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EDITORIAL

'Off site', 'marginal', 'outfields', 'uncultivated areas': all different terms defining uncultivated landscapes, the central subject of this volume of PCA. This is a topical subject that will be addressed in at least three scientific meetings this year (at two different meetings in Rome and at least in a couple of the sessions of next EAA congress in Istanbul).

Indeed, it appears that many European archaeologists have agreed to move beyond traditional thematic approaches to archaeology, such as looking at different settlement types, fortifications, craft areas, churches, cemeteries... in order to deal with the archaeology of entire historical landscapes, conceived as complex systems of agricultural and uncultivated areas (forests, marshes and the coastline), connecting networks (drove roads, hollow ways, outgangs, rivers and water channels) and different kinds of settlements (including houses, castles, churches, monasteries and industrial and processing buildings such as mills, forges, etc.) whose relationships have, over time, changed and influenced each other.

The result is a stratified landscape that can be investigated and understood diachronically with the help of innovative archaeological methods. This approach is also innovative and significant, in that it combines, in a transdisciplinary perspective, new and traditional sources usually utilised in contrasting disciplines within the study of historic and cultural landscapes. This approach conceives landscape not purely as a spatial context for settlement but as a multiplicity of natural and constructed elements in which components acquire new significance in relation to each other.

Three approaches are relevant in order to understand landscapes: the quantitative, the relational and the diacronical one. Quantitative analysis allows, through the techniques developed by "Land Capability Analysis", an estimate of the significance of agrarian production and the resources taken from non-cultivated areas and therefore their differential economical impact. Within a specific territory, the communities that inhabit it may identify many connections between the various landscape components, not only from an economic point of view but also from a so-

cial, ideological and cultural perspective. Finally the evolution of each landscape element must be researched, not just as an isolated site, but holistically, as part of a wider historical landscape.

The final outcome of this approach is an evaluation of the sustainability of past agricultural systems in the context of a range of historic, environmental and global changes. If we consider the post-classical period, the end of the Roman globalised economic system of land exploitation brought about dramatic changes in the ways that societies managed their environment, turning from a semi-globalized world to more regionalised system based on local states. Landscape and settlements, in many cases structured by local self-sufficient communities, underwent reorganisation resulting in distinct new characteristics. These formed the network of landscapes that has survived until modern times. Two elements were particularly relevant to these transformations: 1. the arrival from the 4th Century AD onwards of new populations (in the sample area we consider: Goths, Lombards, Franks, Anglo-Saxons, Muslims), who introduced new agricultural practices, including new ways of exploiting outlying resources; 2. climatic changes, with a very cold period in the 6th century AD shifting to a warmer era from the 7th-8th centuries AD. These changes forced adaptations in some areas, such as in the Venetian lagoon and its hinterland, or the French Riviera, with radical transformations of the courses of rivers, lakes and the shorelines. Understanding the way in which these two phenomena altered and transformed the relationship between settlements, crops and outland can be crucial not only for landscape conservation, but also in adapting to current changes: cultural and economic globalisation, increasing urbanisation, climate change, loss of peasant knowledge and the abandonment of many rural marginal areas.

A better understanding of the historical mechanisms that lead to the transformations of landscapes in the past is also of relevance as part of the strategies and policies connected to sustainable development. The dossier of this fourth volume of PCA has been therefore devoted to the subject of the transmission and communication of archaeology and archaeological knowledge to society at a range of levels, from stakeholders, to tourists, families, amateurs, schools, etc.

This number of PCA again focuses on the objectives that we proposed from its foundation: discussion about new topics, on the frontier between trans- and interdisciplinarity, in an international context. A journal which aims also to promote the research of young scientists by publishing their papers (sometimes the result of PhD research) and for that purpose we have assigned with this number the First PCA Young Award prize for research by Sylvain Burri on the significance and use of incultum in Provence.