Assessment of the Regional Landscape Plan of Sardinia (Italy): A participatory-action-research case study type

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ABSTRACT

The planning activity of the regional administration of Sardinia (Italy) has undergone a deep change after the approval of the Regional Landscape Plan (RLP), which establishes the directions for nearly any future planning activity in Sardinia, and requires that actual sectoral and local plans, as well as plans for protected areas, be changed to comply with its directions. This mandatory adjustment process can be conflictual, if the administrations responsible for these plans disagree with the rules established by the RLP.

On these bases, this essay develops a discussion around two issues concerning public participation in the Sardinian RLP. The first part focuses on the extent to which integration of different stakeholders was looked for in the plan preparation and what the likely consequences of this degree of participation are. The second part discusses how local communities may participate in the implementation process of the RLP. This assessment builds on empirical studies on conflictual issues concerning the Sardinian RLP analyzed through Multicriteria analysis and Contingent Valuation.

The contribution of this essay to define an on-going strategic assessment of the RLP identifies two main normative points. First, the right concept of subsidiarity has to be restored in the RLP planning implementation code. Second, the regional planning activity has to be based on a true cooperative-planning approach so that the relations between the regional administration and the cities may lose their conflict-derived inefficiency.

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Introduction

Early recognition and integration of the local communities' expectations into regional planning policies are necessary conditions for the sustainability of strategic planning processes (see Directive 42/2001/EC of the European Union). They require connecting planning choices to preferences and needs of the members of local communities, comprised of both strong stakeholders and of formal and informal organizations, through which citizens may express their aspirations, needs, and expectations concerning the organization of the urban space. Regional and local planning processes are, therefore, significant grounds to analyze public policies from a participatory point of view, in an SEA-based framework.

The planning activity of the regional administration of Sardinia (Italy) has undergone a deep change after the approval of the Regional Landscape Plan (RLP), which establishes the directions for nearly any future planning activity in Sardinia, and requires that actual sectoral and local plans, as well as plans for protected areas, be changed to comply with its directions. This mandatory adjustment process can be conflictual, if the administrations responsible for these plans disagree with the rules established by the RLP.

On these bases, this paper develops a discussion about two issues concerning public participation in the Sardinian RLP. The first part focuses on the extent to which integration of different stakeholders was looked for in the plan preparation and what the likely consequences of this degree of participation are. By means of one-to-one semi-structured interviews carried out in Italian, some professionals involved in the making of the plan were asked to provide an informed insight on how horizontal cooperation, vertical integration, and inclusiveness had been looked for, and whether the level of participation was satisfactory. As for the implementation, possible consequences of inconsistencies between the RLP and local master plans, as well as conflicts between the regional and the municipal administrations, were explored.

The second part discusses how local communities may participate in the implementation process of the RLP. This assessment builds on an empirical study on conflictual issues concerning the Sardinian RLP analyzed through Multicriteria analysis (MCA) and Contingent Valuation (CV). The disparities brought out by the application of these two methods clearly point to the selection of...
criteria, usually identified by experts on various fields. Since the inclusion/exclusion of a criterion can reverse the results of the classification procedures, the choice of the criteria is decisive for the ranking of the scenarios. If this choice were open to public participation, it would be possible to implement decision processes where experts and the local community would share and possibly build common expectations on the future of their city environment.

Finally, the results arising from the views of privileged stakeholders and local communities are compared, and some lessons that can be learned from the intermix of the two approaches are identified.

Privileged stakeholders and the Regional Landscape Plan

With its approximately 24,000 square meters, Sardinia is the second-largest island in the Mediterranean Sea; its population density is rather low, as it counts less than 1.7 million inhabitants according to the 2001 National Census. The vast majority of Sardinians live close to the sea, and especially in the two densely urbanized areas around the two major cities (Cagliari and Sassari), while the inner areas of the island, hilly and mostly badly connected to the rest of the island, are sparsely populated. This uneven concentration of population parallels the island’s unbalanced economic development, as in coastal areas the majority of economic activities takes place. The peculiar combination of Sardinia’s insularity, geographical distance from the mainland, culture and history, completely different to those of the rest of Italy, has to be taken into account to explain the special status of “Autonomous Region” granted to the island soon after the birth of the Italian republic. This means that, together with three other regions and two provinces, Sardinia exerts a more robust legislative power than the majority of the rest of Italian regions.

