

The Participation of Local Communities to the Landscape Planning: a Controversial Path in Sicily

The Participation of Local Communities to the Landscape Planning: a Controversial Path in Sicily. *The European Landscape Convention (Florence, 2000) foresees the integration of landscape into town planning policies and spatial planning (Art.5.d). However, landscape protection instruments (landscape plans), that are active today in many European countries, particularly in Italy, almost always take sectorial value, hierarchically prevailing to other planning tools and evading the democratic process of sharing with local communities. In relation to these considerations, the present paper focuses on the results of a critical reading of an experience of landscape planning in Sicily: the Landscape Plan of the Specific Area 8 in the Messina's province. In this area the Nebrodi local community, organized in a network, in relation to the critical aspects of the landscape plan was opposed to the rigid logic of the planning process, through the "construction" of a participative process of review of the plan before its approval.*

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so as perceived by people, whose character is derived from the action of natural and/or human factors and their interrelations» (Art.1.a).

This definition takes into account the idea that landscapes evolve over time, due to the effect of natural forces and human action, and at the same time highlights the holistic view of

The *European Landscape Convention* (signed in 2000 by 15 European countries) (Council of Europe, 2000) defines the landscape, from a cultural point of view, as «a specific part of the territory,

the landscape, where the natural and cultural elements should be considered simultaneously.

In order to protect the landscape, the *Convention* introduces policies aimed to favour, management and planning of landscapes (Art. 5.b). Thus, the *Convention* establishes:

1. «To start public participation procedures, local and regional authorities and other parties in the definition and the implementation of the landscape policies» (Art.5.c);
2. «To integrate the landscape into the territory, urban, cultural, environmental, agricultural, social and economic planning policies» (Art.5.d);
3. «To assess the identified landscapes, taking into account the specific values which are attributed to them by the populations and parties concerned» (Art.6.c).

Considering that the activities of the public

authorities, in relation to the landscape, cannot be limited to the elaboration and application of rigid and not shared protective tools, exclusive privilege of skilled technicians, the landscape has to become a matter of public interest, as it significantly contributes to the well-being of the local communities, which are no longer willing to passively accept the decisions taken at a high level (Clementi, 2002; Stoeglehner & Schmid, 2007; Spigler *et al.*, 2008; Dejeant-Pons, 2009; Zoppi & Lai 2010; Hernik *et al.*, 2013). The landscape is a matter that affects everyone and thus, it must be treated in a "democratic" way, starting at the local level (Prieur, 2006; Priore, 2009).

Therefore, the recognition of an active role of the local communities in the decisions which affect their own landscape, can offer them an opportunity to better identify with the territories in which they live. If it strengthens this relationship, they will be able to consolidate both their identities and the local and regional differences, and to be fulfilled from a personal, social and cultural point of view.

In Italy the contents of the Convention have been adopted under the regulatory profile by the *Code of the Cultural Heritage and Landscape* (Legislative Decree No. 42/04) which recognizes that the landscape plays a central role in the formation of individual and social well-being, reaffirming the need of its safeguard, management and planning (Montini & Orlando, 2006).

The Art.135 of the *Code* provides that the State and the regions guarantee the knowledge, safeguard, planning and management of the territory for the different values expressed by different contexts which constitute it; for this purpose, the State and the regions must submit the territory to specific legislation by landscape plans, or rather urban-territorial plans with specific consideration of landscape values.

The landscape plan takes a «descriptive, prescriptive and purposeful content» (Art.143.3) and, on the basis of the recognition of the peculiar characters and aspects of the territory and of its landscape features, divided the latter into specific landscape area plans (Art. 135).

However, after a beginning marked by the utmost clarity, it should be noted that paragraphs 5, 6, 10 and 12 of Art. 143 of the *Code* show a certain ambiguity on the principle of "inter-institutional cooperation" in the formation of the landscape plan that leaves no great margins for dialogue amongst the different institutions that work to varying degrees on the territory and the landscape.

Furthermore, although the Art. 144 foresees both the "institutional concertation" and «the participation of involved parties and the associations formed for the expansion of common interests», however it is foreseen within the framework of the «procedures for approval of the landscape plans», namely then towards the end of the planning process and not in the processing of the plan.

Observing the ongoing planning experiences especially in the last decade in Sicily, the situation is worse in relation to the fact that the agreement with the other local actors and interested people is in most cases yet to be done or just started. This lack or weakness of comparison with local the communities is a confirmation that in the ongoing experiences, a technocratic spirit is openly prevailed in the planning process (Costantino, 2009).

