

Democratising the interface research-policymaking in landscape planning: experiences in Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italy)

Democratizando la interfaz investigación-elaboración de políticas en la
planificación del paisaje: experiencias en Friuli Venezia Giulia (Italia)

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Abstract

In the current, extended socio-environmental crisis, the interface research-policymaking in landscape planning has evolved, seeking responses to pressing global dynamics (e.g., climate change, international migration fluxes, etc.) and critical local demands (e.g., recognition of community-based initiatives, “public governance” of landscape interventions, etc.). Depending on contextual conditions, different political agendas and legal frameworks shape the interplay between knowledge production mechanisms and practices on landscape. The evolution of the interface research-policymaking involves the interactions between structured research policies and informal knowledge generation processes, the (ideological) use of participation in the actions on landscape and the redefinition of power equilibria in the planning arena. Exploring the experiences of landscape planning developed in Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italy (i.e., territorial plans involving landscape conservation norms, regional landscape plans, “integrated landscape projects”), the research shows the need to readdress landscape governance and policymaking towards inclusiveness, fostering knowledge co-production initiatives at all levels and (re-)thinking

power as a complex factor of change in the relationships between planning authorities, academia, communities and citizens.

Key words: knowledge co-production; power relations; participation.

Resumen

En la actual crisis socio-ambiental, la interfaz investigación-elaboración de políticas en la planificación del paisaje ha evolucionado buscando respuestas a dinámicas globales (cambio climático, flujos migratorios internacionales, etc.) y demandas locales (reconocimiento de derechos comunitarios, “gobernanza pública” de proyectos de paisaje, etc.). Dependiendo de condiciones contextuales, diferentes agendas políticas y marcos legales han dado forma distinta a las interacciones entre mecanismos de producción de conocimiento y prácticas de planificación del paisaje. Desde esta perspectiva, la evolución de la interfaz investigación-elaboración de políticas incluye las interacciones entre las políticas formales de investigación y los procesos informales de generación de conocimiento, el uso (ideológico) de la participación en las prácticas/proyectos de paisaje y la redefinición de los equilibrios de poder en la planificación. Explorando las experiencias de planificación del paisaje desarrolladas en Friuli Venezia Giulia, Italia (planes territoriales que involucran normas de conservación del paisaje, planes regionales del paisaje, “proyectos de paisaje integrados”), el artículo plantea la necesidad de reorientar la gobernanza del paisaje y la formulación de políticas hacia formas factuales de inclusión, fomentando iniciativas de coproducción de conocimiento a todos los niveles y (re)pensando el poder como factor complejo de cambio en las relaciones entre las autoridades de planificación, el mundo académico, las comunidades locales y los ciudadanos.

Palabras clave: coproducción de conocimiento; relaciones de poder; participación.

1 Introduction

Despite the static scenarios drawn in international agreements and national normative frameworks (for examples focussed on the European context, see Marson, 2019), socio-cultural and political-institutional processes of change involve the relationships between research policy set-ups and decision-making processes on landscape. In this evolving context, the structural transformations of interfaces research-policymaking are connected to the growing gap between theory generation and applicative interventions in landscape planning (for the interface “science-practice” and its gaps in the perspective of landscape ecology, see Bormpoudakis & Tzanopoulos, 2019; for a land use point of view, see Castella et al., 2014; for an historical understanding of the gap, see

Davoudi, 2006; Hughes et al., 2008). Playing a central role in these vast processes of change, public authorities have started to rethink landscape planning mechanisms, at regional and inter-regional scales, and landscape projects/actions, at a local level (on the initial circumstances of the “change”, see Selman, 2012; on the connections between landscape management, planning and design, see Ahern, 2013). These processes include practice-oriented redefinitions of planning strategies, methodological approaches and operational tools, seeking to overcome the condition of crisis in which conventional instruments of landscape governance are situated (Hedblom, 2017; Scott, 2011; Wu et al., 2017).

Global and contextual dynamics affect the interface research-policymaking, shaping both planning practices and research-based decision-making processes on landscape. Global phenomena (e.g., environmental crisis, international migration dynamics, etc.) underpin structural changes on landscape (Scheller, 2020) and, at the same time, transform the mechanisms of landscape perception and appropriation (for a first introduction, see Stephenson, 2010). Within a substantive framework, where the landscape is understood as a “democratic entity” (Council of Europe, 2017), these conceptual/perceptive (re-)definitions imply radical consequences on the approaches through which individuals and communities identify themselves in and with the landscape (Mercado-Alonso et al., 2018). The transformations of the “ideas of landscape” and the consolidation of plural landscape understandings have direct political implications on the relationships between citizens/communities and decision-makers (Montembault, 2015; Gailing & Leibenath, 2017; Calderon & Butler, 2020): the diffusion of grassroots initiatives and the claims for a real inclusion of social actors in landscape decision-making processes push public authorities to rethink administrative-legal procedures and participatory dynamics in planning practices, beyond rhetoric forms of participation (on landscape and justice, see Mels, 2016; Olwig & Mitchell, 2008; Olwig & Olwig, 2021; Terkenli, 2020; for a focus on ‘democratic landscapes’, see Arler, 2011; Egoz et al., 2018).

