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The landscape plan of the Tuscany Region: an occasion to enhance the knowledge and the place awareness

Questa è la Versione finale referata (Post print/Accepted manuscript) della seguente pubblicazione:

Original Citation:

The landscape plan of the Tuscany Region: an occasion to enhance the knowledge and the place awareness / D.POLI. - ELETTRONICO. - (2013), pp. 51-53.

Availability:

This version is available at: 2158/931357 since:

Publisher:

Uniscape

Terms of use:

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I QUADERNI DI CAREGGI

Issue 05

No. 05

5 / 2013

Seminar on Landscape Observatories in Europe from the ELC Recommendations to Local Initiatives

Coordinators and Guest Editors: Roberto Gambino (Politecnico di Torino) - Claudia Cassatella (Politecnico di Torino)

Marco Devecchi (University of Torino) - Federica Larcher (University of Torino)

Scientific Committee Members: Massimo Morisi (Authority in charge of communication for the landscape plan of the Tuscany Region)

Daniela Poli (CIST Inter-University Center of Territorial Sciences) Mariella Zoppi (Università di Firenze)



ISSN 2281-3195

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Scientific Editor: Dr. Amy Strecker: amy.strecker@uniscape.eu

Graphic layout: Fabrizio Bagatti - Organisation: Tessa Goodman - UNISCAPE - info@uniscape.eu - www.uniscape.eu

vatory: I wish to highlight in particular amongst the actions currently undertaken – all part of the strategic objectives assigned to the structure and in particular of the “protection and quality of the landscape” of which I am in charge –, the research and case studies focussed on the issues of soil consumption, hydro geologic risk (with regard to the prevention and identification of strategies of intervention compatible with landscape values), the definition of “guide-lines” or “good practices” for the right landscape integration of large infrastructures (networks), and the verification of regional law concerning land use according to the orientations and provisions of the Code.

In conclusion, it is relevant to take into account what emerges from the minutes of the meetings that took place in 2009, which record a richness of debate and also a certain difficulty in establishing the details of the organisation and functions of the body perhaps due to its excessive range of tasks.

It would appear that it is possible to conclude,

in my opinion, that there is the opportunity, in coinciding with the hopefully imminent reactivation of the Observatory, to rethink its tasks – an action probably consequent to its activation. This new organisation should be accompanied by an operative cut that strengthens the monitoring and verification activities, and orientates these towards the outcomes of landscape planning and some crucial aspects related to it that are evident (for example the procedures of adjustment of spatial planning tools in the landscape plan): a reinforcement which seems more necessary than in the past because of the state of advancement of some – important – new generation plans and their forthcoming approval. This would allow the evaluation of how and to what extent they can assure effectively the “government” of territorial transformations and the achievement of the conservation and quality aims established; all of this, obviously, carried out in the context of maximum coordination possible with the regional Observatories.

The Landscape Plan of the Tuscany Region: an Occasion to Enhance the Knowledge and Awareness of Place

Daniela Poli

CIST - Centro Interuniversitario di Scienze del territorio - University of Florence. Email: daniela.poli@unifi.it

Keywords

Landscape, planning, landscape regional plan, structural approach, heritage, normative framework.

Introduction

The emergence of participatory mechanisms and the relevance of social perception in the process of territorial government (quality objectives, the territorial statute, structural variants etc.), alongside the typological extension of the protection and promotion of landscape, produced a sudden

renewal of planning tools. The planning discipline has also widened its remit with procedures and instruments that fostered a new form of democracy and inclusive planning (at least in its intention), increasingly open to social participation and to safeguarding the constitutive characteristics of the territory and the landscape. New planning models include the interactive dimension which in turn generates objectives and actions. These new procedures have even managed to penetrate the normative realm, traditionally the exclusive domain of technical expertise. In this contribution, I will try to explain the path leading to a definition of the Tuscan landscape present in regulations and standards.

1. Structural invariants

The structure of the new landscape plan of the Tuscany Region contains rules both at regional

and at local level.¹ Apart from its rich cognitive description, the plan identifies in the “Structural Invariants” the heart of the normative and regulatory mechanism. The structural invariants are present at the regional level and are elaborated at the local level. The plan identifies four types of invariants with landscape value: hydro-geomorphological characteristics of watersheds and morphogenetic systems; ecosystem characteristics of the landscape; polycentric characteristics of urban settlement systems and infrastructure; and morphotypological and functional characteristics of the agri-environmental systems of rural landscapes.

“The description of the structural invariants defines the state of preservation and / or crisis of the heritage, the rules and the norms that guarantee its safeguarding and reproduction in the face of present and future transformations of the territory, its potential uses and performance as a resource. The identification, description and representation of structural invariants involves the whole region, including its critical, degraded and de-contextualised parts, and not just excellent examples of monuments, settlements, nature and landscape; it also covers cultural and landscape heritage, as specific components of the structural invariants which make the region.”²

The aim of the four invariants is connected to the local level in three closely related synthetic maps: 1. The territorial and landscape heritage, which synthesise the content of the four structural descriptions and the relationships between them; 2. the heritage values and elements; map of critical issues that synthesises the description of the dynamics of transformation creating negative impacts on the territory and related problems; and finally 3. Landscape quality objectives which summarize and integrate the policy oriented goals emerging from the four structural invariants. The objectives are to support the dynamics of transformation, the course of action in response to the various weaknesses identified and the general strategy of protection and potential use, whether ecological, economic or pro-

ductive. The sequence of the three maps frames the heritage content of the territorial structure; it defines its state of health and identifies strategies to open up a new phase of coherent valorisation of the territory. The maps are drawn using a visual repertoire of simple and complex graphics whose inter-linkage as in storytelling, illustrating the consistency of heritage, the dynamics of change and the actions to be undertaken according to the quality objectives.

