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**Living with a volcano:  
the real risk lies in not  
having planning  
perspective**

*Carlo Gasparri*

The relationship between planning an extensive area belonging to the commune and integrated planning as well as urban planning is an experience being lived out in the area around Mount Vesuvius and is having interesting repercussions on disciplinary innovation and on the content of the planning instruments used. In fact, transversal stimuli from other disciplinary approaches that affect urbanism and territorial planning, including closely related practical approaches, are an indispensable ingredient in the quality of descriptions and prefigurations as well as in effective decisions making in the management of complex processes. An effectiveness that is continuously discussed in a territory afflicted by a particular and to some extent embarrassing condition of overplanning, which in turn is the source of related conflict. Making the framework even more complex is the need to reconcile the extraordinary nature of a risk that requires demographic decrease and 'living whatever happens' at the foot of the volcano by concentrating on objectives of environmental and urban redevelopment as well as on processes of local development. This operation contains an apparent contradiction - 'if development is planned, why leave?' - which moreover makes it difficult to be persuasive in communications and so for the message to be understood.

*Structural components*

These design the fundamental armor and relationships in the Vesuvian territory and define the system of strong

irrenouncable values to be upheld since they are connected to the structural components in the territory and so to their evaluation and the prospect of being able to protect them. By not being distracted by 'invariables', the interpretation and improved understanding, which identify the territorial structural elements, are not neutral operations in any way, shape, or form, and neither are the objectives derived from the evaluation neutral, but rather they involve planning choices and evaluations. The structural components are therefore necessary in the definition of statutory and component rules and regulations for the Vesuvian territory that must be adopted by the development programs in the form of specific strategies and actions. However, at the same time the plans themselves result in tension between the degrees of freedom of those rules and regulations, through a circular process of progressive refinement, soliciting confirmation or reflection to be submitted for verification, collective sharing and formalization.

*Criticalities*

The theme of risk is historically one of the central questions in the Naples area and so has characterized plans, programs, and policies for decades. In addition to the volcanic danger of Vesuvius, account has been taken of the seismic activity and bradyseism, including the hydrological risk and the risk of accidents in the concentration of gas and petrochemical plants in the industrial area to the east. All these experiences highlight the problem that so many 'risks' cannot be confronted separately or sector by sector. An all inclusive global strategy is required using a multidisciplinary approach, involving simplification and

reduction of the existing overplanning, that is, able to rethink the entire metropolitan territory. The various types of criticality are identified by specific characteristic factors, each forming part of a specific sectorial framework whose interaction maps all areas at risk, highlighting those of greatest concentration that define the places where activating integrated programs is priority.

*Orientations*

Construction of interpretive frameworks, the recognition of the main territorial identity and the risks connected with it intersect in the multiplicity of local orientations, potential or consolidated realities, that is to say, socio-economic development is oriented towards integrated evaluation of the territorial resources. This area has a rich and complex framework composed of the naturally central Vesuvius, the fluvial Sarno park, the places of historical interest with a local identity, historic-cultural and tourist-religious attractions; the centrality of extensive spaces of renaturation, the agricultural landscapes and the seaside resorts for tourists, the managers of businesses of all kinds, the distribution centers, and the port poles: a framework that substantiates the duplicitous role and identity of this territory, forming an ineludable characteristic. The foundation of the interpretation has set the course of the planning project which has been maturing through recent years, i.e. the Plan for the Vesuvius National Park (PPNV) and the Strategic and Operational Plan in the 'Red Zone' of maximum risk (OSP), based on the triangle of strategies - projects - rules and regulations, supported by the irreplaceable role of evaluation in terms of the ability to apply the reference

values and fulfil the objectives in play, the reasons for the choices, and the margins of negotiability of these choices between the various actors.

*Strategic framework and global vision*

The need for a strategic reference framework for the PPNV was above all initially a prerequisite for formulating management policies capable of affecting areas outside its perimeter. This direction - which is also found in the OSP - has emerged as that required to promote and co-ordinate aims, objectives, and development programs based on widely held shared visions. In other words, planning has not only had to express the aims, needs, and objectives, but also direct these effectively, not only legally according to the regulations but above all by demonstrating the ability to orient the choices and behavior of all the actors involved by using concrete planning and projects to do this. The consolidated global strategic vision has defined a conceptual image that can be divided into three physical scenarios whose purpose is also to incubate local development. Firstly, the fertile slope with local identities and innovative agriculture that coincides with the northern side of the mountain, that is, of Mount Somma. Secondly, the dense fabric of excellence along the coastal strip that coincides with the coastal side of Vesuvius that is structured in a crowded network of places, many of which are particularly relevant centers. Thirdly, the great attraction of the Park and the star of the environmental directives, which are very closely connected to the strategic role the Vesuvius National Park is playing in the construction of a system of environmental, landscape, cultural,

functional, and economic relationships able to surround the protected area.

#### *Projects*

The presence of strategic projects performs several functions. Above all, projects 'harvested' in the territory are not all inclusive but partial and selective so that they identify the top priority conservation and transformation areas, and the system of relationships that structures and supports these areas, integrating and providing them with meaning. They do not have a prescriptive function but aim to concentrate public and private action on developments whose expectations and objectives coherently agree with the aims of the global strategic plan. However, these do not include the final designs but favor visual-verbal and narrative pictures, that is, capable of being verified and followed by further studies of the new areas in the urban and landscape plans.

The five large scale strategic projects identified in the PPNV favor evaluation of the historic-environmental transversality in order to rediscover, reinforce, and develop the main historical trends that the urbanization of recent decades has sacrificed in favor of ring developments. These actions are carried out under the aegis of the OSP in which the strategic projects identified also overlap into other territorial environments along the valley floor and the coastal strip.

Both the diffuse and targeted development programs refer to them, prioritizing those public developments that have an effect on the private sector through financial and fiscal incentives mainly connected with the regional programming in the 2007-2013 Strategic Community Framework.

#### *Regulations*

Naturally the contents of planning cannot substitute the irreplaceable function of regulation in protecting the sites, the resources, and the landscapes that motivated the very institution of the Vesuvius National Park.

Here it has a special meaning because rigorous defense against environmental uniformity in the Park needs to be reconciled with the very form that this protection takes in upholding the social, economic, cultural, and landscape specificity. In conclusion, the PPNV must not only express the rules and regulations required to protect the non negotiable or barely negotiable values, but also protect the rules and regulations so that interaction between the various actors is good.

Within this fabric, the structural framework of the Park has a central value that is based on the complex of regulations put in place to safeguard and evaluate those components that also have an interpretative function. In a dense and fertile multidimensional meaning, their identification is the definition of 'landscape unit', the result of a fertile convergence of various concurrent descriptive, interpretive, planning, and managerial applications, attempting to make good the deficiency of traditional zoning 'by level of protection'.

In one sense the structural framework of the PPNV and the provision of specific guide-projects considered priority, supported by a global strategic vision that also possesses oriented and selected functions, has in fact introduced articulation between the Structural and the Operational Plan. From this point of view, the resulting experience of the OSP can also be reread as an attempt to provide form and crystallize a concrete new

generation Operational Plan that provides a context in which to anchor both a strategic vision and a strong and previously consolidated structural framework.