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The agricultural areas in the peri-urban Italian parks: toward new models?

Paola Branduini

The projects of valorisation of the agriculture in the Italian metropolitan areas have had above all origin inside the initiatives of the peri-urban parks. The debate on the role of the protected peri-urban and metropolitan areas has received vigour on the occasion of the second national Conference on the Protected Areas (Turin, October 2002), in which has been confirmed the idea that the peri-urban agricultural areas can have the task of approach between the rural and the urban culture, through new models of management. The Italian territory presents some experiences of plans already realized or in progress: among these some are meaningful for the expressed idea of peri-urban agriculture, for the actions in progress and for the role dressed again by the actors of these territories, stakeholders, citizens and farmers.

Which idea of agriculture in the peri-urban?

In the park of the Po torinese, belonging to the project of Green Crown, agriculture is considered as producer of environmental good and in order to that able to offer a landscape of quality. The landscape improvement can be solved by an enhancement of ecological network. In the metropolitan Park of the Hills in Naples the productive role of the peri-urban agriculture is explicable through the promotion of products of quality certified by the Park. The biological offer of the typical productions is also the proposal of the consortium RomaNatura in order to maintain the bond with the Roman countryside and the city.

In the North and West Parks of Milan, agriculture has passed through a trial of incessant erosion to the recognition of its role of filter, that has allowed her to maintain its physical space. In the South Park of Milan agriculture is still productive, but it should reinvent its relationship with the city through more direct links, allowing the citizen to recognise an agriculture producer of good not for distant markets but for a near clientele.

The actions on the territory

In the areas where a consolidated tourist tradition and of typical products is present, despite the fragmentation of the territories, actions improving tourist offer as paste of the peri-urban offer have been privileged (Rome, Naples); in the areas with more compromised agriculture and crushed from urbanization (Milan, Turin), environmental actions retraining to improve the landscape quality of the pedestrian mobility and cycle connections were engaged.

The public administration is the promoter of the initiatives, the manager of the protected area is the maker; it can coincide with the public administration or to be submitted to other subjects (CFU in Boscoincittà, Milan). Sometimes a global regional project is at the base of the operational choices of the park management (Turin, Naples).

The citizens' participation in the decisional trials is sometimes dominant, sometimes is still weakly. In the parks of the west Milan the involvement of the population has been decisive for the realization of some works, coordinated by the personnel of the park and completed by the volunteers: this has favoured the awareness and the education to the

green as public good. The involvement and responsibility of the farmers in the projects is not always clear. The farmers of Palermo-Ciaculli have initially had a key role in the process of construction of the park: at first informed, to get their assent, they have initially answered with distrust, egoism and closing of it, later with an wide adhesion, signed by a convention. In the metropolitan Park of the Hills in Naples the farmers were called to be the principal makers of the diversification of the agricultural activity through educational actions and direct sale.

Toward a city comprehending her agriculture

Recurrent idea is that the preservation of the landscape passes through the promotion of a biological agriculture, as guarantee of the traditions and the local identity: but also a modern agriculture can be witness of the vocation to the precursor of a territory. Introduced experiences testify of a certain fervour inside the peri-urban parks, even though with vigour and speed more or less sustained: above all an afterthought of the traditional models of the parks is noticed, toward more projects and less plans, coordinates rather than isolated actions, consultations and involvements of the population also in practical activity. This enthusiasm testifies of an European interest on this theme as the birth of the net ENUPA (European Network on Urban and Peri-urban Agriculture) and some ended INTERREG projects (Métropole Nature) or in progress (Extramet), as other experiences going ahead in the peri-urban territories not delimited by a protected area.