In this contested process of change, the role of research in landscape planning is interrogated, and the capacity to incorporate socio-political needs in an integrated, trans-disciplinary vision of landscape becomes a public, institutional demand (on trans-disciplinarity as a device for landscape planning and decision-making, see Opdam et al., 2015b). The responses are still in progress; through discontinuous/contradictory agendas (Hernández-Morcillo et al., 2017), research strategies in landscape planning are mainly engaged in producing “technical” knowledge and operational toolboxes, supporting procedures and practices, with a political impoverishment of the interactions research-planning-action, increased by a condition of

complexity (Parrott & Meyer, 2012; van Vianen, 2015) and uncertainty around landscape developments (Conrad et al., 2011b; on uncertainty in landscape planning, see Neuendorf et al., 2018).

In these “unpolitical” approaches to knowledge production, where the political meanings/values of landscape for society seem lost and the interplays between powers and economic lobbies have a dominant position, governmental actors operate without factual instruments, in a condition of “delay” (for examples showing the evolutive trajectories of these relationships in Europe, e.g., Benson, 2009; Guaran & Michelutti, 2018; for previous identifications of gaps governance-planning, see Gruehn, 2010; Wu, 2013). Due to the current, volatile governance conditions, rationalities of intervention and priorities of action are mainly adapted to short-term, problem-solving agendas. The construction of inclusive translations from landscape governance to planning in long-term perspectives, beyond sector-based approaches, remains a challenge (Freeman et al., 2015; Reed et al., 2017; Ros-Tonen et al., 2018; Sayer et al., 2015).

Conflicts for the management of landscape governance structures (and definition of strategies and fundings allocation for research) involve both context-dependent factors and socio-political processes: the claim for “public control” of landscape policies and research reveals an institutional demand of power sharing in relation to planning instruments and knowledge production mechanisms. Despite a formal recognition, community-based actors and institutions remain essentially marginal in the political and planning arenas, and landscape normative set-up processes and research policymaking are not easily accessible for social movements and community counterparts (for an overview of legal frameworks at the international and national levels, see Strecker, 2018).

In this context, participatory dynamics in landscape (and landscape research) policymaking are not monolithic. Conventional forms of participation are mainly relegated to superficial roles in regional and national decision-making processes (on scale-related experiences involving international/trans-border landscapes, see Sayer et al., 2016; Michelutti & Guaran, 2019), facing the incapacity to involve unstructured and informal subjects, and the presence of co-optation dynamics (Westberg & Waldenström, 2017). At the same time, by dealing with the marginalisation of participatory elements in the set-up of research policies and planning strategies, alternative spaces of interaction and inclusion foster opportunities for a global redefinition of socio-political fabrics, “beyond the landscape” (Vik, 2017; for a landscape services perspective, see Westerlink et al., 2017): the need for democratic, plural approaches to

landscape planning and research evolves in terms of contents, methods and applications (to map this evolution from the European Landscape Convention, see Déjeant-Pons, 2006; Jones, 2007; for a critical perspective, Calderon & Butler, 2020).

In this perspective, the control of landscape knowledge production mechanisms is a decisive power factor. Technocratic agendas involve research actors in rethinking areas of interest and provide methodological tools and techniques for “practical” knowledge production, mainly oriented to planning analysis and projects/programs assessment (Ruckelshaus et al., 2015; Scherr et al., 2013). From opposite positions, alternative political subjects stress the need to put the civil society at the centre of knowledge production processes in landscape planning as a pre-condition for the development of co-planning experiences (Karrasch et al., 2017; for an understanding of knowledge as an agent triggering collaborative landscape planning processes, see previous experiences in ecosystem services, e.g., Opdam et al., 2015a; McKenzie et al., 2014). In this plurality of approaches, academic/research institutions question pure service/customer relationships with public authorities, towards a global redefinition of research policies in landscape planning: an inclusive, multi-actor governance of knowledge production mechanisms becomes a condition for the “change” and the re-discussion of power balances in landscape planning (for basic analytical tools on the political use, management and manipulation of knowledge, see Fischer, 2009; McNie, 2007).

The study interrogates the nature of the interface research-policymaking in landscape planning, analysing the experiences developed in Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG), a region of about 8000 Km² and 1,2 million inhabitants, located in North-East Italy. In FVG, regional and local public authorities, universities, professional bodies, civil society associations and citizens have all been part of different territorial planning processes, where knowledge production mechanisms on landscape were object of radical transformations. By redefining the role of participation in planning processes, power interplays set the interface research-policymaking as a complex space of conflict in the “democratisation” of FVG landscapes.

The research questions are built on three main thematic axes underpinning the interface and the evolution of FVG landscape planning practices:

- Knowledge production. What are the mechanisms of knowledge production in FVG landscape planning experiences? What are the relationships between landscape research policies, knowledge production processes and planning rationalities?

- Participation. What is the role of participation in the interface? How are knowledge production processes connected to participatory practices? Can participatory practices orient knowledge co-production towards forms of empowerment?
- Power. Do research-policymaking interfaces respond to specific power configurations? Do these power relations underpin ideological uses of knowledge production and participation? To what extent do FVG power equilibria in planning open up democratic spaces in landscape governance?