It is therefore not surprising, given this context, that the Regional Landscape Plan of Sardinia was the first statutory landscape plan with regional dimensions produced in Italy under the new legislation. Its statutory character stems from both a national law (National Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape), which required that each regional executive committee should approve a landscape plan, and from regional law no. 8 of November 25, 2004, which required that the Sardinian RLP for the coastal areas be approved within one year since the approval of the law itself. The Regional Administration of Sardinia initially focused on the coastal zone because of the complexity of development conflicts arising from tourism (on which a large part of the economy of the island relies) and other development, and owing to the fact that thirteen out of the fourteen previous landscape plans covering coastal areas, which contained some restrictions on coastal development, had been quashed in 2003 in a court decision.

Following approval of the plan in 2006, restrictions and prohibitions (on development of land and on certain changes in land uses) stemming from the plan are currently in force, in order to protect a part of the island considered economically strategic and environmentally sensitive. Restrictions and prohibitions are set out by the plan by means of a system of rules.

Since the plan has come into force very recently, an evaluation of the outcomes of the RLP would require an examination of the consequences and changes produced by the plan; however, as some scholars (Albrechts, 2004; Tewdwr-Jones, 2004) have pointed out, planning has to do not only with implementation and performance, but also with processes (Faludi, 2000). It is therefore appropriate to evaluate the Sardinian RLP by making reference to its contents (albeit only partially put into practice) and to the making of the plan.

In its premises, the Planning Implementation Code of the RLP (PIC) declares that its principles “constitute a framework and a reference for the sustainable development of the regional territory, based upon a balance between social needs, economic activities and environment” (article 3). However, nowhere does the plan provide a definition of “sustainable development,” nor does it clearly relate its policies and actions with these three traditional components of sustainability. Furthermore, a reading of the documents contained in the plan suggests that sustainable development, as pursued in the plan, is imbalanced towards the environmental component, while economic and social aspects seem not to be given the same importance as the environmental ones. Therefore, in order to establish whether the RLP, formally a plan for the landscape, but in practice a normative framework for other types of plans, pursues this objective, the first part of this paper attempts to evaluate to what extent its contents, both rules and policies, are consistent with the declared aim of its principles, that of pursuing a sustainable, balanced development.

This section is organized as follows. In the first paragraph, justification for a qualitative approach is provided, together with an account of the selection of the interviewees; in the second paragraph, the making of the interviews is described, while the third paragraph presents the content of the interviews. Finally, the forth paragraph discusses the findings.

A qualitative approach

Since personal values and beliefs, as well as professional expertise, affect the way sustainability is understood, the idea of a “logically ordered, objective reality that we can come to know” (Babbie, 1998, p. 50) does not hold; many contrasting points of view exist, and for this reason this research relies on the collection of “data based on privileged information” (Denscombe, 1998, p. 111). This choice has been judged as the best possible one, since the process of the plan, the complexity of its language, and the relationship to the wider planning system can be understood only by informed testimonies with a “high degree of credibility” (Babbie, 1998, p. 133).

By attempting to “see things from that person’s [an expert] point of view” (Bogdan and Taylor, as cited in Bryman, 2001, p. 14, and in Prior, 1997, p. 64) about the essence and possible consequences of the rules and measures of the Sardinian RLP, we focus on “how people interpret the world” (May, 2001, p. 14). The use of qualitative research has therefore been considered to be necessary to obtain information from privileged observers “in a special position to know” (Denscombe, 1998, p. 111), the sole possible source of additional information about the preparation of the plan, beyond that which can be understood from the documents. Therefore, five privileged testimonies (next referred to as “Interviewee A,” “Interviewee B,” “Interviewee C,” “Interviewee D” and “Interviewee E”) were selected among academics and public officers currently working for the Regional Administration of Sardinia, who took part in the process (approximately one hundred public officers, academics and consultants). Five interviewees were chosen on the basis of three criteria, as follows:

- Specific area of competence: the main concern was that of approaching the research with a global perspective, not restricted to landscape quality or environmental matters only. Since the RLPs contents (both descriptive and prescriptive ones) were grouped into three categories (natural assets, cultural heritage, and built environment), the technical team responsible for the preparation of the plan was divided into four working groups, one for each of the three categories, plus one specifically dealing with landscape character areas. A coordination scheme was also set up to link contributions from the thematic groups. For this research it was considered that members of different work-
ing groups would have different insights about approaches to sustainability, so respondents were also selected from different working groups.

