the hilly and mountainous zone the landscape remains almost intact, with notable examples of actual rural architecture in the peasant tradition, the area being increasingly marked and enhanced by agro-tourism in its various forms (“Ibla sharing”).

The same thing cannot be said for the coastal landscape, in which the far-reaching spread of greenhouse cultivation, continuously and uninterruptedly along the coastal strip, presents one's eyes with an almost surreal landscape, in which the vast plastic expanse, with the reflection of sunlight on the greenhouse roofs, “encroaches” on the surface of the sea. This landscape has strongly been transformed because of the productive system of the greenhouses, losing the natural and cultural features that have characterized it during the centuries.

Furthermore, this area is characterized by the presence of extraordinary urban landscapes that exploit the natural morphology of the territory or the ostentatious baroque architecture. The morphology of the territory contributed to the creation of a complex and polycentric settlement scheme where small and medium-sized urban areas are scattered on the edge of calcarenitic terraces opening up toward the coast and creating breathtaking landscapes.

The town centres feature baroque architecture and urban style (Noto, Scicli, Rosolini, Modica, Ragusa, Ispica) and minor Italian Liberty style (Ispica, Canicattini Bagni).

These exceptionally beautiful urban landscapes perfectly express the baroque idea of urban-planning where architecture, space and light merge and reach maximum harmony. After all, this scenic effect

best expresses the most specific features of baroque architecture, which emerged suddenly and spread extensively during the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Blunt, 1968) in South-Eastern Sicily, a territory considered as geographical and cultural periphery (Nobile, 1990).

From the economic point of view, within the framework of nationwide policy with regard to rural development, South-Eastern Sicily has traditionally occupied a primary role, registering a concerted process of transformation in agricultural production, supported by a combination of innovation and entrepreneurial ability, with significant results on the international exportation front (Asmundo, Asso and Pitti, 2011; Giampino, Picone and Todaro, 2014).

This state of affairs has given rise to a dense mosaic of vegetable, flower and fruit greenhouse-cultivation, which can be added to the renowned quality-wine production (“Cerasuolo di Vittoria”).

This production is centred in the Hyblean fruit and vegetable region, mainly concentrated along the “fascia trasformata” (“transformed strip”) (municipalities of Vittoria, Acate, Ispica, Scicli, Pozzallo, Comiso, Santa Croce Camerina) that constitutes the heart of a more wide-ranging economic system comprising about 9,000 enterprises with about 26,000 workers (CCIAA-Camera di Commercio, Ragusa, 2012), handling a little over 9,000 hectares of UAA, of which 2/3 is set aside for greenhouse horticulture. With regard to this specific sector, there are 3,331 farms and 5,700 hectares of UAA (about 75% of the Regional greenhouse total and 30% of the national total); tomatoes account for 65% of early produce, and peppers, aubergines, courgettes and cucumbers make up the rest. In the last few years there has also been an increase in table-grape greenhouse production (ISTAT, 2010).

The success of greenhouse production, often described as the “economic miracle” of Ragusan agriculture has represented, according to Saltini (1982), one of the sprightliest and most dynamic phenomena to hit the entire Italian agricultural scene. This success has not been limited exclusively to actual production, which has managed to profitably exploit terrain previously considered to be of little economic interest, but has triggered wide-ranging spin-offs involving sectors with strong links to agriculture, such as seed-production, commerce in pesticides and plastics (polyethylene), production of materials for packaging products, road transport etc.

### *3.2 Landscape transformation and planning “suspension”*

The introduction of greenhouses in South-Eastern Sicily dates back to the late 1950s when several farmers decided to reconvert their fruit and vegetable production from agriculture in open fields into greenhouse cultivation. This approach consented the extra production of out-of-season vegetables, rendering agricultural enterprise more profitable. In the wake of initial successes, greenhouse production, especially with regard to tomatoes, soon replaced most of the traditional agricultural activity, including that of grapes.

