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River Contracts and participation. An experiment on Tinella river

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The territorial changes and trends that develop on a river area are complex phenomena delicate in their interpretation as in their management: ecological and hydrological factors - intrinsically linked to the water quality – must be related to other (of the whole basin area), like infrastructure system, landscape and socio-economic set-up.

To manage this complexity “basin planning” has now embraced the principles of subsidiarity and cooperation, placing the soil protection in relation to other aspects of territorial planning, detaching from a sectoral approach.

This is the same direction pursued by river contract (CdF), a flexible, multi-level, intersectoral instrument, useful to integrate socio-economic analysis with those of regional and urban planning. The CdF is not an additional tool for the management of the river area, but a method for sharing a strategic vision between public and private stakeholders involved in the same process. The heart of the instrument is the negotiated and participated process, the strong ongoing dialogue between actors of different nature, and the consensus they express around the objectives of the CdF. Nowadays, there is no national standard reference about the method or the contents of a CdF. However, the experiences gained in some Italian regions (Emilia-Romagna, Lombardy, Piedmont, Sicily) laid the foundation for a cultural movement that goes across the country, involving the academic, professional and administrative world. There are some common features, both in the process, both in the contents. We can pick up some weaknesses on either fronts: lack of involvement of ordinary citizens, excessive segmentation of the shares, limited territorial lines of action, lack of tools for assessing and monitoring assistance.

Therefore, the thesis presents a methodological and procedural model for the construction of a CdF, entering into the process of participation and technical contents. In the matter of first, the experience of consultation carried out - on the territory, with the involvement of primary and secondary schools, as well as on the Web, through facebook - aims to achieve virtuous choices (more fair, wise and efficient), and to understand what really are the prerequisites for the start of the next activities of active involvement of local people. On the technical level, the proposed model is a strategic vision, that integrate all the aspects analysed, expressing their spatial forms trough a masterplan.

The area is the sub-basin of the Tinella river. Located in the Roero hills, in the border area between the provinces of Asti and Cuneo, is characterized by the large presence of vineyards and excellent rural landscapes, a lever for food, wine and cultural tourism. In this context, the CdF propose an opportunity for the development of policies to re-create the relationships which over time have been established between the agricultural society and the river. In addition, it should be interpreted as an opportunity to build synergies between the integrated river requalification and economic development based on land-use of local resources, which are gaining visibility, in relation to the Unesco areas, that cover most of the basin.

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