- Availability: not all the professionals involved in the making of the Sardinian RLP live in Sardinia. This particularly applies to the members of the scientific committee, some of whom are distinguished academics from various universities all over Italy. However, their contribution to the RLP mainly focused on providing guidance about the form of the plan, and giving suggestions and opinions to ensure the compliance of the plan to both the European Landscape Convention and the National Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape (Regione, 2006c, p. 1), which, although significant, is not among the topics of this study. Therefore, issues of availability, together with constraints on time and scope of the research suggested a course of action in which members of the scientific committee would not need to be interviewed.

- Likely contribution of the interviewees to the research: this was the greatest concern in selecting the interviewees. First, they were all involved in the making of the plan, so there was a risk that they would tend to justify its choices, rather than provide an objective insight. Second, some of the interviewees are senior officers and managers, so there could have been an issue of power relations (Valentine, 2005), which means that some informants could have tried to control access to information. Finally, there was a concern about the impact of the interviewer’s identity (Denscombe, 1998), caused by the fact that the interviewer worked for the regional administration shortly before the beginning of the preparation of the Sardinian RLP, therefore four out of five interviewees were previously known. However, this similar professional expertise and educational qualification (Denscombe, 1998) and shared membership with their social group (Miller and Glassner, 1997) proved to be an opportunity for the research, since it made it easier to make arrangements for the interviews and to obtain the respondents’ availability; furthermore, this already established professional relationship was in fact discovered to affect positively the responses from the informants (Denscombe, 1998; Valentine, 2005), some of whom gave information they might not have revealed to somebody they did not know or trust.

The five selected interviewees were architects, engineers and planners, involved in the plan preparation with different roles and responsibilities. Three of them were selected from the working groups dealing respectively with natural assets, cultural heritage and built environment, while the other two are an academic and a senior public officer of the regional administration.

Fieldwork: the making of the interviews

The interviews were carried out in August 2007. They were conducted in the interviewees’ workplaces (all based in the same city), therefore neither issues of safety (Valentine, 2005) nor concerns of limited resources and travel cost (Denscombe, 1998) affected the research.

The method chosen was that of one-to-one semi-structured interviews, with “a general plan of enquiry but not a specific set of questions that must be asked in particular words and with a particular order” (Babbie, 1998, p. 290). Not only does this type of interview allow to collect “an in-depth insight to the topic” (Denscombe, 1998, p. 111), but it is also extremely flexible (Babbie, 1998), since it lets the interviewee free to explain “all the complexities and contradictions” (Valentine, 2005, p. 110) of the phenomenon observed and to raise issues which were not thought of by the researchers.

At the beginning of each interview, each participant was asked for freely given informed consent to take part in the research, in accordance with the statement of ethical practice of the British Sociological Association (BSA, 2008).

Design of the interviews and questions asked

Semi-structured interviews are not carried out on the basis of a specific and rigid set of questions to be asked in a certain order and with particular words. On the contrary, they are conducted in a flexible way, and tailored to the interviewees and to their responses to previous questions, having always consideration to the aim of the research.

For this reason, a general list of topics of interest and some questions were prepared prior to the interviews. A general framework for the topics covered and the questions raised is here presented. It should be noticed, though, that some areas investigated overlap in some respects.

The first topic covered the treatment of sustainability in the plan, and was always preceded with a reading of article 3 of the PIc, which advocates “a balance between social needs, economic activities and environment.” The interviewees were then asked what kind of sustainability, in their opinion, the plan pursues, and whether the code only affirms a theoretical principle, or provides the means to put this statement into practice. On the basis of individual responses to the previous question, a series of detailed questions were then asked, to allow the respondents to expand upon the topic, to give reasons for their answers and, when possible, to make reference to specific examples. Among these questions:

- How did the plan address the issue of consumption of renewable/non-renewable resources, protection of biodiversity and safeguard of the landscape?
- How were economic activities considered by the plan?
- How were participation and information sought?
- Why was a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) not performed?
- Does a landscape plan really need to tackle economic, social and environmental issues?