From this moment on, the success of greenhouse production meant that economic considerations led to widespread and profound changes in the traditional local landscape. In order to build greenhouses flat terrain is necessary and so, the famous “macconi” (sand-dunes), especially those at Punta Braccetto (Ragusa) and Punta Secca (Santa Croce Camerina), had to be levelled out; over a period of time their natural modulation had produced a singular landscape, with alternations of wet depressions, and characterized by typical dune vegetation (Campione and Sgroi, 1994). In some cases, the greenhouses extended as far as the water’s edge. The sand-dune landscape was reduced to compressed fragments between the greenhouses; the end-effect is one of a vast translucent surface (as a result of light on the plastic sheeting), which extends in homogeneous fashion over the whole area as far as the sea, levelling out the terrain’s natural depressions and protuberances (Campione and Sgroi, 1994).

As we shall see in subsequent paragraphs the new lay-out of the landscape, brought about by the pressure of economic power on the natural morphology of the area and on who works into the greenhouses, represents a “landscape of exception”, which, re-reading the concept of Agamben’s “state of exception” (understood as a suspension of the rights/norms, which is paradoxically legalized)

constitutes a possible spatial organization of this phenomenon. In this way the “state of exception” becomes a “landscape of exception”.

In this, furthermore, the condition of “exception” of the Ragusan greenhouse landscape is made explicit in accordance with a dual modality: one spatial and the other social, strictly inter-dependent. The former emerges through the suspension of planning-instrument contents, and the latter via the suspension of greenhouse-worker rights.

From the planning point of view, the Province of Ragusa has a greater number of plans than the other Provinces in Sicily, dealing with aspects of both territorial planning and environmental and landscape safeguard.

On the subject of greenhouses, general awareness has been noticeably heightened with regard to the impact produced on the environment and the landscape; as regards the various planning objectives, there is agreement on the indispensable delocalization of the greenhouses and salvaging of the entire coastal strip.

Many plans, at different institutional levels, faces this issue, with different approaches, administrative capacities and levels of efficacy.

Among all the planning instruments, in the area, it is specifically the Landscape Plan (“Piano Paesaggistico”) (2007)<sup>2</sup>, managed by the Superintendence for Cultural and Environmental Resources in the Province of Ragusa, which examines the issue of greenhouses in depth, in the strategic document “Progetto d’ambito Macconi”. The Plan sub-divides the greenhouse-belt into three zones with different characteristics:

1. RED ZONE ON THE BEACH. The plan envisages a ban on building new greenhouses, and regulation for their reorganization (reduction) in order to create a coastal park.
2. RESTRICTED ZONE WITHIN 150M OF THE SHORE. The plan envisages a ban on new greenhouses, except for those that integrate pre-existing ones or are situated at the margins (i.e. extensions are permitted), following the principle that only “quality agriculture” (and not small-scale, poor-quality agricultural) has to be improved.
3. RESTRICTED RETRO-ZONE. The plan provides for diversification of agricultural production, with “redirection towards traditional agriculture, redirection of greenhouse production towards quality levels oriented to the enhancement of organic agricultural production and industry certification”; the restricted zone should aim to enhance tourism in the local area.

Several doubts arise about the efficacy of the planning system in this regard. Since there are so many plans, with all of them tending to emphasize the need for delocalization of the greenhouses and salvaging of the coastal strip, why are the greenhouses still in place?

We will find our answer in the suspension (and non-application) of the actions of the planning instruments, as provoked by the economic powers that oversee the productive system of the greenhouses. This line of thinking suggests that economic power is able to exert strong pressure on political-administrative power, which actually controls and, in this case, suspends and postpones the application of plans and planning decisions. In marginal contexts such as Southern Italy, and in particular Sicily, the gap between planning contents and their implementation is generally more noticeable wherever there is the presence of strong economic interests, which might also be in a position to influence the political sphere.

