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*edited by Irene Cremonini, Adriana Galderisi
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Scira Menoni
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Carlo Gasparrini
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A propulsive profile for the prevention and mitigation of natural risk

Francesco Domenico Moccia

Risk prevention planning process is defined in its peculiar character. This essay focuses on the participatory dimension and suggests that, in it, an educational process is embedded, due to a scientific knowledge of ecosystems and on the responsibility of collective action. Consequently local government and planners must have a propulsive stance.

In response to catastrophes, specialized organizations has grown to assure effectiveness in saving lives and goods through training and professional competence. After a disaster, we need house and to better social and economic conditions of escaped people. That is why reconstruction plans have more ambition than to rebuilt in the same way everything was before. So we manage disaster in a short and long time span. The former is the realm of Civil protection, while the latter is the proper field of territorial planning. Notwithstanding both perform planning having both to face disasters prevention. This imply to make predictions, to live certainty and construct concepts as danger and hazard. Civil protection makes prevention using the monitoring of natural events and preparing evacuation plans. Vulcanological knowledge of Vesuvius come from the history and from the study of all physical and chemical indicators of eruption. On this bases, an area potentially involved has been defined in the 18 municipalities surrounding the mountain, where more than half million people lives. Predicted an eruption all the inhabitants will move

to temporary, and more stable locations, if needed, according to the evacuation plan. For this the plan uses the usual technologies of transport engineering: network modelling.

Because natural events hardly may be controlled, planning may work mainly on protection of exposed lives and goods. The first tool achieved to pursue this goal has been regulating land use, as Basin Authorities did to quickly have provisions of flooding and landslides prevention, without investing the massive financial resources need to make rivers more safe.

The Basin authority, with their respective plans, have been increasingly absorbed by their authorization function, often making the administrative and legal aspects prevalent with respect to the scientific and of programming one. Nowadays, because of the considerable difficulties in the 'a posteriori' integration of separate planning, both the active prevention of the risk and the integrated approach are frontier lands. The prevention based on the integrated approach lacks in many urban and territorial plans also when they mean to be characterized by a particular environmental sensibility. The Operative Strategic Plan (OSP) for the municipalities of Vesuvius area subordinates to the risk of eruptions (Red zone) is not framed in the system of planning designed by the L.R. 16/2004, but only in the generic category of provincial sectorial plan, as established by an apposite regional law concerning the Vesuvius risk.

Also in this case, the two different times of the immediate application of the prohibition of new residences construction and of an organic plan of safety are interlaced with the pressures of the public opinion and the political changing.

Paraphrasing Clausewitz, we could assert that the plans are the prosecution of politics with other means.

This is not the first case where conflicts are avoided with the promise that a specific discussion of these issues would be addressed in depth in an appropriate plane.

In this case the law conjugates relevant couples of opposite issues that constitute real challenges for the strategy of the OSP and that immediately assume the attractive form of slogans particularly useful for communication: operate so that the mitigation of the risk becomes an occasion of development; elaborate suitable measures to compensate for the defence of building.

The assignment of the OSP to the Province is balanced by the centrality of the municipalities, which, according to the law, must obligatorily be consulted. A representative of three municipalities enters to make part of the 'direction cabin', together with the Province, the Region and the Park Agency, to which, however, only organization tasks are entrusted. The group of advisors reflects the disciplinary complexity and are in charge of ensuring a link with the technical-administrative structures of the involved agencies.

The communication activity inside this articulated organization is a delicate and hard job.

In the framework of risk prevention and mitigation, the strategic method is not used, as in the classical model, for the selection location of objectives; these are established from the analysis of the dangers and of the exposed values.

In our case, the excess of population with respect to the expected times of evacuation in case of eruption has come to attention; but also the higher safety ensured by antiseismic building and

roofs resistant to the weight of lapillus; or with an unflooding water system and landslides control.

The objectives are articulated between the reduction and protection of the exposed values and the adoption of measures of mitigation of the effects of the threat.

The study of the social and environmental resources, based on the SWOT analysis, is close to the planning of the development, and solves a part of that dichotomy placed at the centre of the OSP, although the strategic approach cannot be restricted to each of the various components of this plan taken singularly. The synthesis of all the components appears in the elaboration of the strategies, which are meant as the modalities of reaching the objectives.

The strategy of reduction of the demographic weight, chosen for the availability of the resources and the convergence with objectives of development, was that of changing the destinations of use of the buildings with a system of urban planning incentives; the system of aids to the enterprises has been aimed at the emersion and at the eco-compatibility. The combination of the public and private participation is aimed at breaking off the equilibriums and at injecting confidence through the focalization on program areas of city regeneration, with high capacity of inducing deep transformations of use also in the context.

This multi-acting planning process entrusts the partnership in any aspects and articulation. It involves an investment of resources of the participants whose compensation does not appear to they always very clear. The difficulty is increased by the insufficiency of negotiating relationship between the parts, differently from other forms of planning aimed at

resource allocation. The prevention of the risk demands the passage to the step of the real cooperation, where the efforts of the single actors are directed to the research of innovative solutions and to the advancement of the level of knowledge and of the number of solutions.