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Plurimondi

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Dealing with wicked environmental  
problems in urban and regional planning



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Press

This Issue entitled “Dealing with wicked environmental problems in urban and regional planning ” has been conceived for collecting a series of important topics included in current research interests and practical applications coming from young researchers regarding interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary works connected with social and environmental issues.

**Guest editors:** Giulia Motta Zanin & Stefania Santoro

**Year:** 2020

**Issue:** 19

**ISSN:** 1129-4469 - Online: 2420-921X

**Cover image:** "Troubles' shadows", by S. Santoro, November 2020

## **Landscape policies, urban and territorial planning to support SNSVS and SNAC**

Stefano Damiano\*, Marsia Marino\*\*

### **Abstract**

The article is part of the broader debate concerning the processes of transposition, on a local scale, of the national strategies of socio-economic and environmental interest.

Specifically, the focus will be on the integration of the objectives of two specific Strategies: National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change (hereinafter SNAC) and National Strategy for Sustainable Development (hereinafter SNSVS), in territorial government policies, and among territorial planning tools.

From a doctrinal point of view, these Strategies can be registered in the category of Soft Laws; this particular juridical “nature” involves some administrative weaknesses for which the SNAC and the SNSVS need tools and institutes dedicated to their transposition on a local scale.

Landscape, urban and territorial planning represent the suitable tools through which to implement the aims of these Strategies while favouring, at the same time, greater participation of local institutions in decision-making

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\*CURSA (University Consortium for Socio-economic and Environmental Research), Italy

\*\* Sapienza – University of Rome, PhD student at Department of Planning, Design, and Technology of Architecture, Italy

processes, in compliance with the principles of multilevel governance desired by the European Landscape Convention.

## **Keywords**

Sustainable Development; Climate Change; Landscape policies; Urban and territorial planning; Multilevel governance

## **Introduction**

The issues concerning a new global model of sustainable development and the adoption of measures to mitigate and adapt to climate change are now at the centre of the scientific and institutional debate at the international level.

Both the United Nations and the European institutions have put in place strategies and programs to achieve these objectives; the strategic framework is defined by the 2030 Agenda and by the documents drawn up by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

In the EU framework, the regulatory reference on the topic of sustainable development is COM-739 (European Commission, 2016) “Next steps for a sustainable European future. European action for sustainability”. However, as regards climate change, the legal framework is provided by COM-35 (European Commission, 2005) “Winning the Battle Against Global Climate Change” and in the subsequent COM-216 (European Commission, 2013) “The EU Strategy on adaptation to climate change”.

These programs and strategies define guidelines that require national and local implementation plans. Italy has both a

National Strategy for Sustainable Development (ME, 2017a) and a National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change (ME, 2017b) but the fundamental role in implementation is to be attributed to local institutions. This poses the need to put in place suitable tools - the responsibility of which is borne by territorial administrations - for the execution of the objectives set at the national level.

The principles and purposes set out in the SNSVS and in the SNAC are immediately related to issues related to territorial governance, landscape policies, and urban and territorial planning tools. Therefore, it is desirable to evaluate the functionality of these tools in achieving the set of the objectives.

Therefore, in this article, the authors intend to start a reflection on this theme, proceeding through a path of analysis that will investigate some specific aspects deemed exemplary of the key focus of the paper: the functionality of the Landscape Plan to provide, on a regional scale, some tools necessary for the implementation of the SNSVS; the role of urban planning in implementing the SNAC in relation to the issue of urban welfare and the resilience of urban contexts to the impacts of Climate change.

Starting from a reading of the critical issues from the legal-administrative point of view in the SNSVS and SNAC, the authors will move on to the analysis of: (i) the new dynamics of socio-economic development of the territory; (ii) how to respond, with integrated actions, to the direct and indirect effects of Climate Change through integrated actions for the transformation of urban welfare models.

In addition, the ways in which landscape policies and urban and territorial planning would be able to make concrete some strategic objectives set in the SNSVS and SNAC will be highlighted.