Relating to these considerations, this contribution deals with the subject of the critical review of the elaboration and approval process of landscape plans in Sicily, focusing its own attention on the experience led with the specific area Landscape Plan 8 of the province of Messina.

In relation to such plan, an informal interacting path has been activated with the local communities which have produced a system of remarks on the Plan forecasts. Such a path, not foreseen by the laws in force, joined the active participation of the "Nebrodi, Open City" Municipalities' Network and, for the relevance of the submitted remarks, led to the suspension and subsequent revision of the Landscape Plan¹.

1. The complex issue of the landscape planning in Sicily

In relation to the landscape plan process, the Sicilian Region as a special-status region has exclusive competence in the field of landscape². In the early 1990s, the Sicilian region, in order to protect the integrity of the regional landscape, already heavily compromised by the heavy settlement growth, which in the past thirty years has devastated much of the regional territory (particularly the coastal areas), has started the elaboration of the Regional Landscape Plan.

This Plan is divided into two distinct levels, but closely linked:

1) Regional level of the Guidelines for the Regional Landscape Plan (Decree No. 6080 of 1999), address document developed on thematic maps in 1: 250,000 scale affecting all the regional territory and defining the general guidelines for the safeguard of the Sicilian landscape.

2) Sub-regional level of the specific area landscape plans whose elaboration ended at the end of 2008. This level comprises 18 Specific Area Landscape Plans identified in the Guidelines. The specific landscape area plans are based on in depth analysis of the landscape, natural, cultural and environmental resources, socio-cultural, economic and environmental, dynamics, at different scales (1:50,000, 1:25,000 and 1:10,000), and deal with specific contents for the protection, enhancement and restoration of the landscape. Merging the individual specific landscape area plans, we would have to reassemble the overall regional framework and get in this way a single Regional Landscape Plan.

Specifically, the objectives of these Specific Area Landscape Plans are:

1. Ecological stabilization of the environmental context, soil and bio-diversity safeguard;
2. Enhancement of identity and peculiarities of a specific landscape;
3. Improving the fruition of the environmental heritage.

The landscape plans also contain the provisions (constraints, limitations, etc.), particularly contained in the regulative norms addressed to:

1. To preserve the features of the safeguard assets, taking also into account the architectural types and materials of construction.
2. To identify urban and building development guidelines which do not diminish the value and merit of a particular landscape.
3. To safeguard the sites which are included in the list of the world UNESCO heritage;
4. To safeguard the agricultural areas.
5. To recovery and re-qualify buildings and areas to reintegrate the pre-existing values
6. To "build" new "coherent and integrated" landscape values.
7. To find other actions of the landscape enhancement, even in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

However, in relation to the completed planning experiences, we may encounter some problems in the process of elaboration of the specific area landscape plans.

In fact, in relation to the Guidelines for the Regional Landscape Plan of 1999, it has been activated a special office (Office of the Plan) which has made possible to ensure a unified vision of the starting process of the Regional Landscape Plan.

The same Office should have to elaborate the specific area landscape plans. However, for the sub-regional level, in order to use some residual funds of the Sicilian Regional

1) He who writes, he has coordinated the work of the Technical Table for the remarks to the 8 Specific Area Landscape Plan of the province of Messina and drew up the "Document for the "Nebrodi, Open City" Municipalities' Network

Participation to the process of formation of the 8 Specific Area Landscape Plan".

2) In Italy special-status regions are those which have exclusive competence in specific subjects (such as the safeguard of the landscape) and

special forms of autonomy. The special-status regions are Sicily, Sardinia, Aosta Valley, Trentino-Alto Adige/Südtirol and Friuli-Venezia Giulia.

Programme 2000-2006 which imposed a decentralization of expenditure in the territory, the drafting of the specific area landscape plans has been entrusted to the nine Superintendence (decentralized territorial organs of the Region, which are in nine Sicilian provinces). In this way, besides the expenditure, the unitary planning action initially started with the Guidelines has also been decentralized. The Superintendence have just started the process of elaboration of the specific area landscape plans referring to their competence territories in a not homogeneous way, concerning the scale of representation, methodology, analytical and design contents. In fact, in the drafting of these plans, it has been found a weak technical coordination between Office of the Plan and Superintendence. In the absence of such coordination, the drafting of the specific landscape area plans has lost unity of contents and method (Costantino, 2009).