The second general topic looked into the plan preparation process of the Sardinian RLP, especially the decision-making process, by examining to what extent participation and integration of different stakeholders in the making of the plan were sought. This topic was developed by means of a series of more detailed questions, which depended on the responsibilities of each respondent in the preparation and implementation of the plan. The relation, or conflict, between the so-called “technical knowledge” (scientific and technical expertise) and “common knowledge” (owned by common people who live in a particular place, and stemming from their experience and perception of issues and concerns related to that place) in deciding upon the meaning, quality, and future of places and spaces was also investigated. Among these questions:

- In what phases of the plan-preparation, and in what ways, were municipalities, provinces, private sector and other stakeholders involved?
- What level of participation has been achieved? Was it appropriate?

The third general topic examined the idea of governance (Vigar et al., 2004) reflected in the Sardinian RLP. The relationship between the RLP, provincial plans and local masterplans is here assumed to reflect the relationship between different administrative tiers, that is region, provinces and municipalities. In particular,
three of the interviewees, who are also working on the implementa-
tion of the plan, were asked to discuss the consequences of inconsist-
encies between the Sardinian RLP and the local master-
plans, and to explain possible conflicts between the regional and
the municipal administrations, where possible providing specific
examples they had encountered. The other two interviewees, who
took part in the preparation of the plan but not in its implementa-
tion, were given by the interviewer some of those examples as
inputs, so as to stimulate a theoretical reflection on the relation
between different tiers of government as implied by the RLP.

With regard to critical aspects of the research strategy here
used, it is worth pointing out that qualitative research methods are
not concerned with issues of generalization, therefore the insights
provided by the interviewees should not be considered as repre-
sentatives of those either of the regional administration or of the
academics. Moreover, different insights could have been provided
if the research had included, for instance, representatives from
city councils, environmental groups, economic sector (especially
tourism and construction), not interviewed because of constraints
on time and length of the study.

Another factor which limits the breadth of this study is its focus
on the contents and on the plan preparation, therefore on potential,
rather than actual, effects. This is partly due to the fact that the
implementation of the plan had started shortly before the making
of the interviews.

As for the interviewing process, each interview lasted about an
hour. The management and control of each interview was quite
challenging, especially with regard to the transition from a topic
to the following one and to the attitude of all of the interviewees,
quite passionate about the topic, and willing to add extra informa-
tion, sometimes beyond the scope of this research. This required a
constant monitoring on the interviewer’s part.

Findings

As expected, different opinions and judgments about the con-
tribution of the RLP to sustainable development emerged from the
interviews, therefore similarities and dissimilarities were looked for
(Babbie, 1998), in order to understand whether a shared per-
ception of the issue exists and to find out why different respondents
disagreed on the likely effects of the RLP.

The Sardinian RLP and sustainability

Explicit reference to sustainable development, and to its three
traditional components, is contained both in the regional law which
preceded and required the preparation and approval of the Sar-
dinian RLP, and in the plan itself. However, from a mere reading of
the documents of the plan, it is not clear how this formal commit-
ment relates to policies and rules contained in the plan, especially
as far as economic and social sustainability are concerned, and
whether a landscape plan is an appropriate means of delivering
balanced, sustainable development. This ambiguity was reflected in
the interviewees’ answers, since the respondents provided differ-
ent, and sometimes opposing, point of views, which can be grouped
into two categories as follows.

It has to be pointed out that the categorization which is dis-
cussed below is based on the opinions of only five interviewees, so
it has to be considered as a conceptual starting point for future
research rather than an attempt of drawing general conclusions.
The first group of interviewees believed that, in spite of the
formal commitment contained in the plan and anticipated by the
regional law, social and economic development lie beyond the
scope of a landscape plan, which should be restricted to environ-
mental objectives, aesthetic concerns, and land-use related issues.
For this reason, they argued that a careful selection of princi-
pies deriving from the European Spatial Development Perspective
and from the European Landscape Convention was necessary, and
that this selection had to leave out other principles not directly
related with the aim of a landscape plan—that of laying down “basic
emphases, general principles and strategic choices by which deci-
sions on landscape protection, management and planning are to be
guided” (CE, 2004, article 38 of the Commentary Report).