The contribution is the result of a shared reflection of the authors. However, the second and third sections are attributed to Stefano Damiano, while the fourth section is attributed to Marsia Marino. The remaining sections, including the introduction and conclusion, are shared by both authors.

### **SNSVS and SNAC. Comparative analysis**

The choice to analyse the functionality of landscape policies and urban and territorial planning tools in relation to two specific strategies - SNSVS and SNAC - is due to the need to find an implementation of the principles highlighted by the latter at the local scale, through prescriptions able to guarantee their implementation.

The National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change is solely dedicated to the specific theme, while the National Strategy for Sustainable Development - as well as the 2030 Agenda at the international level - has a wider sphere of action which includes the actions to adapt and mitigate the effects of climate change.

#### ***Similarities: vision and purposes***

In the two strategies it is possible to trace a common mission and vision, as also highlighted by an important document of the European Commission, the Green New Deal, which highlights how “Climate change and environmental degradation are an existential threat to Europe and the world. To overcome these challenges, Europe needs a new growth strategy that transforms the Union into a modern, resource-efficient and competitive economy where there are no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050 economic

growth is decoupled from resource use no person and no place is left behind The European Green Deal is our roadmap for making the EU's economy sustainable” (European Commission, 2019).

Therefore, there is a cause-effect link between processes aimed at sustainable development and actions to adapt to climate change. In fact, Sustainable Development is based on three dimensions - environmental, economic, and social - proposing a vision of a more harmonious society, respectful of one another, and of the resources of the Planet. All the sustainability challenges, including, first of all, the issue of climate change, is not only related to the environmental sector but also have serious repercussions on the economic and social system. The latter, in fact, strictly depends both on the availability and fair distribution of natural resources, and on the ability of ecosystems to absorb the impact of human activities on the environment. Artificial capital (production systems) and natural capital (natural resources) are fundamentally complementary (Italia Nostra, 2019).

In this regard, the same National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change highlights the relationship between its objectives and those of the SNSVS, underlining that in the literature there is a growing ability to understand the possibilities of choosing and implementing climate response options in different sectors to achieve synergies and avoid conflicts with other dimensions of sustainable development (IPCC, 2007; IPCC, 2014). Sustainable development is defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. (WCED, 1987) The latter is possible through integration between:

- micro and macroeconomic dynamics;

- multilevel governance processes preceded by a strengthening of capacity building in the different stages of decision making;
- environmental protection and sustainability actions and programs;
- safeguarding of social cohesion processes also through the empowerment of people in environmental matters (Aarhus Convention: UNECE, 1998).

Only the integration of these different dynamics and processes would guarantee, at the same time, the achievement of multiple objectives, including those of sustainable development and mitigation and adaptation to climate change. A slogan can be used: there is no development without sustainability; there is no sustainability without actions to combat Climate Change.

As highlighted in the SNSVS, the impacts of climate change can seriously hinder development in essential sectors (for example, the increased risk of natural disasters and water stress will have to be counted in planning for public health); development choices, in turn, will affect the ability to mitigate and adapt to climate change (for example, forest conservation and renewable energy policies, if properly designed and implemented, can increase the resilience of communities and therefore reduce their vulnerability). There are other examples of synergies:

- Policies related to energy efficiency and renewable energies are often cost-effective, improve energy security, and reduce local polluting emissions.
- Measures to reduce natural habitat loss and deforestation can have a variety of significant benefits in terms of biodiversity, soil and water conservation, and can be implemented in a socially and economically sustainable way.
- Forestry and plantation measures for bioenergy can help restore degraded land, manage water runoff, store carbon in



the soil and benefit rural economies, but they also risk creating competition in land use with food production and be negative for biodiversity if not properly designed (ME, 2017a).

