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Full reference:

Guarino R., Menegoni P., Pignatti S., Tulumello S. (2015), “A territorial contradiction”, in Gambino R., Peano A. (eds.), *Nature policies and landscape policies. Towards an alliance*, Cham: Springer-Verlag, 69-76. Doi: [10.1007/978-3-319-05410-0_7](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-05410-0_7).

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A TERRITORIAL CONTRADICTION

Spatial planning and environmental restoration are essential corollaries to the management of protected natural areas, however, without a sound awareness of the evolutionary consistency of biocoenoses, the harmonious integration between human activities and ecosystem preservation remains an unattainable utopia. The theorization of a balanced welfare, inspired by the universal tendency of ecosystems to reach a steady state, has to go along with the defection from any economic greed.

Keywords: Parks, protected areas, sustainability, spatial planning, human behaviour.

The ever increasing importance given to nature conservation in Europe in recent decades, has brought to the setting up of a system of protected natural areas extended to 18% of the EU territory, mostly thanks to the transposition and implementation of Directives 79/409/EEC and 92/43 EEC (http://ec.europa.eu/environment/nature/index_en.htm; <http://natura2000.eea.europa.eu/>).

Frequently, European protected areas have limited extension and are close to densely populated areas characterized by pervasive urbanization and infrastructures. What is under protection in Europe is not a primordial nature, of which very few traces remain, but the still surviving elements of a traditional cultural landscape, rich in natural features of which the establishment of protected areas try to salvage the most significant relicts.

The new EU policies consider natural areas as a resource to be managed through measures and initiatives aiming not only to preserve biodiversity, but also to meet the demands of local people, in order to ensure the best compromise between ecosystem integrity and social-economic development (Petermann & Ssymank 2007). The new managerial paradigm is therefore based on a collaborative approach, agreed and shared by local communities along with all the other stakeholders.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to find an optimal balance in the expectations of those who propose, who use and who manage protected areas. The risk is to invest resources in protecting and perpetuating what we like most, making a sort of "large-scale gardening" - gardening at the scale of landscapes - often at odds with all natural processes and dynamics, such as the shrub encroachment in abandoned rangelands, a frequently observed natural process throughout Europe, that is causing the rarefaction of orchids very dear to man.

As often happens, it is necessary to establish priorities and to make choices. Nonetheless about biodiversity, real and perceived, as well as about advisability and effectiveness of actions taken to protect it, there is a great variety of opinions that makes difficult the implementation of programs and the evaluation of results, also due to some confusion of roles between ecologists and planners (Guarino *et al.*, 2011).

Knowledge about vegetation, ecoregions and ecosystem relationships is an essential element in planning and land management (Pignatti, 1994, 1995; Blasi & Paoletta, 1997; Biondi, 2007). It is necessary to understand where and, more importantly, how much it costs (in terms of "environmental sustainability") to invest energy and resources to counter the natural dynamics.

It is not always given due importance to this knowledge base and it often happens that, in choosing the management strategies, the impact on employment of the 'interventionist' approach is preferred without considering that nature, in order to remain such, should not be excessively subject to the deterministic control by man.

However, outside protected areas, weeding of roadsides and cultivations is practiced without hesitation; the continuity between trophic ecosystems and agro-systems is compromised in order to promote all that is functional to the production system of the global market. Not even the management and conservation of protected areas escape the market rules and require, thus, the availability of resources to invest. This brings us to the obvious contradiction that to safeguard very limited portions of the planet, the remaining areas are exploited with increasing intensity (Guarino & Pignatti 2010).

As previously mentioned, European protected areas have a strongly "urban" character, this stimulates a constant search for innovative solutions in the management of such complex areas. The will to protect not mediated by a thorough and dispassionate understanding of ecosystems can easily run into errors, or end up to mainly accommodate the requests of those who look at nature protection primarily in an economic-productive way, demanding guarantees, benefits and services.

Protected areas or thematic parks?

As we have seen, the protection of nature in Europe is inextricably linked to the preservation of surviving fragments of our collective past, an ancestry from which we freed thanks to the recent technological and socio-economic development. Like the historical city centres, which are protected and restored to last over time, even the protected areas are often subject to maintenance and conservative restoration.

Significant differences exist between pre- and post-industrial cities, based on the juxtaposition city / nature and on the concept of the urbanized area itself. In the past, cities were a closed entity opposed to the *res nullius* of the outer territory (Salzano, 1998).

When cities were surrounded by walls, the unknown, the unknowable, the unpredictable were kept outside. In more recent times, urban expansion and population growth have gradually blurred the city boundaries, until, in the post-industrial urban sprawl, the *res nullius* has come to penetrate the city itself, along with a functional complexity that has made us accustomed to use, but not to know, and much less to control, many items and spaces of our daily lives.

