

The landscape of Italian Immigration in Southern Brazil. Signs, structure and continuities in the Landscape Units

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Abstract

This paper deals with aspects of the memory of the first Italian colony in Southern Brazil (1875 onwards) from the point of view of the landscape, considered as a synthesis of physical, anthropic, social and intangible evolution of the territory. This cultural landscape is deeply rooted in the Italian areas where the first immigrants came from which can be observed in the physical features of both territories and in the policies that are used to the economic development of local resources, particularly those related to the wine industry and the conversion of old rural houses for touristic purposes. A thorough investigation about the structural signs of the territories is made using historical maps as a starting point. The paper aims at the identification of physical features responsible for the structure of the present landscape of the Italian colonies in Brazil, identifying their nature, form and rural uses, comparing them with the Italian areas. The methodology of analysis comprises the reconstruction of physical and uses of the rural plots in order to identify the rules that governed their aggregation and their main spatial features. This procedure allowed building a broader picture in order to understand the present patchwork that characterizes this particular landscape. Over this patchwork, the identification of 'landscape units' (LUs) is made, through which, historical, physical and cultural elements of the territory become the framework of the LUs. The remains and signs of this cultural landscape can, then, boost the development of the territory and represent an important local resource that must be supported by convenient preservation and management policies regarding spatial transformations. What it is possible to identify, so far, is that the actual policies tend to be used as a way to exploit the cultural landscape and the heritage preservation represents a by-product of these policies.