### ***Similarities: critical issues***

In addition to the characteristics of commonality, from the reading of the two strategic documents, similar criticalities also emerge, which led the authors to propose this reflection on the points of union between the strategic lines highlighted by the two strategies and national government instruments. The SNSVS and SNAC, in fact, in order to achieve their goals at the local level, need dedicated tools that are not exclusively of a planning type, but also of a managerial-territorial type. In compliance with current legislation, this function could - and should - be performed through landscape policies and urban and territorial planning. Yet, although the two strategies repeatedly highlight the importance of landscape, resilience, and urban regeneration, the tools dedicated to territorial governance are never expressly referred to.

For example, among the transversal vectors of the SNSVS, as regards the “Monitoring and evaluation of plans and projects policies”, there is talk of ensuring the definition, implementation and supply of integrated systems for the monitoring and evaluation of policies, plans, and projects, but without talking directly about the Landscape Plan or the Local Urban Plan.

Even concerning the vector “Institutions, participation and partnerships”, the instruments of government and territorial planning are not expressly mentioned, although there is a need to guarantee the creation of effective mechanisms for institutional interaction and the implementation and

evaluation of the SNSVS and it is specified that the areas will be deepened and defined in line with the strategic guidelines of the governance system for the implementation and evaluation of the SNSVS, which will identify the ways, times and spaces functional to the interaction with the institutions (horizontal and vertical integration mechanisms), taking into consideration the existing guidelines at national and EU levels (ME, 2017a).

Instead, it is the Legislative Decree 152/2004 - which according to the principle of cogency also concerns urban planning tools - to highlight the relationship between landscape policies and planning with the processes of sustainable development and resilience to the effects of climate change - even if only indirectly, recalling the need for actions to protect and safeguard the environmental and landscape heritage.

Article. 135, section 2 “Landscape planning”, for example, establishes that the landscape plan defines, with particular reference to the assets referred to in Article 134, the transformations compatible with the landscape values, the recovery and redevelopment actions of buildings and areas subject to protection, as well as landscape enhancement interventions, also about sustainable development prospects (Legislative Decree 42/2004).

Furthermore, also in “Chapter III - Landscape planning”, art. 143 (“Landscape Plan”) identifies the measures necessary for the correct insertion of the transformation interventions of the territory in the landscape context, to which the actions and investments aimed at the sustainable development of the areas concerned must refer (D .lgs 42/2004).

Finally, art. 145 “Coordination of landscape planning with other planning tools” highlights that landscape plans provide for coordination measures with territorial and sector

planning tools, as well as with national and regional economic development tools.

The Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape, therefore, would compensate for the *vacatio* existing in the SNSVS about the relationship between sustainable development and territorial planning.

On the side of mitigation and adaptation actions, urban planning tools - thanks to their greater ability to influence, from an executive and administrative point of view, the actions of the government of the territory - are fundamental to make the cities and the territory resilient to the effects of climate change.

However, to date, the strategic documents at the national level, while providing for implementation and adaptation processes on a local scale, have not yet defined the tools dedicated to achieving the set objectives, while, by reinforcing and integrating with new skills the Landscape Plan and Urban Plans, it may be possible to start the necessary implementation processes. In support of this line of research, in the following two sections the authors want to define some aspects, linked to sustainable development and to the contrast of the effects of climate change, exemplifying how the PP and urban plans could give immediate answers to the strategic objectives outlined at the national level.

### **Landscape policies and planning tools to support a new socio-economic development model of the territory**

As expressed up to now, the SNSVS claims that sustainable development does not mean economic stagnation or renounce to economic growth for the sake of the environment; rather, it should involve the promotion of

economic development as a condition for maintaining environmental quality.

Economic development leads to a greater ability to deal with environmental and social problems. In turn, maintaining environmental quality is essential for sustainable development. Therefore, climate change and the strategies to counter, and adapt to, it can be understood as part of the greatest challenge of sustainable development (ME, 2017a). Development and sustainability are not “forcibly linked” concepts but represent different types of relational processes between human and the environment. However, to make these two types integrated it is necessary to define a new paradigm of territorial development, where sustainability represents a growth factor and not a “brake”. Moreover, as previously highlighted, the issue of mitigation and adaptation to the effects of climate change could represent an “accelerator” of this new model of socio-economic development of the territory.