Finally, other critical aspects of the landscape area plans concern the excessive flattening on the binding dimension and the weakness of the planning component, as well as the weakness or lack of the agreement with local actors and interested people which in most cases has been just started. This lack or weakness of comparison with local communities is the further confirmation, that in the experience of the specific landscape area plans, is evidently prevailed the technocratic spirit referred to the bureaucratic fulfillment of a duty, rather than the spirit of sharing aimed to an effective action of the landscape protection.

2. The 8 Specific Area Landscape Plan (Messina) and the “Nebrodi, Open City” Municipalities’ Network

The Nebrodi Mountains are a mountain range which runs along the north east of Sicily. They arrange the Sicilian Apennines with the Madonie and the Peloritani. Since 1993, large areas of the Nebrodi Mountains have been established as Regional Park. The park covers 856.87 km². It runs along many municipalities

in the mountains and is one of the largest protected areas in Sicily.

The Nebrodi Mountains fall within the categories of landscape heritage as defined in chapter II of the *Code of the Cultural Heritage and Landscape*. Particularly, it deals with «properties that have substantial natural beauty features» (Art. 136.1.a), of the «scenic beauties regarded as paintings as well as those points of view or public accessible belvedere from which we enjoy the scenery of those beauties» (Art.136.1.d), and the “protected areas by law” (Art.142). Particularly, the territory of the Nebrodi Mountains falls within the 8 special area Landscape Plan, one of the 18 areas identified by the Guidelines of the Regional Landscape Plan for the elaboration of the landscape plans. The Plan, which was drawn up in accordance with the Art.135.2, «defines (...) the interventions compatible with the landscape values, the recovery actions, and properties redevelopment and the areas subjected to the protection and enhancement of the landscape, even in relation to the prospects of sustainable development».

The Sicilian Region is currently undertaken in the final stage of the drafting of these landscape plans. In particular, the area of the Nebrodi Mountains (8 Specific Area Landscape Plan)³ the landscape plan has been drafted by the Superintendence of Messina, a decentralized body of the Region, responsible for the drawing up of the plans. The process of the Plan approval foresees a phase of “institutional concertation” towards the end of the plan elaboration which only formally allows to the local communities to exchange views about the forecasts of a predefined and drawn up plan. This does not allow to the local communities to intervene personally in the elaboration of the Plan.

The path of “institutional concertation” started by the Superintendence of Messina is divided into several regional meetings from February to December 2012.

During these meetings, the local communities, have long been held in the “Nebrodi, Open City” Municipalities’ Network⁴ and have decided to redefine their

role in the revised landscape plan because of the serious inconsistencies and weaknesses found in the requirements of the plan⁵.

The "Nebrodi, Open City" Municipalities' Network within its institutive Convention (2010) therefore recognizes the active role of local communities in the outline of territorial development strategies in relation to the objectives of protection and preservation of the environment and landscape (Art. 1 «to harmonize the activities of landscape protection with the urbanization and management of the territory»).

To this end, the Network has set up a "partecipative process" for the involvement of the local communities in the elaboration of the Landscape Plan. Within such a path, a Technical Table has been formally established for the *Remarks to the Landscape Plan* and drafted a document of the Municipalities of the "Nebrodi, Open City" Network to participate to the process of formation of the 8 Specific Area Landscape Plan. This document led to the suspension and subsequent revision of the Plan because of the significance of the undertaken remarks.

3. Purposes and objectives of the "partecipative process"

Referring to the above mentioned premises, compared to the contents of the specific area

8 of the landscape Plan, the partecipative process for the critical review of the Plan has been aimed at a more consistent and effective action to enhance the landscape, through the definition of shared objectives and strategic actions share in terms of recognition and enhancement of the landscape of the Nebrodi Mountains. Therefore, the activated partecipative process has been directed to provide a concrete substance and constructive response to the principle of the "institutional concertation" (Art. 144 of the *Code of the Cultural Heritage and Landscape*, Legislative Decree No. 42/04), through the direct involvement of local communities for the effective application of the principles of cooperation, subsidiarity, appropriateness and differentiation, often simply stated.

Such a path led to the construction of an interpretative framework of remarks submitted by the municipalities of the "Nebrodi, Open City" Network, delivered and discussed with the Superintendence of Messina and the Sicilian Region.