### *3.3 Immigrant workers and the “suspension” of their rights*

Whereas the “greenhouse landscape”, on the spatial front, has replaced the traditional, dune-lined coastal landscape, from the eminently social point of view, greenhouses have determined a profound

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<sup>2</sup> The Piano paesaggistico was adopted through the Decreto n. 1767 of 10th August 2010, Assessorato Regionale Beni Culturali, Ambientali e Pubblica Istruzione.

transformation in the “social landscape” in this area.

With regard to the “transformed strip” in the Province of Ragusa, unofficial statistics (Medici Senza Frontiere, 2008; Caritas Migrantes, 2011; INEA, 2013) show a significant concentration of foreign workers<sup>3</sup> employed in greenhouses; this consents a doubling of annual production of vegetables, but at the same time necessitates a greater number of workers.

However, apart from the profound changes wrought in the features of traditional landscape, behind this economic success an extremely complex situation sees the immigrants often living and working in seriously demeaning conditions.

The Ragusa area, in particular, apart from being a constant point of arrival for flows of illegal migrants from north Africa, already boasts a stable foreign presence; this is partly linked to historical immigration from the Maghreb of what are now settled ethnic groups, and partly by the temporary presence of workers (especially from Romania) on a cyclical basis, this being related to the shifting Regional and inter-Regional flows, which are, in turn, linked to the various production cycles (INEA, 2013). Most of these manual unskilled and low-cost workers in this area are unregistered (therefore badly paid and unprotected); compared with these conditions, the various social, economic, sanitary and housing aspects are at some risk (Gertel and Sippel, 2014).

With the enlargement of the European Union to include Eastern European states, a sort of “ethnic substitution” of immigrant workers was noted in the Ragusa greenhouse-belt (Colloca and Corrado, 2013); there was a sudden increase in fresh flows of immigrants, especially Romanians, seeking employment, and mostly taking the place of north Africans. These neo-EU workers came from countries characterized by serious socio-economic difficulties and willingly accepted very low wages (about 20 Euros for a working day of 10 hours), thus neutralizing the “social” gains achieved by the north Africans. For the whole immigrant manual workforce this was followed by a real loss of rights and a worsening of living and working conditions.

Other critical conditions relate to the illegal status of immigrant greenhouse-workers, with one part of them, moonlighting in the “black economy” and another one in the “grey”.

Indeed, in the Southern regions, the informal economy and irregular employment have even greater weight. These two aspects existed well before the arrival of immigrants (De Zulueta, 2003).

In respect to this condition, according to certain cautious estimates by Caritas Migrantes (2011), the irregular workers' percentage amount to 10% (and in some periods of the year, also 20%) of the total of “regular” workers. On the other hand, INEA (2013) suggests an estimated 15,000-20,000 overall units of immigrant workers in agriculture and considers 50-60% of them to be “irregular”; in this case the immigrants are usually employed by small-time businesses, where there is a lesser risk of controls. On the other hand, the so-called “grey” economy provides for a regular work-contract (enabling the non-EU immigrant to obtain a temporary-stay permit in Italy), in virtue of which the immigrant declares that he is working for about 102 days per year; this is the minimum required in order to acquire what is called “indennità di disoccupazione” (i.e. unemployment benefit for those months in which one is not officially working); in reality the working hours extend to the whole year.

The last serious phenomenon involves cases of sexual exploitation of female immigrants, especially Romanians. People working in this field (Caritas, 2011) report that this represents a widespread problem for the female component among immigrant workers, who may be blackmailed by the owners of the greenhouses and risk losing their jobs.

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<sup>3</sup> According to findings by ISTAT (2013) regarding the inter-census period 2001-2011, the permanent foreign population resident in Sicily more than doubled, going from 49,399 to 125,015 units. The first five nationalities present in Sicily, Romanian, Tunisian, Moroccan, Sri Lankan and Albanian, represent over 50% of the total foreign presence (ISTAT, 2013; INEA, 2013). With regard to numbers for the year 2011, the Province of Palermo provides the highest figure in absolute terms, of resident foreigners on the island; however, the Province of Ragusa has the highest percentage of foreigners as a percentage of the total resident population.