This concept is further underlined in the premise of the SNSVS which highlights how sustainable development means a new circular economic model, with low CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, resilient to climate change and other global changes due to local crises such as, for example, the loss of biodiversity, modification of fundamental biogeochemical cycles (carbon, nitrogen, phosphorus) and changes in land use (ME, 2017a).

Talking about sustainable development also includes an overall vision of growth for the whole territory, starting from urban areas up to the so-called internal areas - subject to a dedicated strategy: the National Strategy for Internal Areas (SNAI).

The contents reported up to now in this section have the aim of bringing out a specific element, a keyword that is at the

basis of all the assumptions of the SNSVS and SNAC: the territory.

### ***Landscape planning for sustainable development***

This term is also part of the definition that the European Landscape Convention gives of landscape: “a certain part of the territory, as perceived by the populations, whose character derives from the action of natural and/or human factors and their interrelations” (European Council, 2004). Moreover, continuing to read art. 1 of the ELC, it is highlighted that: “Landscape management” indicates the actions aimed, from a sustainable development perspective, at guaranteeing the governance of the landscape to guide and harmonize its transformations caused by social, economic and environmental development processes.

Therefore, landscape policies are fundamental in achieving a sustainable development model from a social, economic and environmental point of view. Landscape planning tools can be functional to the objectives envisaged in the SNSVS and their implementation on a local scale.

For example, it should be noted that the landscape plan is responsible, among the various skills, to identify the risk factors and the elements of the vulnerability.

Even from reading these few paragraphs of the *Urbani Code*, it is clear how much the Landscape Plan, as a tool for implementing landscape policies at a territorial level, can be functional to the simultaneous achievement of the objectives of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development. Landscape planning, in the light of current legislation, represents the main tool of competence of the local institutions - even if in agreement with the central institutions on some aspects including landscape protection - and this guarantees the principle of subsidiarity, of

multilevel governance and greater participation of citizens and stakeholders in decision-making processes.

Moreover, in the drafting of the Landscape Plan, the Ministry of the Environment and the Protection of the Territory and the Sea can also make its contribution of expertise, strengthening the actions of environmental protection and mitigation adaptation to the effects of Climate change.

At the end of the present section, the authors want to highlight the role of urban planning tools in support of innovative economic-environmental models.

Starting from the UN data concerning the processes of progressive population increase in the urban environment (a topic further developed in the third section) it is clear how cities are the centre from which to start developing a new model of sustainability in which economic, employment and production sectors growth is sustainable from an environmental, landscape, ecosystem and health point of view.

Given the relevance of the issue, public institutions at different scales, starting from municipal administrations, should be committed to the front line according to the principles of the Aalborg Charter (European Commission, 1994).

The scientific literature highlights how a correctly planned urban fabric is the prerogative of a city that tends towards urban resilience to the effects of climate change and can implement sustainable development processes capable of driving even a large area such as the one established with the so-called “Del Rio Reform”.

If local institutions are committed to implementing landscape policies, planning tools and socio-economic programs in support of the objectives defined by the SNSVS and SNAC, in this section the authors want to highlight the

extent to which urban planning tools can favour the participation of private subjects in the processes of redefining the city also through ecological-environmental interventions.

In vast and complex contexts, the “Urban Project” tool is required to adopt specific and innovative implementation rules, whether it is new interventions, or whether they are the recovery of parts of the existing city.

The tool guarantees, with a single solution, the technical and economic feasibility, the finding of financial resources with the active involvement of private individuals, certain phases and times of realization. The basic urban planning choices of urban projects are agreed upon and shared through specific forms of participation (Rome Department of Urban Planning, 2008).

Therefore, the Urban Project favours the participation of private individuals, and especially business women and men, in public-private partnership actions for the construction of city transformation works, also to make them resilient to the effects of Climate change.