2 Materials and methods

In academic and political debates, there is no consolidated definition of the interface research-policymaking in landscape planning. This theoretical uncertainty opens up a plurality of epistemological conceptualisations of the interface, which has been analysed mainly through mixed-approach and non-quantitative research methods, following the studies in spatial and urban planning (e.g. Albert et al., 2012; Conrad et al., 2011; for an analysis of the interface research-policymaking in an urban perspective, see Alfaro-d'Alençon et al., 2022). In addition to planning-oriented approaches, disciplinary explorations of the interface include research operating through holistic analytical frameworks, mainly developed with quantitative tools/methods, as in landscape ecology (e.g. Gruehn, 2010; for alternative experiences using action-research approaches, see Castella et al., 2014).

Despite recognising the “political character” of the interface and promoting the involvement of different stakeholders as part of the research process, existing approaches to the interface do not deepen the contextual landscape politics, and political contexts, shaping the linkages between research and policymaking (Gailing & Leibenath, 2017); these explorations remain tied to specific research perspectives/environments (e.g. Beunen & Opdam, 2011). A lack of knowledge in the political and ideological substrata of the different interfaces is evident as well as the difficulties in understanding the real interconnections between global political agendas, national/regional landscape policies and the generation of ad hoc institutional structures for the interface.

Available studies have mainly explored sectoral parts and/or mechanisms of the interface within the complex web of processes interlinking research and policymaking in landscape planning (for an example focussing on knowledge co-production, see Enengel et al., 2012). Beyond the dichotomies and “research-policymaking” polarisations, a key concern refers to the comprehension and recognition of the relational geographies underpinning the interface, in

particular in relation to the role of grassroots and community-based actors (Guaran & Michelutti, 2018; on “knowledge brokering”, see Hering, 2016). In this sense, the basic conditions and the assets that make the “democratic” interface remain unexplored.

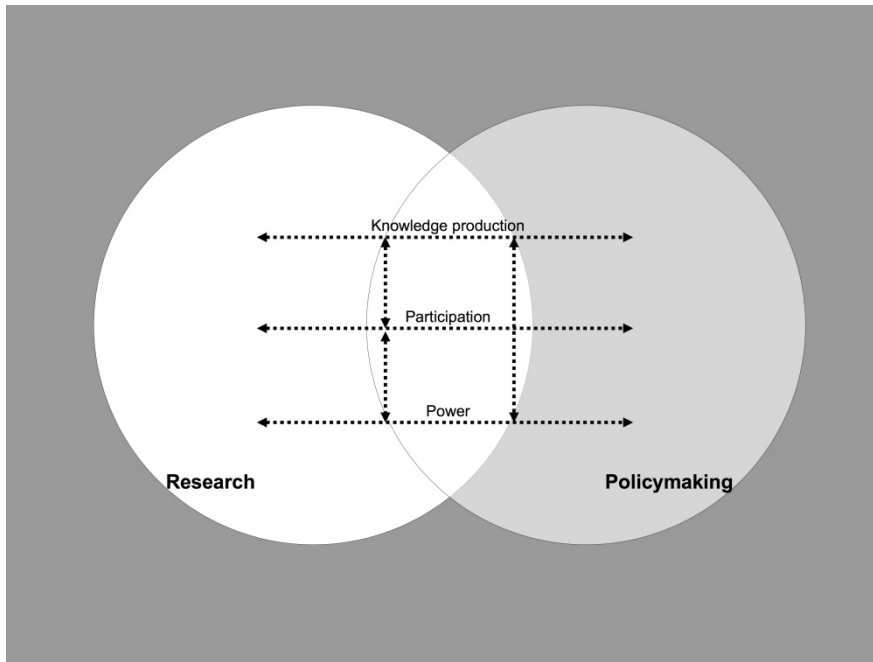
The research deals with these conceptual areas and methodological gaps in the landscape planning experiences of Friuli Venezia Giulia (FVG), Italy, using qualitative methods both in data collection and analysis. The data collection includes:

- Review of published and unpublished materials referring to regional planning experiences in FVG, with a focus on three main resources/planning processes (Regional-Territorial Plan, RTP, 2007; Plan for the Governance of the Territory, PGT, 2013; Regional Landscape Plan, RLP, 2018; see Table 1.);
- Direct and participatory observations on the RLP process (observations were collected during the scientific consultancy developed by the University of Udine for the FVG regional administration and the participatory process developed within the RLP framework from 2015 to 2017);
- Storytelling and in-depth interviews¹ with key informants participating to the RLP definition and implementation phase, through ‘Integrated Landscape Projects’, ILPs, in the period 2015–2021.

The data analysis responds to the research questions engaging three epistemological and conceptual dimensions (Figure 1): a cognitive dimension, which entails the types and processes of knowledge production in landscape planning and the (ideological) approaches to landscape research policies; a relational dimension, which involves the “uses” of participation and the role of knowledge co-production in “democratising” the interface; a power dimension, which includes the internal mechanisms of the interface and the rationales of its processes of change. Cognitive, relational and power dimensions underpin the analytical framework (knowledge production, participation and power) for the discussion of the research results.