In fact, in this sense, the anomalous increase in the rate of voluntarily-interrupted pregnancies (abortions), as registered in the last ten years by healthcare structures in the area, is due, to a significant extent, to female immigrant workers from Eastern Europe.

On the subject of this phenomenon, the structural features of the “greenhouse landscape” consent the hide both the presence of illegal workers and the various forms of abuse perpetrated on them. Taken together with the distance from towns and the conditions of isolation experienced by immigrants, all this does not appear so far-removed from the forms of slavery carried out in non-democratic countries. Nevertheless, with regard to the seriousness and pervasiveness of the phenomena described here, in the various forms of exploitation undergone by immigrants, the key-players and official policies (including those stemming from planning instruments) are conspicuous by their absence (also with regard to the institutional duties that they should be addressing) (Lo Piccolo, 2013). The only operators active in the area are voluntary associations and healthcare structures, which, owing to the poor resources available, can only respond in emergency cases (Consoli, 2009; Todaro, 2014).

#### **4. South-Eastern Sicily as Landscape of Exception**

In South-Eastern Sicily planning is suspended to maintain the economic power's superiority and control over the agricultural production and the immigrant workers. Consequently, the landscape has been constantly transformed resulting in a complete change in its role and meaning. Landscape has become saturated with elements of control (enclosures, walls, and hurdles) thus losing its liveability, geographical continuity, and the norms that shape it.

Generally, in spatial and social conflict conditions, a resolute power uses planning regulations, laws and plans as vehicles for sustaining oppression through landscape. However, the existence of laws does not imply that the production of space goes through a clear and systematic process to be produced. On the contrary, in conflict situations, the law is very ambiguous and blurred. With regard to the political regimes sphere, according to Agamben (2005) when a regime faces a political crisis it circumvents constitutional principles: so an “exceptional state” is produced, and legislative power collapses, being replaced by an executive power; as result, “an emptiness of law” becomes the form of the juridical order of the state. Agamben (2005) specifies that “an emptiness of law” shapes the state of exception which is characterized by: the transformation of legislative power into executive power, and the suspension of norms and juridical forms.

In the South-Eastern Sicily case the political regime is replaced by economic power. The “landscape of exception” does not mean that there is no law shaping the landscape, but that the law becomes a spectrum that can be practiced partially and ambiguously. “Landscape of exception”, as this study highlights, is produced through three inter-connected processes: firstly, the acknowledgement of the economic power linked to the agricultural production success; secondly, the suspension of norm and planning; and thirdly, the manipulation of landscape through the greenhouses, used as elements of control for the purpose of exercising power.

Apart from constituting the actual essence of this model, the greenhouses represent an effective tool for spatial as, well, as social manipulation and control. Under the spatial aspect the greenhouses determine the transformation of traditional landscape, exercising an extraordinary force on a natural eco-system, i.e. the dune-lined coastal system, which was once deemed unproductive but, at the same time, of great value as regards environment and landscape. This eco-system, recognized at the local, national and international level, with the institution of protected areas (reserves and Natura 2000 sites), has in fact been reduced to a series of isolated strips and fragments. With regard to this natural heritage, the safeguarding system as laid down by law and planning instruments has been suspended and is no longer applied, consenting the greenhouses to spread everywhere, even as far as the sea coast edge.

From the social point of view, the greenhouses constitute an enormous reservoir of employment, with non-qualified and “flexible” jobs to attract the international flux of immigrants (Kasimis, 2010), who

consider this work advantageous when compared to the living and working conditions in their countries of origin. This has often actually provided a solution to the principal difficulties with regard to conditions of illegality, lack of jobs etc. On the other side, the wide-scale availability of work is not matched by adequate working conditions. Work in the greenhouses proves to be extremely hard and, in many cases, scarcely bearable (Avallone, 2011). Most of the basic individual rights are denied as regards work contracts and a fair wage, and, contextually, multiple forms of violence are also carried out.