Therefore, companies can play a fundamental role in the dynamics of promoting and strengthening sustainable development models and adaptation and mitigation to climate change through the sustainability of the production of goods and services and their consumption.

For example, 'impact finance' represents an extremely interesting socio-economic model, as also indicated in the second Eurosif report (2017) which highlighted how the sustainable and responsible investment strategy (SRI) has proved extremely effective in achieving the objectives for sustainable development while promoting territorial adaptation processes.

This is an interesting model to follow, which could be further implemented through forms of public-private,

private-private, and even private-third sector partnerships, to create the conditions for a new form of sharing economy in which:

- the company is configured according to new micro and macroeconomic models including that of shared value and benefits corporations;
- the citizen directly or indirectly participates in the creation of a circular economy model whose benefits can be used;
- the public entity, while maintaining its role as a “decision-maker”, finds interlocutors ready to support, in a participatory way, transformation processes of cities aimed at improving resilience and sustainability (Damiano, Marino, 2020).

### **A new welfare model for resilient cities**

According to the World Urbanization Prospects (UN, 2018), more than 50% of people currently live in urban areas and the increase in settlement in cities could increase by 2.5 billion people.

This issue has absolute relevance in the international political agenda, requiring institutions to start a profound reflection on the social, economic and environmental repercussions that this phenomenon will entail in the long run, to guarantee the well-being of the inhabitants of the city, intended in its social and relational dimensions linked to daily life, with the material endowment of services for the community through its different spatial articulations (Cognetti, 2012).

SNAC also highlights how urban settlements host the majority of the Italian population (94% in 2001) and are at the same time the main culprits and the main “victims” of climate change. Being predominantly artificial systems, their



resilience must be ensured almost exclusively by human action. This is an unprecedented challenge for the government of the territory since it is necessary to combine short-term interventions with interventions that will produce effects in the medium and long term (ME, 2017b). The progressive massive migration towards large urban centres involves, in addition to the effects in terms of welfare, also the explosion of some phenomena including gentrification. This is a physical, social and economic tendency for which historically popular neighbourhoods are repopulated by the middle class, thus determining a substantial change in the social composition due to the endogenous factors mentioned above which have the effect of increasing the price of housing and essential services (Secchi, 2013).

This phenomenon triggers extremely delicate social processes, as the most fragile segment of the population is forced to move to the marginal areas of the city, with the dual effect of causing urban sprawl phenomena (with significant environmental accidents such as the consumption of soil), and an increase in the gap of disparity between residents in terms of access to primary and essential services; therefore, a substantial disarticulation of spaces is generated, even more discontinuous both in morphological terms and in terms of social equity (Mariano, 2011).

Therefore, there is a theme of contrasting inequalities understood as the right to the city and to an accessible and homogeneous urban welfare system for all segments of the population and throughout the territory.

This strategic objective takes on a central role in the Green New Deal which “will provide targeted support to regions and sectors that are most affected by the transition towards the green economy” (European Commission, 2020). In fact, the European Union is aware that many states and regions

could have difficulties, in economic terms, in implementing a sustainable transition; thus the EU has foreseen an investment plan that can support the just transition mechanism according to the principle that "no person and no place is left behind". At the local level and in terms of territorial governance instruments, the objectives of the Green New Deal presupposes a new vision of the urban design to be implemented through an integration of the objectives of the SNSVS and SNAC in the planning tools provided for by current legislation.

It seems necessary to emphasize how the theme of "inequalities" has particular relevance within the strategic document for sustainable development. In this concern, a further innovative aspect of the 2030 Agenda is the attention paid to the phenomenon of inequalities, exacerbated by the economic crisis of the last decade, which risks slowing down the path aimed at pursuing sustainable development. In the absence of an adequate intervention strategy, various factors, including globalization, technological changes, transformations in the labour market, demographic trends, and migration, can feed a polarization between 'winners' and 'losers'. Therefore, it appears essential to identify and share policies that can relaunch growth and make it sustainable in the long term (ME, 2017a).