While in the past we were frightened by what was outside the city, currently it is the specialization - and functional segregation - of the modern urban space that intimidates us (Ellin, 1996): a progressive occupation of physical space, unable to build city. Among the areas that -at least in appearance- are still relatively immune to such contamination, there are the natural spaces, which can be seen as a belated acceptance of the devastation wrought by the territorial city: the wildlife reserves of modern Europe, however great, can be well interpreted as recreational appendages of urban spaces. They are used by most of the people to relax, to do a little exercise, to visit unusual places, to buy local products and to imagine how it was in the past.

Oddly, the establishment of protected natural areas, which occurred over the past two decades at an unprecedented rate, is contemporary to the need of creating "newly urban" spaces. Think of the *malls*, entities that assert itself as public venue similar to cities but without their flaws: safe, reassuring, with an easily recognizable spatial and functional organization. Consider the reaction of the urban centers to the processes of *gentrification*, that replicate the characteristics of a mall through a "renewal" based on urban marketing and surveillance systems.

Sometimes, these spaces are built from scratch: City Walk is a pedestrian and commercial area built in the '90s in Los Angeles, "an urban area painstakingly reproduced (even to the extreme of wedging candy wrappers into the pavement [...]) and idealized because it wants to be the best essence of the city, completely free from the violence of Los Angeles (Codeluppi, 2000).

In other cases, are the historical centres to be modified according to profit-oriented models. Thus, many Italian towns have seen cleared their social fabric, replaced by a space tailored to tourism requirements. Connected to these processes is the falsification of historical spaces, pushed towards aesthetic stereotypes consistent with their commercial role. It is an example -perhaps unintended- the PPE (Detailed Executive Plan) for the historic centre of Palermo released in 1989, which, in reaction to some types of urban speculation, requires the accurate reconstruction of entire blocks and is populating the city of architectures that are historically fake like the Palace of the Grand Chancellor in the homonymous square (Fig 1), which seems a restoration but it is an almost entirely new building.

Even more complex is the situation of Venice: the city was not developed "against" the surrounding environment, which for a millennium has been maintained as a necessary enclosure for the city, and provided food resources (fisheries) and safety from external attacks. Between the city and the lagoon has remained an interactive relationship (just think of the importance of tides) that man has changed over the centuries with the diverting of rivers flowing into the lagoon and the consolidation of the Lidos. This has allowed the development of Venice as a political and commercial centre, the development of the first industrial complex (the Arsenal) and a thriving culture. Over the past two centuries, the city has lost these features and in recent years much of the population has migrated to the mainland, while the lagoon has been progressively depleted by erosion and pollution. In this way, the old balance between the town and the lagoon is lost: both are now (for various reasons) protected areas, but the cultural and commercial meaning of the first, and the natural one of the second are being upset.

The metaphor we have built seems to reveal a sad fate: protected areas, whether they are natural parks, historical centres or quaint villages, are pushed -unknowingly?- toward a "productive" function: the object to be protected becomes a valuable frame within which to develop employment and investment, tourism and territorial marketing. In this context, visitors become users/consumers: they usually reserve to the frame a rather superficial aesthetic/contemplative evaluation and assess their experience mainly on the quality of services offered by the administrators. «This new realm is a city of simulations, television city, the city as a theme park» (Sorkin, 1992).

The "Sanctuary" (in russian: Zapovednik) is an exception to this general trend and, as a natural environment protected *erga omnes* should be considered a positive example, although elitist and expensive, because it requires a difficult management (control of herbivores, biodiversity monitoring...), which often clashes with the reluctance of administrators and public opinion to accept the non-usability of areas that, to remain such, require maintenance patrolling and monitoring costs (Sessions, 1995; Boreiko *et al.*, 2013).

Pandemic park foundations

...So many parks have been recently founded all over the world! Some example are: national-, regional-, pelagic-, river-, mountain-, valley-, wildlife-, urban-, public-, cultural-, school-, college-, music-, literary-, research-, technological-, archaeological-, Jurassic-, safari-, amusement-, recreational-, commercial-, private-, pocket-, wind-, solar-, car- ...and even sushi-park!
Areas as diverse, they share an implicit "need" for protection, fence, boundary, sectoriality.

According to Diez (1853), the term "park" derives from the Latin word *parcere* (i.e. to impede): "the place where wild animals of every kind are locked up, in order to take delight in hunting at any time". According to others, the term derives from the ancient German word *berkan* (modern: *bergen*): to cover, to save, to defend. In fact, the word *perku* already existed in Akkadian, with the meaning of defense, frontier, barrage.

In connection with these concepts is the root "pork" (in Latin: *porcus*), originally indicating the enclosure, the courtyard where the domestic pig (in Latin: *sus*) was kept and later designating the beast itself. The *porcus* stands clearly out from *aper* (i.e. the wild boar), which is the same beast but lives in open spaces, in freedom.

Our history of supporters or detractors of parks is largely based on the metaphorical contrast between a pig living in a closed, fenced and protected place, and a wild boar routing in the forest without supervision. The pig, symbol of the rational use of animal breeding, has originated from the clever domestication of a wild boar. Similarly, the Park, a protected place, is the outcome of a metaphorical domestication of Dante's forest "savage, rough, and stern / which in the very thought renews the fear" (<http://www.worldofdante.org>). The pristine nature, reduced to a paltry fragments, does not more induces awe but inspires a protective instinct.