1 Storytelling came mainly from planning actors, including regional administration officers and researchers; drawn on the three analytical areas of the research, semi-structured interviews involved key informants such as local politicians, members of civil society associations and committees, and landscape architects and practitioners. Due to their fragmented and ‘liquid’ character, unsuitable for this research format, extracts of interviews and storytelling do not appear directly in the text.

Figure 1. Analytical framework



Source: own elaboration

Table 1. FVG Landscape planning processes and interfaces

| PLANNING PROCESS | | INTERFACE RESEARCH-POLICYMAKING | KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION MECHANISMS | PARTICIPATORY ACTIVITIES | INSTITUTIONAL CONDITIONS |
|---------------------------------|--|--|---|--|---|
| Regional-Territorial Plan (RTP) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Vertical Interface': • Expert-driven research • Top-down planning processes (territorial approach to landscape) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General scientific consultancy • Sector-based consultancy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information gathering • Consultation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional government: Centre-right/Centre-left coalitions • Local authorities: • Region FVG/Provinces/Municipalities |
| Regional Landscape Plan (RLP) | RLP Set-up | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Horizontal Interface': • Multi-actor research • Bottom-up, collaborative planning process ('strategic'/integrated approach to landscape) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General scientific consultancy • Sector-based consultancy • Bottom-up processes of knowledge generation (municipalities and landscape 'areas') • Knowledge co-production (specific municipalities) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information gathering • Consultation • Participatory webGIS • Thematic workshops (municipality+landscape 'area' levels) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional government: Centre-left coalition • Local authorities: • Region FVG/Municipalities (provinces formally exist, but planning competencies are assigned to the regional administration; establishment of 'Inter-Municipal Territorial Units') |
| | RLP Implementation (Integrated Landscape Projects, ILPs) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Fragmented interface': • Expert-driven research • Vertical planning processes (horizontal processes in specific project areas; action-oriented approach to landscape) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sector-based consultancy • Site-specific consultancy | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information gathering • Consultation • Thematic workshops (specific project areas) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional government: Centre-right coalition • Local authorities: • Region FVG/Municipalities (Inter-Municipal Territorial Units <i>de facto</i> not operating) |

Source: own elaboration based on FVG, 2007, 2013, 2017, 2018

3 Results

3.1 “Vertical” interfaces: Regional-Territorial Plan (2007)-Plan for the Governance of the Territory (2013)

At the beginning of the 2000s, FVG territorial planning was still marked by the 1978 Regional Urban Plan, RUP (and following modifications/integrations). The need to update the RUP and other sector-based strategies (e.g. Plan for Rural Development) pushed the FVG regional administration to set-up a more comprehensive planning tool featuring urban, territorial/infrastructural and landscape measures. The result of this initiative was the RTP, which was provisionally approved in 2007 but not effectively implemented. In 2009, as part of a political change in the local government, the regional administration started a new planning process, the PGT, which ended in 2013 without factual results.

In spite of resulting from different political agendas (the regional administration was led by a left-wing coalition during the RTP process, while the PGT was developed under a right-wing government) and diverse socio-economic conditions (the 2008 crisis radically redefined FVG planning scenarios), RTP and PGT present elements of continuity in relation to role of the landscape in spatial planning and common dynamics structuring the interface research-policy making. In both experiences, the landscape is considered as an environmental-cultural device within a “territorial” framework. This conceptual/political position is related to the FVG application of the 2004 national law on landscape and heritage, which obliged regional administrations to create ad-hoc planning instruments for landscape protection or to include specific landscape regulations in their territorial plans (Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities, 2004). The FVG governments opted for integrated territorial strategies. In the RTP, the landscape was associated with the basic “environment” system, structuring the plan with the operative categories “mobility/infrastructures” and “urban/rural settlements” (FVG, 2007). In the PGT, landscape strategies were included in the “environmental and cultural system” (the categorisation of plan sectors also involved “socio-economic conditions”, “territory and urban settlements” and “mobility-energy infrastructures”). In this case, the landscape was the object of a “strategic policy” of protection (other policies included the development of “territorial competitiveness” and the poly-centric organization of the region) (FVG, 2013).

RTP and PGT developed “vertical” interfaces research-policy making (FVG, 2007, 2013). In line with other FVG public authorities’ strategies, landscape knowledge production was generated mainly inside the regional administration, through top-down systems involving the hierarchies of

public officers/technicians. The planning group was led by a dedicated councillor who connected the technical body of the regional administration with the political government (regional council): the transition from the political agenda for the territory to the definition of landscape policies and applicative norms was implemented internally. External experts (e.g. university researchers, professionals) provided thematic contributions on local/regional landscapes through contract-based relationships, apparently excluded from the strategic definition of topics, approaches and modalities of knowledge production (dialogue with the regional administration was mainly developed on informal bases, Guaran & Michelutti, 2018).