Among the principles set by the Sardinian RLP, and whose
application was believed to contribute to sustainability, the inter-
viewees made explicit reference to safeguarding of habitats (Inte-
viewee A) and to prevention of consumption of non-renewable
resources (Interviewees B and C), especially water and land. For
example, it was emphasized that many of the rules contained in the
Sardinian RLP prohibit new developments in greenfield sites, and
demand that new housing supply, if needed, should be generated
primarily by means of urban renewal (according to interviewee
B, this also entails regeneration of abandoned areas and buildings,
especially in town centers, thus indirectly contributing to economic
development and social aims). Only when the regeneration of pre-
viously developed land is demonstrated, by means of demographic
analysis, to be insufficient to meet the needs for new houses, can
greenfield sites be developed under very restrictive conditions.
These measures, which prevail over the zoning system of munic-
ipal masterplans, are meant as a tool to prevent urban sprawl
and consumption of land which could be reserved for agriculture,
amenities, or other activities, if judged to be eco-friendly. To sum
up, according to these three interviewees, a plan for the landscape
must not be considered a comprehensive planning tool, since its
scope would be restricted to environmental and aesthetic matters.
As a consequence, rules and policies contained in the plan were
regarded not as effective in promoting environmental sustainability.

A completely different opinion emerged from the other two
interviewees, who judged the plan inconsistent with its statement
of intent. The various reasons they put forward to justify this opin-
ion are next grouped according to the three traditional components
of sustainability.

Environmental sustainability

In the opinion of Interviewees D and E, the plan is somewhat
ineffective if reference is made to sustainability in general, but it
is stronger in terms of environmental sustainability. Some positive
aspects of the plan were identified, however, each of them was
somewhat diminished by stressing its omissions and failures.

The analysis of the elements which constitute the Sardinian natural
environment and landscape was regarded as “strong.” Commit-
ment to protection of current levels of quality of places was
considered to have been consistently put into practice by means of
a series of rules aimed at preventing loss of natural assets and cul-
tural heritage, and at preserving or recreating identity and vibrancy
in town centers. It was noticed, though, that the plan pursues “land-
scape protection” (CE, 2004, article 1.1) rather than “landscape
management” (CE, 2004, article 1.1.e), or, in other words, that
the rules and policies of the Sardinian RLP “freeze” natural and built
landscapes (Interviewee D) by “impeding that any transformation
could take place” (Interviewee E). Such an approach, in the opinion
of Interviewee E, can be tolerated only in a context, such as the Sar-
dinian one, where environmental problems are not serious (with
only few, circumscribed exceptions) and diffuse. On the contrary,
in other regions of Italy, where widespread environmental risks exist
(because of either natural phenomena or human activities), this
commitment to protect the present situation of places rather than
to manage their change can produce adverse effects and exacerbate
the situation; to put it with Interviewee E, “the more environmen-
tally sensitive and fragile a landscape is, the more one needs to give
directions and rules to guide processes of transformation.”
Finally, as for the absence of an SEA of the plan, some interviewees appeared reluctant to go into details. An appraisal procedure was said to have been studied (Interviewees A and E), but the study was not completed. Lack of time (Interviewee B) and absence of legal requirement (Interviewee A) were put forward as an explanation. This latter justification stems from the absence, at the time the Sardinian RLP was approved, of a national law requiring a formal assessment of the effects of spatial and sectoral plans on the environment; however, it was also admitted that there was a statutory requirement, deriving from the Directive no. 42/2001/EC of the European Union, even in the absence of a national law (Interviewee A).

Economic sustainability

As for economic sustainability, two main deficiencies of the plan were identified. The first one concerns the absence of any reference to economic issues (Interviewee D), the only exception being some economic data contained in the reports concerning the economic structure of the landscape units. These data, however, have been judged as “a mere repetition of data already available in any report published by the National Census” (Interviewee D). It was suggested that a certain neglect of economic concerns was embedded in the very early stages of the planning process, that of the selection of the more appropriate type of plan. Regional governments are required by the National Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape to approve either a “Regional Spatial Plan for Land Management with Specific Consideration of Landscape Values,” or a “Plan for the Landscape,” but the choice of which one is left to the discretion of the regions. In the opinion of Interviewee E, the former is more capable of envisioning and guiding transformation and development, while the latter is more focused on protecting and enhancing landscape. As a consequence, it would be the choice of the type of plan itself that leads towards a limited consideration of economic issues.