2. Heritage, weaknesses, landscape quality objectives

The heritage description shows the complexity of the structure and the co-evolutionary interaction that produced the territory and its highly complex landscapes. The interwoven system of graphic and pictorial signs helps to appraise which eco-systemic services the landscape could deliver; it should intrigue the observer and lead him/her to re-read the details and appreciate the maps as well as the individual variants therein. In the maps displaying critical areas, sketches show the dynamics, the pressures and the elements of degradation or threat. The map containing objectives is selective and partial, as it shows those heritage elements and portions of the territory treated as a priority for the resolution of critical issues. The map implies an idea of the overall project, which is not a simple resolution of risk factors or impacts, but which instead brings into play the desired dynamics: light arrows cross the territorial system indicating the need for relieving polarised areas (costs, plains, valleys) for the benefit of inland areas in order to reactivate carefully balanced relationships. The river basins regain colour and depth and go back to being the centre of a multipurpose landscape and the ecological backbone of the whole system; the settlement system is represented as a polycentric urban network, fitting in with the need for re qualifying the urban fringe; in the hilly and mountainous areas of Tuscany the central objective is new sustainable development, according

to multi-productive farming methods, of many abandoned agricultural areas.

3. Territorial figures and standards

To give more clarity to the proposed actions and communicate them in as clear a manner possible, we use a more detailed imagined standard: the graphic representation of one or more of the actions in a defined territorial context. The so-called ‘envisaged standard’ is an aid for the observer to localise the action in the territory and place him/herself mentally in a place. The standard is located on a qualitative representation, a ‘bird’s eye’ view, able to communicate the structure, form, and image of the territory. The figure represents the minimum territorial unit in the organization of the landscape context. It emerges in a clear and unambiguous way the form in which the four structural variants are reported in space and how they are uniquely combined, defining a particular territorial identity.

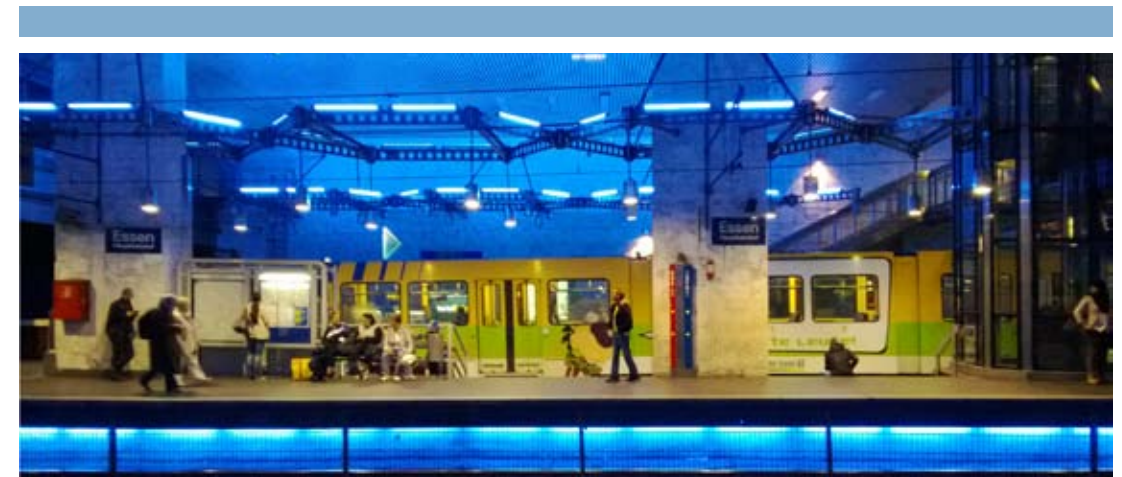
Within this complex representation the areas concerned are located by the actions for obtaining quality objectives. One of these contexts was graphically enlarged and used as an example of good practice to adopt in similar situations. Even in this case the reconfiguration is carried

out using a design with colours that enables the observer to grasp the sense of what normative result is being communicated by words. The colouring of the gap between the two urbanised areas simulates a presence of agriculture in the area between Calenzano and Florence, and adds a deep meaning to the definition: “to restore the rural continuity between the Travalle Park and Piana Park”. The image creates a reality of what the words merely allude to. The detailed ‘envisaged standard’ helps possible technical users (technical officers of local or regional bodies) or ordinary users (citizens, student, stakeholders, environmental activists, entrepreneurs, etc.) to better understand the treatment of that portion of the territory, placing it in its structural dimension and in relation to the wider context.

Notes

¹ 2011 saw the activation of the process of landscape integration in the PIT – which is already in the course of completion. Tuscany, as other Italian regions, has chosen to integrate the landscape plan into the territorial plan. The regional landscape plan is compiled by the Tuscany Region and the Inter-University Centre of Territorial Sciences (Cist), made up of the five Tuscan universities (Florence, Pisa, Siena, Superior Normal School and Sant’Anna School).

² Magnaghi A. (2012), “Proposte per la ridefinizione delle invarianti strutturali regionali”, in Poli D. (ed.), *Regole e progetti per il paesaggio. Verso il nuovo piano paesaggistico della Toscana*, Florence University Press.



I. Fleishe, *Underground Landscape*, Fourth Edition Peoples Landscapes (detail).