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Ecological network and plannig

Biancamaria Rizzo

The ecological network is the instrument ad hoc to reestablish virtuous relations between parts of the ecosystems, fragmented by process of territorial transformations.

The ecological network, born and developed inside ecological disciplines, is often adapted to territorial, environmental and landscape policies. The acquisition of the ecological network concept is a complex operation but also a challenge for the innovation proposed for disciplinary integration and planning policies.

An interesting relation can be created between ecological network and landscape planning. With *European landscape convention* and *Urbani code* both the category 'landscape' and the intervention area of the Landscape plan were extended even to the most degraded territorial zones, the same zones that need environmental rebalance, which is a priority of the ecological network. The ecological network recreates environmental relations through core areas, buffer zones, ecological corridors, stepping stones, greenways and blueways and so it reconstitutes a landscape identity, if possible in accord with the Landscape Plan that can recognizes "reuse and requalification interventions for deeply compromised areas".

A further operational declination of the ecological network, whose primary elements of connection are the rivers, could be an interaction with the Basin plan (l. 183/98), relaunching this fundamental instrument for rivers management and floods prevention.

With respect to Park structure plan (l. 394/91), the ecological network could

help to overcome the isolation of protected areas in regard to territorial context, creating relations with the less valuable neighbouring zones, that need an environmental rebalance.

Moreover the management of an ecological network has a confrontation with all evaluation instruments: Environmental impact evaluation, Incidence evaluation and strategic environmental evaluation. In particular, the ecological network can offer to the Strategic environmental evaluation (Direttiva 2001/42/Ce) an useful contribution, creating half period scenarios to wich refer for the ecosystem rebalance.

In effect the lack of a new landscape plan generation and the difficult start up of the basin plan and of the Strategic environmental evaluation, has had the consequence that the integration between ecological network and the planning instruments has been experimented mainly in the territorial plans.

The case studies that we present here are the experiences of the Province of Mantova, Bologna and Novara (Masuzzo T., Iorio L.). To complete the exposition, adding further elements of discussion, is the interesting didactic experiment done on the ecological network of the Provincia of Milano.

The hypothesis of the use of the ecological network as a support for the planning and management of the territory is the goal that foresee all the case studies. The project Life Econet, financed by the European union, tries to verify, among with the stakeholders of the Cheshire county (UK) and of the italian regions Abruzzo and Emilia-Romagna, the more useful ways to create natural habitats and their link with natural corridors, demonstrating the chance of using the ecological

network to develop a sustainable territorial planning and management. For this purpose each work group has the task to experiment a model that promotes the realization of a regional ecological network. The regional scale of intervention links this case with the Ecological network of the Regione Umbria (Reru), that has a cognitive and methodological character instead of operational. Referring to the construction of the analitical-informative framework is interesting the example of the Provincia of Mantova, that compile an Atlas of environmental informations to evaluate the environmental framework in order to construct the ecological network; the Atlas has been done individuating both the land-environmental values and the causes of disturb and of environmental crisis, relating them to the indications and the prescriptions of the actual planning.

The reference to the existing plans of the territory is a fundamental issue for the right construction of an ecological network that is really operational. From this point starts the experimentation done by the Province of Bologna that among the preliminar plans for the realization of the ecological network foresees the Plan of the actual law dispositions. In the example of the Provincia of Vercelli, with the construction of the ecological network is set a Planning network intended as an instrument of territorial planning, at the different scales of intervention, a sort of network, in fact, that underline the vocation of some areas to act a specific role inside the ecological network and can give specific instructions (e.g. laws, rules) for its management.

The insertion in the system of the actual planning and environmental laws is a

fundamental element in the construction normative system of the ecological network.

It is the case of the Province of Novara, where a deep attention is put for the construction of the rules of the ecological network called *Linee guida per l'attuazione* different for the various degrees of obligatoriness. Instructions and Directives intend to individue the characteristic of the plan and the territorial institutions involved.

The prescriptions are made for the immediate conservation of the network elements that are recognized by the Provincial plan. Also for the Province of Mantova, the Green regultions of the Ecological network completes the rules set by the Territorial plan.

The individuation of project themes, in the example of Mantova, is done starting from a deep study of the territory; every theme is assisted by a planning instructions that suggest the ways of intervention.

Instead the planning of the bassa val di Susa ecological network is based on a methodology of participation likewise Agenda XXI. In this example, the general instructions for realization of the ecological network are inserted inside an Action plans that can be implemented by discussions, transforming them into definitive plans and, finally, into realizations. These are only some points of reflection on ecological network theme. As it is possible to see, there are no fixed methods, prearranged scales of intervention and univocal institutional references to plan an ecological network, that is actually innovating the traditional instruments of planning, interacting with them in different ways and phases; from the study of the framework to the construction of environmental partecipated policies, to the definition of the interventions and to the

implementation of the rules for the realization.

It is evident that the model of the ecological network inside the plan is, up today, the most pursued, for its easier realization, through the adaptation and the forcing in an ecological key of the existing planning instruments. Harder, though more effective, could be a model of ecological network done through the plans, as to say an autonomous and transversal instrument that could interact, in a process of feedback, with the different levels and sectors of planning, defining itself as the unique reference methodological, cognitive, evaluational and operational. This transversal nature could be an element of complication, but at the same time it could represent a constant incentive for innovation and for the coherent speech between land governance instruments and the 'reasons of the environment'.