The second weakness was identified in the fact that the plan failed to keep its promise of bringing economic development because of the lack of coordination between the Sardinian RLP and the “Plan for Sustainable Tourism Development” (PSTD, Interviewee D). Tourism is regarded as a strategic and at the same time as a risky sector for the economic growth of the island. On the one hand, tourists are attracted by distinguishing nature, environment, and cultural identity of Sardinia (Hospers, 2003); on the other hand, tourism activities are mainly concentrated in coastal areas and in summer, a relatively short period of the year. Furthermore, along the coastline, private houses for rent can accommodate (legally or illegally) four times as many tourists as hotels and resorts (Regione, the coastline, private houses for rent can accommodate (legally or illegally) four times as many tourists as hotels and resorts (Regione, 2004). Contrary to this decision, the two plans eventually followed two different paths, and the PSTD was presented for its approval several months after the approval of the RLP (Regione, 2007a). Therefore, in the opinion of Interviewee D, the Sardinian RLP lacks one ingredient which would have been necessary, that is an appraisal of the impacts of economic and social activities in general, and of tourism in particular, on landscape and environment. Consequently, the making of the plan itself would be undermined by this deficiency, since rules and policies would have stemmed directly from a scientific analysis of the present situation without any prior evaluation of the factors which impact on the territory, and of the magnitude of this impact.

Social sustainability

As for social sustainability, understood as a complex subject made up of cooperation of different tiers of government, integration of public and private sector, inclusion of stakeholders in the decision-making process, transparency and information about decisions made on scientific and technical grounds, this topic proved to be the most challenging one.

Aims and objectives of the plan were defined in a political and technical process which involved the regional administration only (Interviewees A and C). Only after the adoption of the plan (however, before its approval) were lower tiers of government and other stakeholders involved in public meetings (the so-called “conferenze di co-pianificazione”, “cooperative-planning conferences”) on a territorial, rather than thematic, basis. A single meeting concerned one or two landscape units, so a total of twenty-three meetings were held.

As for their role, it was admitted (Interviewee C) that the aim of the meetings was more informative than participative, so the consultation phase consisted of explaining principles, aims and contents of the Sardinian RLP to those key actors whose cooperation was needed for the implementation of the plan, that is, municipalities. Different reasons were put forward as a justification for such a restricted interpretation of participation. First, one leitmotiv was that of lack of time (Interviewees B, C and E), since the plan had to be approved within the space of a year. Second, the absence of participation during the making of the plan was justified in terms of institutional competences (Interviewee E), which means that only the regional government would be responsible for the definition of regional policies and rules. Third, it was also suggested (Interviewee B) that the absence of a proper consultation phase was legitimized by the character of the RLP itself. According to this interpretation, participation was not required because the RLP would simply set rules for other plans, and in particular for municipal masterplans; as a result, wider participation would be required only when it comes to adjusting masterplans, and especially their zoning schemes, to the RLP, because only in this phase would interests and expectations be affected in concrete terms.

It was somewhat agreed that the process of adjustment of the municipal masterplans to the rules of the Sardinian RLP, through which policies and rules contained in the regional plan are to be implemented, would compensate for the lack of consultation during the making of the regional plan (Interviewees B, C, and E). Article 11 of the PIC clearly states that the Sardinian RLP is to be implemented by means of other plans (such as municipal and provincial plans) and by means of individual agreements (the so-called “intese”) between regional, provincial and local governments. Therefore, the plan relies on other planning tools to implement its policies. Technical support and financial resources are available to allow every municipality to prepare a new masterplan (Interviewees B and C). All the municipalities whose territory overlaps the coastal areas, that is around 100, are entitled to such funds, which were made available in December 2006. However, as of August 2007, only five municipalities actually made request for these resources (Interviewee B). The reason for such an “omission” seems to be that a municipal government is obliged to approve its masterplan in compliance with the Sardinian RLP within one year of the funds being granted. This does not mean that municipalities can apply the rules of the RLP only if they wish, because, if they do not modify their plans, almost any development of land is forbidden by the regional plan, whose rules become immediately effective in the absence of a compliant land-use plan (Interviewee B).
This shows that, rather than drawing on consensus and wide participation, which are considered as ordinary tools to facilitate the implementation of a spatial plan (Zonneveld, 2005), the delivery of the Sardinian RLP relies on a normative approach. The effectiveness of this kind of approach as a tool to implement a regional strategy has been questioned (Interviewee E) on the basis of an historical precedent, that of the small number of municipal masterplans approved in compliance with the former landscape plans in force in Sardinia.

