



Scheda sintetica descrittiva
Premio INU Letteratura Urbanistica 2020
inedito

Autore/i Luca Lazzarini

Titolo Urban / rural co-productions. Planning and governance approaches for improving the relationships among city and countryside in Italy and England

Immagine rappresentativa:



Figura 1. Grey Grass. Photo-credit: Diego Mayon.

Abstract:

The thesis explores the relationship among local governments' cooperation and planning in two domestic contexts, Italy and England. It investigates the relational politics, processes and practices of cooperation by which local governments can build stronger relationships among city and countryside. Emphasis is on improving the understanding on how planning can increase the interdependencies among food production and consumption across the urban/rural continuum in the light of supporting more sustainable food systems.

The research problematized this topic by looking at the planning actions and interactions, connection and disconnections among local governments in three cases, the metropolitan area of Milan, the Aso Valley in Marche region and the City Region of Bristol. These case-studies are indicative of different governance and planning arrangements which match with specific configurations of urban/rural relationships. Moreover, the location of the three cases in three distinctive institutional contexts and planning frameworks provides the chance to reflect upon the cultural assumptions and technical procedures that produce a different tension among spatial development and territorial governance processes.

What the three cases elicit is a delicate tension among city's pressing social and economic needs and countryside's unexploited contribution to more localised food systems. Research findings underline that the prevailing approach by planners and policy makers in dealing with the food system is regulative and prescriptive. Emphasis is on protecting existing agro-ecological resources and visual amenities of the countryside, rather than exploring the ways in which agricultural production and multifunctionality can guide a transition towards more sustainable food systems. Reasons of this limitation lie in planning's disjointed focus on distinct policy regimes, which is mainly due to sectoral and regulative designations and to structural conditions. Conversely, a positive contribution in exploring the potentials of food for shaping better urban/rural relationships comes from a number of alternative, non-statutory, collaborative spaces among farmers and civil society. These have emerged in opposition with the standards and regulations typically underlying the planning process. Their potential lies in the reflexive approach and in the process of inclusive negotiation they share in addressing the vulnerabilities of the food system.

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