Even the National Strategy for Adaptation to Climate Change clearly refers to the concept of "inequalities", albeit indirectly, and the relationship existing between SNSVS and SNAC on this issue is evident in a passage of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development which states that the fight against inequalities is increasingly an inescapable goal for governments, since growth without inclusion limits social mobility, damages growth and creates political instability (ME, 2017a).

### *Inequalities in changing cities*

The concept of inequality, in relation to urban design, is highlighted, above all, in the marginal areas which, from a social point of view, represent areas in which forms of “degradation” and social marginalization are easier to take place, while from the institutional point of view, according to Gilles Clemant, represent those places where the carelessness of the political decision-maker often generates a state of dereliction.

It is precisely on this aspect that action must be taken, accepting the challenge of a social and ecological reconversion of the city, and the actions to be taken are those of strengthening the urban welfare system.

In relation to the SNSVS, the concept of margins is highlighted in the strategic area “People”, which highlights how sustainable development also passes through the fight against poverty and social exclusion by eliminating territorial gaps (ME, 2017a).

For example, among the key tools for “Tackling poverty and social exclusion by eliminating territorial gaps”, the Plan for the redevelopment of the suburbs is reported.

In addition, the following objectives are reported in the “Planet” area of the National Strategy for Sustainable Development:

- Create resilient communities and territories, safeguard landscapes and cultural heritage;
- Prevent natural and anthropogenic risks and strengthen the resilience capacities of communities and territories;
- Ensure the high environmental performance of buildings, infrastructures and open spaces;
- Regenerate cities, ensure accessibility and ensure the sustainability of connections;

- Ensure the restoration and defragmentation of ecosystems and promote urban/rural ecological connections;
- Ensure the development of potentials, the sustainable management and care of territories, landscapes, and cultural heritage (ME, 2017a).

To achieve these objectives, one of the key tools is the Italian National Report on sustainable urban development, a document supporting Italian participation in the United Nations International Conference HABITAT III.

However, as regards the issue of Climate Change, it is above all in the “margins” that the so-called “Critical infrastructures” are present, according to the definition of the SNAC: they are areas that will be most affected by the effects of the CC.

The SNSVS, in “Promoting health and well-being”, underlines the importance of acting in order to reduce the “exposure of the population to environmental and anthropogenic risk factors” (ME, 2017a).

It is evident how necessary it is to create strategies capable of guiding the sustainable urban development of the territories, as indicated by the European Environment Agency (EEA, 2016) in the report “Climate change, impacts and vulnerability in Europe 2016”.

Therefore, the figure of the urban and territorial planner emerges, who, “as a leader of Change, is committed to [...] promoting strategies, policies, and programs for greater 'Regional Resilience' to combat the vulnerability of cities and regions (territories) to the effects of rapid urbanization, climate change, poverty and growing inequality” (ECTP-CEU, 2013).

Designing for change means predicting the effects of what may happen in the future, of how climate change will continue to affect our environment and how it will change

our lifestyle and our new needs. Anticipating change will mean establishing planning strategies and actions, which are capable of making our cities resistant to changes in environmental conditions, which are at least capable of adapting and responding to changes in the climate in progress and defining places, spaces and buildings capable of mitigating their effects (Bassolino, 2016).

### **Concluding remarks**

Sustainable development and actions to mitigate and adapt to climate change are inextricably linked and require joint actions in order to achieve the global goals highlighted in the 2030 Agenda.

The strategies through which the institutions tend to achieve these goals require implementation tools, especially at the local level.

To date, this aspect is still little dealt with, yet it is clear how necessary it is to set up tools capable of achieving the purposes set by the SNSVS and SNAC.

In this paper, the authors wanted to open a reflection regarding the functionality of landscape policies and urban and territorial planning in the actions of implementation and adaptation at the local level of national strategies of economic and environmental interest.

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