In these planning experiences, the role of social movements, community-based actors and informal subjects was marginal or inexistent. Structured on expert-driven, non-collaborative frameworks, RTP and PGT did not include participatory actions in decision-making. This top-down approach entailed also knowledge production processes: the researchers' engagement consisted mainly in clustering specific competences, in a direct relationship with regional officers, organised by planning sector. Public authorities' modus operandi avoided constructive elements in the epistemological set-up of the plans; even in the case of an established, formal relationship with specific parts of civil society (e.g. professional councils of architects, environmental NGOs), the involvement was minimal, developed mainly at an informative level.

RTP and PGT were informed by different political equilibria, but "power over" processes characterised both the experiences (for a classification of power types in spatial planning, see Healey, 2007). Besides pro forma declarations in the electoral campaigns, the theme "landscape" had a peripheral role in the agendas of the coalitions. Due to the absence of specific electoral mandates for the definition of landscape policies, landscape-related topics were embedded in the negotiation processes involving FVG territorial challenges (e.g. need to rethink the infrastructural nodes at the regional level²). These processes resulted in complex compromises, where the issue "landscape" was accessory. Landscape-oriented interests were incorporated into the fabric of power dynamics shaping territorial/infrastructural conflictive areas, increasing the distance between regional decision-makers and local communities (e.g. the perception of the poly-centric idea of the region as a consequence of clientele relationships between regional powers and local lobbies/voting basins). Besides not being implemented, neither plan generated consensus around landscape-related nodes, and the definition of

2 Some infrastructural key-nodes had/have a dominant position in the regional political debate (i.e., the renewal of the Trieste "old-port", the redevelopment of the A4 highway Trieste-Venice and the implementation of the "high-speed" railway system).

landscape measures was received as an imposition, leaving an institutional fracture as an inheritance for the following landscape planning experiences (Michelutti & Guaran, 2020).

3.2 “Horizontal” interfaces: Regional Landscape Plan (2018)

The RLP process (2014–2018) provoked a radical change in FVG planning practices, linked to a global redefinition of local/sub-regional authorities (e.g., the establishment of “Inter-Municipal Territorial Units”, substituting the former “Provinces” as intermediate administrative entities between the regional and local levels). In this framework, the regional administration (led by a left-wing coalition) decided to create a specific planning tool for local/regional landscapes, setting the landscape as a strategic and political asset. The regional government opted for a co-planning process with the Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities: by avoiding legal/normative conflicts, the national and regional administrative bodies used a *modus operandi* based on regular validations of each planning step (e.g. definition of the landscape “goods” and areas; production of landscape regulations, etc.). The regional administration (through the “Office for biodiversity and landscape”), the University of Udine and a private architectural atelier formed the core “planning team”, supported by several external professional/practitioners.

The RLP was structured in three parts (FVG, 2018): a normative part (defining protected environmental areas and heritage goods, and dividing the FVG territory in landscape “areas”, as required by the national law, Ministry of Heritage and Cultural Activities, 2004); a strategic part (developed through three “networks”, on heritage, environment and “soft mobility”, and a set of guidelines for specific landscape-related sectors, e.g. land consumption, sustainable tourism); a management part (with applicative measures, e.g. plan implementation through “integrated landscape projects”, indications for the future “regional landscape observatory”).

The RLP included a participatory process (2015–2016) fostering the strategic part of the plan through local data collection and assessment, and elaboration of proposals to protect and promote local and area-level landscapes; the space for contribution in the normative and management parts was very limited.³ The university was directly responsible of the process,

3 At the institutional level, FVG municipalities had the possibility to be included in the participatory process through ‘areal agreements’ with the regional administration. These agreements grouped municipalities with similar landscape characteristics (96 FVG municipalities opted for this solution, about the 40% of the total). In these municipalities, local and area workshops were implemented; further participatory activities involved primary and medium schools (about 5000 FVG students participated to the process). At the individual level, citizens living in FVG had access to an online webGIS tool, which allowed identifying-assessing areal, linear and specific-site goods, and best practices in landscape protection and promotion (more than 3000 records were collected in 7 months) (Bianchetti & Guaran, 2019; Michelutti & Guaran, 2020).

forming facilitators, coordinating the activities on the territory and providing data elaborations and strategies for decision-making. Despite the limitations of time and resources, civil society actors were engaged far beyond the expectations (and the interests) of the regional administration (Michelutti & Guaran, 2020).

Where previous projects had prepared a pro-active cultural substratum for community actors, RLP participatory activities fostered the implementation of knowledge co-production practices (e.g. collective analysis of landscape perceptions and memories collected in the local workshops). The RLP process expanded the horizontal dimension of the interface research-policymaking. The agreement between the FVG regional administration and the university went beyond a conventional scientific consultancy, triggering multi-level actions with other social counterparts involved in the planning process: while a contract-type relationship was in place for research tasks and outputs, the terms of reference gave room for the establishment of different, plural connections outside the planning team. An informal co-planning approach overlapped with the formal ties of the contracts: the systematic involvement of stakeholders “democratised” the planning arena towards a collective translation of the political agenda into the plan.

