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**Planning and evaluations**  
Anna Laura Palazzo

The aim of this paper is to verify if and to what extent, the 'environmental issue' and the principles of strategic action have led to reducing the gap between the rationality that has always influenced the discussions on territorial disciplines and the rationality that has inspired the path taken by the environmental sciences. In particular, I am proposing that this convergence between the two has come about on the basis of 'scenarios'.

1. It is now an established fact that the knowledge systems with an operative goal in planning activities can have features quite different to those linked to survey activities aimed at study and research. Thus, 'planning to act' practically must influence the selection and organization of the set of information needed as base materials (indicators, thematic maps, etc.). At the same time, we have witnessed a decline in such simple associations raising the need for 'pure knowledge' regarding neutral results and the need for a 'finalistic knowledge' with a presumed partial, hence arbitrary vision. Some consequences of this shift in thinking over the last years can be found in the acknowledgement of the non-linear behaviour of the actual processes due to a radical rethinking of the sequence *know-understand-judge-act* suggested by Giovanni Astengo in reference to 'comprehensive planning'. The concept of circularity (contemporaneity and recursiveness) between the processes aiming at gathering together existing knowledge, as well as, monitoring the present state, and those aimed at evaluating a supposed, tendential and desired future state, is now largely

shared, with its possible consequences on remodelling the specific aims of planning and the ways to achieve them. If it is true, that the recognition of the environmental thinking was crucial in renewing the plan paradigms, the circularity of the knowledge-action *ratio* looks carefully at the process and also the result, taking into account the shift from a substantive rationality, linked to ends-means-decisions thinking, to a procedural one, associated with the idea of the capability of the territory, where compatibility, not conformity, is the key word. Moreover, the renewed interest in feasibility studies exhibiting techniques in *ex ante* evaluation, seems, whether interpreted differently or not, to reaffirm this change. Today, the future of planning and that of evaluation, calling for 'environmental' and 'strategic' thinking, also supported by local governments, tend to be taken into account together. It is obvious that the prospect of a 'common path', without doubt more reasonable than a 'common destiny', can be none other than the result of dialectics between a strategy for the conservation/reproducibility of resources strongly conditioned by the environmental sciences (indicators of optimum and critical consumption of earth, air, water and energy, that determine the quantitative 'limit' to development), and the territorial strategy conditioned by the need to localize and qualify its aims and its field of activity. To accept this, we need only look at how the rationality regarding the environmental paradigm, supported by analytical mechanisms closely linked to the sector, results in being hardly reconcilable with the 'whole vision', synthetic, but also timeless, that traditionally supports territorial and

town-planning. In other words, if we look at the sequential formulation of the 'if...then' type that gives rise to both discourses, then the emphasis placed on the two terms of the hypothetical construction is different. In town-planning practice the stress is placed on the latter (the *then*, or rather the "desired future", as Luigi Mazza defined it), while the environmental sciences begin from the near future (the *if*), in progressive steps, following a course, also taking into account evaluations of possible alternatives.

2. Here, we come to the 'hitch' in the issue, i.e. the requirements and criteria to be adopted to guarantee an authentic and sustainable transformation, where the planning choices are called upon to confront the issues of 'safeguarding the natural, environmental and landscape values', 'improving the state of the environment' and 'securing' the territory. The 'thresholds of use' for the primary resources result in individuating the degrees of resource exploitation linked to the mainly quantitative indicators. In other words, a knowledge regarding environmental considerations, allowing for results being noted and mapped in their spatial configuration and distribution, is quite rare, and even if available, would be of questionable usefulness. Vice versa, the options concerning town-planning procedures are mainly linked to the need to 'localize' and 'qualify' the development forecasts. This is without taking into account that the consequences of the choices, not included in the prefiguration and therefore, not able to be hypothesized beforehand, can form interference factors that are not easy to interpret. These conditions of 'uncertainty', that, as we have seen are