In the modern city, men undergo an inexorable fascination towards nature, and the greater the fascination the stronger the process of alienation against it. The Italian writer Calvino (1963) has masterfully represented such fascination in the short stories of Marcovaldo: " The Marcovaldo's love for nature can only be felt by a city man (...) Dad -the children said- are the cows like trams? Do they make stops? Where is the terminus of the cows?"

Towards a participated landscape

Beauty and harmony of nature, together with its efficiency, have inspired most of speculative thinking and art forms that have marked the human history. Human nature and its technical and cultural expressions mirror the complexity of the phenomenon of life. Through the centuries, rural communities have managed their environment and farmed the land in their own natural way, creating a rich diversity of landscapes, choral representation of historical identity of the territory and cultural human heritage (FIG 2). We now tend to recognize in that model of development the precursor of "sustainability".

In the past, even the human welfare was associated with a balanced and durable state of satisfaction, inspired to the ecological concept of *climax*. The *ἀταραξία* of the Greeks, the *otium* of the Latins are expressions of a pleasure to be enjoyed noting wisely the satisfaction not of one's own desires, but of his own needs.

Modern man has redefined the perception of welfare and simplified its semantic breadth: all parameters are set on the purchasing power of goods, products and services, that in many cases are necessary just because they are depicted as such by the new global socio-economic order. Paradigm for this change is the gradual shift from the theorization of a balanced welfare, inspired by the universal tendency of ecosystems to reach a steady state, towards an incremental and bulimic welfare, no longer inspired by nature, but fuelled by its devastation. In doing so, the speculative power of analytical thinking has been equally simplified and increasingly bound to the binary logic of cost/benefit analyses (Menegoni et al. , 2011).

Cheap and pervasive information services broadcast this new concept of welfare, emphasizing in the popular imagination the gap between the "polluted" places of our everyday life and the "intact" places of protected areas.

To overcome this contradiction, it is necessary to design new logistic networks, integrated on a local scale. We urgently need a planning that links the man to his territory and not the restorer to his object. These aims are achievable only if we are able to put every single man in a new position of awareness and responsibility.

The spaces to be (re-) planned will no longer be, as they were in pre-industrial times, the result of unconscious, choral, attempts to best use land, resources and local materials. They will be, instead, the result of a planning well integrated to the social context and to the strategic sharing of ideals and models alternative to those of consumerism and of the global market. So, not the return to an edenic, pre-industrial world, but the evolution from a world centralized by the global economy towards a world where global technologies and knowledge will be used to boost local economies, to emphasize the local diversities and encourage the decongestion of the trade routes that underpin the current human habits, linked to products and services standardized on a national and, increasingly, continental scale. To do this, the planner can not ignore the political value of acting on behalf of an ethical necessity, imposed by the not sustainable environmental and social costs of current consumption patterns.

Under this perspective, even the " Sanctuary " takes on a new meaning: it does not only matter for the rarity or the particular aspect of species and vegetation layers, but also for its value as an ethical model: a physical space where an efficient and optimal balance is established between the external factors (climate and soil) and the local communities (bacteria, plants, animals), a living example of self-organized order, able to maintain and preserve in a steady state all the ecosystem functions which are needed also by the human species.

The tools to convey this message are the virtual channels of the web and the mass media, that the new planners should learn to use with skill at least equal to that of those who use them as catalysts of global consumption patterns.

The physical elements of the new landscapes will be much stronger the greater the number of people who believes in and supports a re- localization of consumption habits, and particularly of those related to the human nutrition. The new landscapes will be more durable the greater the number of people who will use their free time to set up the network of collaboration and proactive interaction that is functional to the development and maintenance of a participated, unmediated and alive cultural landscape (Guarino & Menegoni, 2010).

If most of us will keep on spending our free time in malls, spas and television, land protection in an integrated and systemic view risks being perceived as yet another action to share passively, to be supported by providing a small contribution money, without changing our habits too. In this way, we will not go very far.

The new way of planning should be social and territorial at the same time: if the aim is to promote, not just for aesthetic reasons, more sustainable landscapes we should be able to recognize in the parsimony of our ancestors the precursor of the moral and personal commitment of modern innovators. A parsimony no longer imposed, as in the past, by poverty and limited resources, but by the awareness of how gross -and inefficient from environmental and thermodynamic standpoint- is to consume products whose packaging and transport costs outweigh the production costs (Patel, 2009).

The challenge goes far beyond the ability to redesign the territory: it lies in making desirable a sober lifestyle, aware of the environmental consequences of all our actions; it lies in making choices oriented to the re-territorialisation, i.e. the downsizing and the localization of production districts, in close proximity to trading posts and disposal places; it lies in favouring the most direct relationship between production and consumption.

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