Horizontal dynamics in the interface research-policymaking opened up new spaces of negotiation: in the plan set-up, the negotiation processes among (co-)planners involved strategic assets (e.g. configuration of the networks, definition of landscape areas), having the regional administration as key power actor (Guaran & Michelutti, 2018). In the negotiations generated within the participatory process, the university played as a “power to” agent, facilitating the interactions between community-based actors and the regional administration. The results of RLP participatory activities were contradictory (Bianchetti & Guaran, 2019): while knowledge production on landscape was an inclusive terrain for contrasting rationalities, landscape “political” contents remained de facto inaccessible for community-based actors. Outside the formal RLP framework, a different level of negotiation involved local powers/lobbies and the regional government in clientele webs of relationships which frustrated the expectations of the civil society and undermined the RLP participatory approach: the real platforms for the management of landscape conflicts (e.g. governance of protected areas, control of urban development and transformation of city landscapes) remained in an informal, hidden domain. The breaking-up of the RLP bottom-up relational fabrics (and consensus) had critical consequences on the plan implementation and management phase (Michelutti & Guaran, 2019).

3.3 “Fragmented” interfaces: Integrated Landscape Projects (2018–2021)

In 2018, after the RLP final approval, a political replacement in the regional government (under control of a right-wing coalition) changed FVG landscape policies once again. The organisational structure of the RLP interface research-policymaking was overturned: the regional administration closed the “office for biodiversity and landscape”, moving human resources and tasks to a different unit, labelled “landscape, territorial and strategic planning”; the university lost its role as scientific counterpart for the RLP management part, remaining involved only in a partial way.

In this context, the RLP implementation is currently developed through “Integrated Landscape Projects” (ILPs), consisting in local, (multi-)municipal planning initiatives⁴, which include material interventions on landscapes (through a ‘design’ approach, e.g. cycle routes for landscape exploration, connecting heritage and environmental sites) and/or immaterial landscape protection and promotion actions/practices (through local agreements, e.g. joint campaigns for the promotion of the territory, as “food landscapes”, where specific territorial/landscape elements are associated with local products). The ILPs’ framework has provoked a fragmentation of landscape governance at the regional level, fostering (un-)structured, research-policymaking micro-interfaces, developed mainly at the local or intermediate/sub-regional scales. The RLP strategic framework remained as a formal background for landscape initiatives, which sporadically include a research substratum. These projects are frequently part of long-term strategies, launched before the RLP or developed in parallel with the plan (e.g. practices and research focussing on protection/promotion of rivers and their associated landscapes, known as “river-pacts/contracts”-“*contratti di fiume*”, which use an ad hoc funding scheme of the regional administration). Shaped by local-regional interests, ILPs adjust the RLP strategic recommendations to their objectives and the interconnections with the plan and the outcomes of the RLP participatory process are incidental or inexistent (on the consequences of the participation break-up in an educational perspective, see Michelutti & Guaran, 2020).

The ILPs’ experience confirms the centrality of local power dynamics in FVG landscape planning. The regional government maintains a technocratic approach to landscape, which is understood as an element of territorial governance dominated by urban development logics and infrastructural needs/priorities. The absence of a regional landscape observatory de facto assigns the

4 The regional administration funded about 30 ILPs, which involve 80 municipalities; independently from the participation with ILPs, FVG municipalities have to adapt their urban/territorial planning tools to the normative requirements set in the RLP (FVG, 2017).

monitoring activities to local offices of the national administration (in particular in relation to heritage sites and goods) and to civil society associations (mainly working on environmental concerns/risks). Control of the dynamics affecting the landscape at local/regional scales is complex, undermining the role of FVG as a counterpart for trans-regional and trans-national landscape governance (e.g. at the trans-regional level, the urban spread and landscape transformations in the areas between Veneto and FVG, Fabian et al., 2015; at the trans-national level, the protection policies of the Alpine mountain landscapes involving Slovenian and Austrian authorities, from a FVG case study perspective, see Bassi et al., 2019).

4 Discussion

4.1 Knowledge production

In FVG landscape planning, the relational fabrics between research, “politics” (understood as an interplay among political actors and actions) and “the political” (conceptualised as an “engaged”, constitutive element of democracy; for an ontological argumentation of “politics” and “the political”, see Mouffe, 2005) are embedded in two key processes: the transformation of multi-sector political agendas into specific landscape research policies/practices; and the conflictive overlap between formal, structured landscape research policies at the national/regional level and informal, non-expert, community-based knowledge production initiatives at the local level.

FVG governance of landscape research is informed by regional/local power processes and represents a “material” aspect of landscape politics: in the research agendas connected to planning processes, landscape conceptualisations and visions are shaped to achieve precise power equilibria and respond to specific powers’ needs, where “politics” affect “the political”. Far from free and/or neutral, landscape research policies are a terrain of power interplay and negotiation, and their definition results from the power systems in place, independently from the ideas of landscape adopted/promoted by the research counterparts; in this sense, both a technocratic, planning-oriented understanding of landscape (for the political implications of this approach, tied to visual and/or physical aspects of landscape, see Scott, 2011; Calderon & Butler, 2020), and a socio-cultural and institutional conceptualisation of landscape (for a critical analysis, see Gailing & Leibenath, 2017) are instruments of power. Power (re-)codifies the ideas of landscape.