Regarding this, we have indeed detected obvious contrasts between the levels of protection foreseen by the Plan (protection levels 1, 2 and 3)¹ and the needs of socio-economic development of the territory, previously planned by the provincial, territorial planning, the planning of the Nebrodi Park and the municipal urban planning; but also contrasts with the physical

3) The 8 Specific Area Landscape Plan affected by the landscape plan includes the following municipalities: Acquedolci, Alcara li Fusi, Capizzi, Capo d'Orlando, Capri Leone, Caronia, Castel di Lucio, Castell'Umberto, Cesarò, Floresta, Frazzanò, Galati Mamertino, Longi, Militello Rosmarino, Mirto, Mistretta, Motta d'Affermo, Naso, Pettineo, Raccuja, Reitano, San Fratello, San Marco d'Alunzio, San Salvatore di Fitalia, San Teodoro, Santa Domenica Vittoria, Sant'Agata di Militello, Santo Stefano di Camastra,

Sinagra, Torrenova, Tortorici, Tusa, Ucria.

4) The "Nebrodi, Open City" Network includes the following Municipalities: Acquedolci, Alcara Li Fusi, Brolo, Capizzi, Capo d'Orlando, Capri Leone, Caronia, Castel di Lucio, Castell'Umberto, Cerami, Cesarò, Ficarra, Floresta, Frazzanò, Galati Mamertino, Gioiosa Marea, Longi, Maniace, Militello Rosmarino, Mirto, Mistretta, Motta d'Affermo, Naso, Pettineo, Piraino, Raccuja, Reitano, San Fratello, San Marco d'Alunzio, San Salvatore di

Fitalia, San Teodoro, Sant'Agata di Militello, Sant'Angelo di Brolo, Santa Domenica Vittoria, Santo Stefano di Camastra, Sinagra, Torrenova, Tortorici, Troina, Tusa, Ucria.

5) The Network has already started before projects and initiatives that take adequately into consideration the landscape safeguard of Nebrodi Mountains, giving identity value. These measures have been introduced in the 2007 Strategic Plan.

6) The landscape Plan includes 3 levels of safeguard with different intensity of restriction, from the

features of the places and their “image” shared by the local communities.

The methodological path is largely divided into the following activities:

1. Coordination among the local institutions within the Territorial Council (Board) of the “Nebrodi, Open City” Network.
2. Structuring of a technical form for the identification of the Landscape Plan remarks.
3. Technical support for the local authorities in order to draft the technical form.
4. Evaluation and selection of the remarks.
5. Cataloguing and systematization of the remarks.
6. Preparation of the summary document.
7. Examination and adoption of the document by the Territorial Council of the Network.
8. An open meeting with the officials and technicians of the Sicilian Region and the Superintendence of Messina (December 2012).

The technical form for the plan remarks has been designed as a descriptive tool which, in a simple and communicative way, allowed to the individual Institutions to identify immediately and adequately motivate the remarks for the Plan. It was addressed to the active involvement of the Local Authorities, which, in this way, could effectively talk with the authors of the Plan and join directly in the construction of the landscape quality of their living environments, identifying forms of degradation, proposing safeguard and protection actions, integrated to actions for sustainable development. The technical form deals with all the useful information for the localization of the remarked areas and the identification of the causes that drive to it.

4. Remarks to the Landscape Plan

The activated participative process enabled for the revision of the 8 specific Landscape area Plan of the province of Messina has drawn the

participation of a large number of municipalities which have submitted several technical forms dealing with the plan remarks. The remarks contained in the technical forms are the outcome of a comparison enabled within the individual municipalities, amongst the administrators, municipal technicians and the community of citizens and residents. The technical forms submitted by the municipalities of the “Nebrodi, Open City” Network are represented synthetically in Table 1.

In relation to the exhibited technical forms, the highlights remarks have been divided according to the following categories:

A. Remarks related to material or interpretative errors

It is a type of evaluation largely related to the lack of basic cartographic update used by the Plan. This type of evaluation is structured as follows:

A. 1 Placing of symbols in an area which does not correspond to the actual location of the asset.

A. 2 Placing of the level of protection in an asset which is not subjected to protection.

A. 3 Not-represented assets.

B. Remarks relating to inconsistencies with the existing planning tools

It is a widespread presence of protective layers on areas already targeted to specific functions (not just the areas A and B) by the existing planning tools.

C. Remarks relating to inconsistencies with other plans and ongoing programs

It is about the presence of protective levels on areas addressed to specific functions by other planning and scheduling tools of supra-municipal level too.