However, the economic success of this type of agricultural production depends to a great extent on work by immigrants (Osti, 2010), who are, nonetheless, unaware of this fact.

The discussion and the case study illustrate that also the economic power can produce a system of rules which are spatially localized, allowing it to reshape landscape by eliminating natural preserve zones and constructing elements of dominance and control. Under the context of the “emptiness of law” the whole landscape is transformed from the purpose of enjoyment or agricultural development into the purpose of surveillance, control and repression.

Although the greenhouses constitute an instrument for the transformation of landscape and social manipulation, via a system of new rules imposed by economic powers, the legal void has entailed the loss of the role of safeguard of the environmental and landscape heritage from landscape-planning. Thus, a question of an eminently ethical nature arises, which concerns the safeguard of the landscape in intensively cultivated rural areas and the repercussions, in terms of social justice, on the workers (Berlan, 2008).

## 5. Conclusions

In his adoption of the Foucaultian analyses of power, Flyvbjerg (1998) stresses the role of knowledge and highlights the selective process of interpreting and accrediting knowledge that is exercised by power. He claims that normative rationality is the upfront planning model presented for public scrutiny, while the real rationality corresponds to the backstage hidden from public view and often contrasting with the most celebrated aims of advancing democracy. On the other hand, Gunder and Mouat (2002, p. 131) highlight how the (individuals’ or groups’) “capability” of resistance relies on cultural and financial capital i.e. knowledge (including strategic awareness), and access to expertise and resources. But under which conditions can resistance be exercised? And what are the structural obstacles to forms of resistance?

Obstacles to any act of resistance are constituted by legal and institutional systems that impede any act of resistance by the manipulation of laws and rules, which often occurs in a state of exception, producing an instrumental misinterpretation (and consequent manipulation) of rules.

On the other hand, one of the main risks is the progressive normalisation of the state of exception use: this might be generalised in the contemporary political and economic conjuncture (Gray and Potter, 2014).

This paper offers conceptual and empirical contributions on the way in which the landscape can be manipulated. Its main task is to provide concrete examples of the ways in which power works in planning by suspending and manipulating rules and laws, and its consequences not just for people or urban areas but also for rural areas and their landscape, too. This study demonstrates through analysis and discussion of the planning system in South Eastern Sicily that landscape, in this particular case, has been transformed into a “landscape of exception”. This transformation has not occurred spontaneously or occasionally; instead it is a continuous process in which the “suspension” of planning is used in order to transform landscape in an instrument of oppression and exclusion. In this way landscape loses the positive value and is transformed from a space of equitable development into a space of subjection and control.

This paper shows that the production of the landscape of exception is separated from norms, highlighting the landscape’s role as a medium in exercising power over its users. In particular, it is

characterized by the meaning of control that influences socio-economic issues of citizenship rights, but also life-styles. Through landscape of exception citizens are prevented from fruition of the natural resources, like the dune system and the seaside. This means to defer the “public interest” (and the “common good”) for a private interest of individual profit. At the same time, others are maintained in a status of non-citizens, for the same economic reasons.

The manipulated normative context determines the production of a landscape of exception, where subjection, exclusion, domination, and control exist. The common economic interest has been used in order to legitimate landscape transformation, with a suspension of laws and plans; consequently, the production of landscape is deviated from basic principles of norms.

This is a good example of the detailed insight that Foucaultian critique can contribute to understanding planning practice. Flyvbjerg (2004) makes the point that the central question is how power is exercised, and not merely who has power and why they have it; the focus is on process in addition to structure. We argue that Agamben concepts add a valuable contribution to this critique describing the mechanisms of exception which allow power to be exercised defining what counts as rationality and rule, and thereby what counts as reality (Flyvbjerg, 1998).

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