Regardless of the coalitions governing the region (or their political positions), FVG experiences show how political party rhetoric on landscape protection and promotion are part of the propaganda instruments/strategies for the realisation of local/regional powers' interests. By disseminating simplistic axioms in the political debate, FVG political rhetoric assumes "dogmatic" rationalities (e.g., landscape as a vector in promoting regional identities, see Guaran & Michelutti, 2018). Their nature is ephemeral, but the subsequent ideological landscape narratives imply complex consequences in research policymaking. In FVG, changing, interest-oriented rationalities and narratives have limited the development of an inclusive, long-term research strategy on landscape at the regional level. Previous experiences and accumulated knowledge of research programs (involving also spatial and urban planning disciplinary domains) were incorporated in regional planning frameworks only in a minimal way: FVG research-policymaking interfaces have been continuously restructured.

At the same time the construction of formal landscape research policies in FVG is influenced by a lack of organic strategies at the national level (different declinations of this condition can be seen in many Italian contexts, e.g. Colavitti et al., 2021): objectives and frameworks, funding and assessment processes become fluid, (intentionally) undefined, fostering informal set-ups in research policymaking. Unstructured processes and non-formal networking are more evident when landscape research is connected to planning activities. In the FVG experience, a personal, clientele approach informs the interactions between political and research/academic spheres. These practices involve the definition of the plan framework and the power relations between political subjects and "knowledge producers" within and outside the planning group.

In this framework, the control of knowledge production mechanisms is a central space of conflict. Conflictive dynamics include the recognition of different types and approaches to knowledge production, and the relationships between expert-driven forms of knowledge generation and community-based knowledge production practices (on the tensions between expert and non-expert actors, and expert dominance in participatory processes, see Westberg & Waldenström, 2017; Calderon & Butler, 2020). Up until 2015, in FVG plans, the development of community-based and collaborative/collective forms of knowledge production were marginal or inexistent: RTP and PGT did not use specific participatory instruments, remaining tied to technocratic, expert-driven models of knowledge generation. Alternative experiences remained outside the planning system.

As an instrument constructed around a complex, plural idea of landscape, the RLP radically changed these conditions, triggering mechanisms of knowledge co-production and laying the foundation for long-term, democratic processes on landscape and landscape planning. Sectors of social movements and communities suffering from landscape-related conflicts understood knowledge production re-appropriations as instruments of political transformation towards new landscape governance set-ups (for an assessment of RLP participatory processes, see Bianchetti & Guaran, 2019). In this sense, the RLP experience represented a “point of no return”: since the plan approval, public control of knowledge production processes is recognised as a decisive factor for the effective involvement of community-based and non-formal political subjects (Michelutti & Guaran, 2020). In the face of this recognition, the RLP implementation through ILPs overturned the situation again, undermining collective/community knowledge initiatives and re-addressing the control of knowledge production processes in expert-driven, bureaucratic micro-systems at the (multi-)municipal scale. This regressive reaction questions the role and meaning of participation in the interface research-policymaking.

4.2 Participation

In planning processes, the landscape, understood in its polysemic political connotations, informs conflicts that involve power relations and rationalities, and the institutional set-ups structuring the social fabric (Calderon & Butler, 2020). Set on both inter-group and state-citizen fractures (for a typological classification, see Egoz et al., 2011; Ernstson, 2013), the evolution of FVG landscape planning tools shows the changing character of landscape conflicts in contexts where participatory practices and cultures are weak. Without institutionalised spaces for participation and the factual exclusion of community-based actors, RTP and PGT planning actions on landscapes were felt as impositions, with a general distrust on the effectiveness of FVG participatory practices (Guaran & Michelutti, 2019a; Bianchetti & Guaran, 2019), accentuated by other parallel experiences in urban and environmental planning. Despite a widespread need of genuine participation (on the multidimensional role of participatory practices in landscape planning, see Conrad et al., 2011a), RTP and PGT participatory activities were mainly based on information gathering and consultation (for a comparison with similar dynamics, see Butler & Berglund, 2014).

The RLP set-up radically changed RTP/PGT approaches, implementing large-scale participatory activities and experimenting co-productive actions. In specific contexts, community-based actors were deeply involved in the definition of strategic planning elements, generating long-term

initiatives towards community empowerment and the appropriation of democratic tools beyond landscape-related themes (Michelutti & Guaran, 2020). The plan implementation through ILPs (re-)established conventional relationships between citizens/communities, academia and policymakers. In this relational fabric, an interest-oriented participatory framework was/is merely instrumental in achieving consensus around planning choices. By delegitimising participation, making concessions to local lobbies and “using” public institutions, political/economic powers reinforced clientele systems involving private sector subjects (in this sense FVG experiences seem to follow the scenarios drawn in Vik, 2017).

The inheritance of expert-driven models and non-homogeneous organisational set-ups limit the RLP capacity to incorporate diverse community-based rationalities, but the socio-political effects of the plan building-up process were an achievement in itself (Pascolini, 2019): the RLP used an inclusive approach to regional authorities, power lobbies and communities’ conflictual landscape conceptualisations, accepting the landscape as a ‘state of complexity’ (Michelutti & Guaran, 2019). The political change after the RLP approval pushed the new administration to implement the RLP strategies refusing/ignoring the conflicts that emerged during the participatory process (provoking further contrasts in the current political debate). In FVG, despite the limited impact on the regional policy set-up (Bianchetti & Guaran, 2019), participatory approaches are now recognised as a pre-condition for spatial planning and a central instrument in engaging local/community-based actors in power interplays.