D. Remarks relating to the boundary delimitation of the old town centers

This is the boundary delimitation of old town centers covering more extensive areas than those which have the feature and nature of the old town centre, and which also includes

smallest one (level 1), which be authorized by the allowed any territory/landscape however provides that the territory/ Superintendence, to the strictest transformation. landscape transformations have to one (level 3) in which has not

urban networks of recent construction and large portions of suburban territory.

The remarks contained in the final Document delivered to the Sicilian Region are the result of a further level of verification carried out in terms of comparison, on the one hand, with the reality of the territory and, on the other hand, with the legislation and the existing planning and scheduling tools in the concerning territorial context.

	Municipality	Number of Technical Forms
1	Acquedolci	12
2	Alcara Li Fusi	10
3	Capizzi	10
4	Capo d'Orlando	3
5	Capri Leone	2
6	Caronia	19
7	Castel di Lucio	
8	Castell'Umberto	2
9	Cesarò	
10	Floresta	
11	Frazzanò	
12	Galati Mamertino	10
13	Longi	14
14	Militello Rosmarino	6
15	Mirto	1
16	Mistretta	1
17	Motta d'Affermo	1
18	Naso	6
19	Pettineo	4
20	Raccuja	3
21	Reitano	2
22	San Fratello	4
23	San Marco d'Alunzio	1
24	San Salvatore di Fitalia	
25	San Teodoro	
26	Santa Domenica Vittoria	1
27	Sant'Agata di Militello	10
28	Santo Stefano di Camastra	12
29	Sinagra	8
30	Torrenova	4
31	Tortorici	11
32	Tusa	1
33	Ucria	2

Source: Elaboration of the Autor on November, 2012

Tab.1
Overall synoptic overview of the evaluation technical forms of the Landscape Plan presented by the municipalities of "Nebrodi, Open City" Network

5. Conclusions

In relation to the formal and substantial contents of the Landscape Plan, the remarks submitted have helped to define broad and/or methodological issues that have led to a deep questioning of the Plan. This led to its suspension (the Plan should be approved definitively by 2012) due to the necessary assessment of the submitted remarks.

The "partecipative process" started by the "Nebrodi, Open City" Municipalities' Network outlined a possible innovative approach in the shared building process of the territorial protection and landscape petitions in a territorial text generally far apart compared to participation in planning processes. The aim was not to refuse the prescriptions of the Landscape Plan, but rather to help, in the form of a real agreement, its definition in a way as much coherent as possible, with the idea of landscape where the local communities (through not only planning tools) are holders, building together, while respecting their respective competences, the most appropriate protection model.

Following the approval of the Plan, it will get a more effective implementation of its forecasts, with the support not only of the Local Authorities, but of the whole community of the Nebrodi, which can share the reasons, effects and benefits.

In fact, helping to define and sharing the protection levels, the local communities personally undertake to preserve this landscape.

In this way the Landscape Plan can become part of a unitary planning process through collaborative relationships and understandings between Local Authorities and local communities, allowing and bringing in a single framework, the multiplicity of tools which rule different, often overlapping and controversial interests.

Through this partecipative process, it was meant, therefore, to contribute to the definition of a well structured Landscape Plan around high levels of sustainability, to integrate territorial and socio-economic development

and, in this way, to generate a shared project for the landscape, successful outcome between local communities and landscape.



Sommario

Il paesaggio viene definito dalla Convenzione Europea del Paesaggio (Firenze, 2000) come una porzione di territorio così come è percepita dalle popolazioni, il cui carattere deriva dall'azione di fattori naturali e/o umani e dalle loro interrelazioni e la cui tutela va integrata nelle politiche urbanistiche e di pianificazione del territorio. Tuttavia, i piani paesaggistici, strumenti di tutela del paesaggio che oggi sono attivi in molti dei paesi europei (in particolare in Italia) assumono quasi sempre valore specialistico, imponendosi gerarchicamente sugli altri strumenti di pianificazione e sottraendosi spesso al processo di condivisione democratica con le comunità locali. Tale condizione determina gravi ricadute sull'efficacia delle azioni di tutela del paesaggio. A partire da tali premesse, attraverso l'esperienza del piano paesaggistico dei Monti Nebrodi in Sicilia, il presente contributo mostra come è possibile attivare un percorso di partecipazione delle comunità locali, non previsto dalla normativa vigente, al processo di elaborazione del piano, in un contesto territoriale tradizionalmente non favorevole alle pratiche partecipative.

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