unavoidable, have led to some innovative town-planning experiences taking advantage of precautionary formulations correlating properties and size, part of the environmental sciences body, to the expected territorial performance. The standard, obsolete in its traditional physiognomy, finds here a renewed *raison d'être* through an *ex ante* indication of the 'expected' performances regarding the environmental sustainability for an area transformed by town-planning, with, for example, the definition of parameters and indicators relevant to the consumption of environmental resources depending on the various town-planning uses and the possibility to establish the compensatory measures. In recent years, we have seen a move by the disciplinary culture towards more ambitious formulations that have adopted in an allusive 'scenario' dimension the interaction of the *if* and *then* jointly. The realistic path to take, other than a type of 'obligatory path' from a condition of 'imperfect' knowledge, seems to be that of selection and arrangement, within what is available of the different knowledge, of interpretive and synthetic frameworks, able to incorporate into the development scenarios (tendential and corrective) some opportunity and risk factors, adequately indicative (e.g. important and relevant) and possibly related to the environmental field.

3. With some simplifications, we could go over the causal chain that supports the logical framework and the arguments for the scenarios. Beginning from a hypothetical correlation between properties that describe the present state (from *if*), it takes on a future projection, or tendential scenario. At this point, the outlining of corrective measures raised by the

alternative future scenario (the *then*) looks again at the methodological moment of the *if*, imposing a change or break from the considered relationship, through appropriate policies. As we can see, the procedure is recursive and repetitive. Here we could see the relevance of the research, *I costi collettivi della città dispersa (The community costs for a scattered city)*, that studies the Milan and Brescia areas. Analytically, the research aims to measure the impact, i.e. "to objectively evaluate the significance, from a statistical and econometric aspect, of the hypothetical causal relationship". Thus, the hypothesis of an inverse relationship based on empirical observations between the residential density and use (quota) of private transport with the resulting procapita energy consumption must be verified. The *procapita* energy consumption acceptably encompasses events linked to car use (noise, pollution, time lost in commuting, stress, isolation, etc). At the end of the work, the hypothesis of a corrective scenario means adopting more appropriate patterns of urbanisation, through solid promotional policies with less waste of resources. The research *Campagne urbane. Paesaggi in trasformazione nell'area romana (Urban countryside. Changing landscapes in the Rome area)*, that uses the Province of Rome as the study target, tried to use the so-called 'fragmentation' to describe the degree of abuse of land resources, ie. the processes of occlusion and breaking up of tracts of open territory, as has happened over the last 20 years, by the main transport routes and urbanization. I must stress that the interpretations of these images are not always shared. The diachronic survey leans towards an interpretation based on

'changing states' implying various patterns of 'migrations' of open territory from larger to smaller. The selection of optimal thresholds to define variability ranges is, therefore, a sensitive process. Moreover, the phenomenon has different meanings and explanations regarding the different sized thresholds and space and time distribution. Yet, it is easy to generalize that the considered processes, of which we can hypothesize spreading, according to the town-planning tools of municipalities included in this survey, conspire against the principle of ecological continuity. The 'insulating' of territorial resources is symptomatic of bio-diversity reduction, and indirectly provides the sign of a risk for the territory and the environment.

4. However, when all is said and done, the scenarios, that appear relevant to the different parameters and factors, where the sustainable traditions are placed alongside the more interesting 'thresholds of use' in the keystones of 'possibility' and 'regulation', lend themselves to the use of knowledge that bridges the territorial extensive property and the intensive property, and undermine a planning philosophy based on the 'certainty of the norm' and on the 'possibility of forecasting'. In this pragmatic version associated with a weak idea of sustainability, where time becomes historical and no longer metaphysical, the risks linked to the outcomes of an 'issue-based' culture are evident. However, the inherent opportunities become evident in the need to express the capability to respond to and change the non-standardized awareness-building of the public, involving, as well, an effective improvement in analytical and planning knowledge.