4.3 Power

The research results reaffirm the idea of landscape planning as a territory of conflict for powers (Gailing & Leibenath, 2017; Calderon & Butler, 2020). At the same time FVG experiences show how landscape governance/planning conflicts can trigger empowerment dynamics and shape community socio-political fabrics, transforming bureaucratic participatory practices into deep knowledge co-production and decision-making (re-)appropriation, towards “landscape democracy”. Beyond incidental contrasts in politics, vote-raising needs and interest-oriented choices, landscape planning and policymaking involve stakeholders’ rationalities in a radical way: by ordering individual-landscape and community-landscape relationships, planning-related power processes interrogate citizens’ mental models and cultures, and question community organisational structures (in all the possible notions of “community”). The RLP shows how empowerment processes can take place also in unstable institutional contexts, as in FVG, where political parties’ agreements are volatile and the local-regional discontinuity in governance make

long-term perspectives/scenarios unpredictable. Landscape power sharing equilibria are fragile, and ILPs demonstrate how power, as a pervasive institutional agent, can affect “neutral” planning mechanisms. These processes involve both vertical and horizontal organisational set-ups and interfaces: in spite of possible collaborative scenarios (for a focus on collaborative rationalities, see Innes and Booher, 2016), participation is a “place of power”, embedded in a complex fabric of negotiations.

In the FVG institutional set-up, the formal spaces of negotiation shaping the interface research-policy-making remain inaccessible. In this sense, the RLP was a borderline experience with an open, dynamic structure where the interface-evolving set-up involved both internal and external subjects (Pascolini, 2019). Despite its transformative framework, different conditions in the regional political environment make the RLP a static tool and ILPs choices for the plan implementation contradict the initial premises. In this context, landscape negotiation processes take place at a hidden level: negotiations are mainly controlled by private sector lobbies and formal political subjects while social actors and community-based stakeholders have only a minimal, indirect role (Guaran & Michelutti, 2019b). Without access to formal channels of negotiation, local platforms connecting knowledge production and landscape practices are forced to work in informal domains. These conditions create parallel research-policy-making interfaces where “closed” institutional circuits govern local, fragmented forms of landscape planning. Excluded from the structured interconnections between formal political subjects, local authorities and economic lobbies, community-based actors and citizens can find their “landscape futures” in alternative and antagonist initiatives.

5 Conclusions

In FVG experiences, the interface research-policy-making in landscape planning is an institutional terrain of conflict, a “work in progress” towards landscape democracy, revealing the complex and contradictory fabric of relationships between knowledge production processes, participatory practices and power mechanisms.

Knowledge production: in landscape planning, knowledge production is not neutral and assumes a political, ideological connotation. In this framework, the control on knowledge production processes is a key asset in the definition of power balances for landscape decision-making. In FVG, non-inclusive rationalities connected to top-down forms of knowledge production (RTP, PGT) have been substituted with participatory, open approaches, including knowledge co-production experiences (RLP). The FVG landscape planning evolution has showed how, by

questioning established (expert-driven) rationalities, bottom-up and community-based knowledge (co-)production initiatives foster a redefinition of participation as a strategic device of power in landscape planning;

Participation: participatory practices transform collective knowledge production into landscape (re-)appropriations, enabling plural approaches of landscape (understood as a democratic entity) and community empowerment. In FVG, despite a lack of participatory culture in planning (RTP-PGT), contradictory applications in local/regional politics (RLP) and powers' resistance (ILPs), the democratisation of landscape planning is in progress. By introducing horizontal elements in a vertical decision-making system, the RLP provides institutional/legal instruments for an integrated, inclusive redefinition of landscape power equilibria. The plan implementation shows the complexity and powers' opposition to this process;

Power balances: specific power rationalities underpin the translation of landscape governance agendas to planning practices, embedded in a multi-layered fabric of negotiation processes. In FVG, the absence of formal, structured spaces of negotiation around landscape decision-making has opened up informal negotiation processes built on the relationships between political subjects and economic lobbies (RTP-PGT). Without breaking consolidated power mechanisms, the FVG interface research-policymaking has evolved towards a progressive inclusion of plural social actors in landscape governance (RLP). The following fragmentation of the plan negotiation platform has implied the development of multiple power circuits informing different research-policymaking interfaces in landscape planning (ILPs).

In relation to the interlinks knowledge production-participation-power in landscape planning, the study suggests further research which may include:

- experimenting transdisciplinary approaches to knowledge (co-)production processes towards non-ideological forms of landscape understanding;
- redefining participatory procedures and frameworks for a political awareness of landscape (re-)appropriation processes;
- exploring alternative/antagonist interfaces research-policymaking in landscape planning as empowering instruments for grassroots institutions.

Further research depends on our capacity to re-think the conflictive interfaces between research and policymaking in landscape planning as political spaces, where power is recognised as a critical agent in its polysemic meanings.

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