Within this context, participation would take two different forms. The first one concerns involvement of the general public in the making, or in the adjustment, of local masterplans; the second one concerns cooperation and integration between different administrative tiers and stakeholders in the mechanism of the intese. Some interviewees’ insights about meanings and limitations of these two ways of pursuing both public participation and vertical integration are next provided.

The Sardinian RLP is not a plan aimed to simply control land uses. It was argued by Interviewee A that the Sardinian RLP does not spatially allocate land uses, thus it should not be qualified as a plan. However, to put it with Interviewee E,

The fact that somebody says that the [Sardinian] RLP is not a ‘plan’ does not surprise me, because it is, in fact, a ‘meta-plan’ [that is, a plan which controls other plans], although it is a rather weak meta-plan… When it affirms its principles, it mentions sectoral policies and plans, local masterplans and provincial plans. But, when it comes to practice, it is only concerned about municipal masterplans, land-use plans.

This statement was indirectly supported by the fact that, when asked about the impact of the RLP on other policies or plan, all the interviewees automatically referred to urban masterplans, as if the RLP were a framework for land-use plans only. Public participation during the making of city masterplans in Italy is, by law, carried out in the form of written comments on an adopted draft of the plan, so there appears to be the risk of a limited involvement of stakeholders and general public in the implementation of the Sardinian RLP, which would parallel that occurred in the preparation. However, since an SEA has to be carried out when preparing a new masterplan or making an existent one compliant with the Sardinian RLP (Regione, 2007b), it has been argued that wide public participation will be sought in accordance to good practice already established for the SEA process (Interviewee B). This would mean that municipalities should organize public meetings, taking, for instance, the form of fora and workshops: allegedly, though, the same municipal governments who complained about not being involved in the making of the Sardinian RLP seem not to be willing to allow their citizens to take part in the making of their masterplans (Interviewee C).

As for vertical integration, both positive and negative sides of the intese, and of their consequences on relations between regional, provincial and municipal governments, have been pointed out by the interviewees.

On the negative side, it has been maintained that the Sardinian RLP provides only a few rules concerning landscape protection and prohibition of activities, and omits to give rules concerning transformation of land (Interviewees D and E). This absence of a formal, standard, and complete set of rules to guide transformation, management, and development of land in compliance with principles and aims set by the Sardinian RLP would force municipal administrations to make compromises about the contents of their masterplans. In other words, the intese risk allowing the regional administration to interfere with the making of municipal masterplans, while this is actually an exclusive responsibility and power of municipal administrations (Interviewee D), since it is only they who can define programs and plans for development and transformation of land (CEC, 2000, p. 24). As a consequence, there might be a risk that the regional administration, with the RLP, exerts absolute power on spatial planning, retaining its own power on spatial strategies (moreover, limiting public participation and vertical integration and avoiding independent appraisal of the strategy) and compelling both municipalities and provinces to negotiate their plans with the regional administration. This also entails a risk of social inequality, because results of such compromises could be different for each municipality or province (Interviewee D), if affected by their bargaining powers and political or economic strength.

Advocates of the intese contend that this mechanism allows for an effective integration between regional and municipal governments. It is during the intese, in fact, that inconsistencies between masterplans and the Sardinian RLP can be justified on both technical and political grounds (Interviewee B) and development plans not allowed by the regional plan can justify their assumptions, methodologies, choices on the basis of their analyses. In this respect, the intese would address an issue of scale, since the Sardinian RLP based its policies and rules on analyses at the regional scale, while local masterplans and development plans carry out their analyses at a much more detailed scale. Therefore, the intese would be a tool that would help preserve municipal powers, rather than constrain them.

An example raised by two interviewees when stimulated on public participation was that of the definition of landscape character areas. Both the spatial distribution of coastal landscape areas and the landscape units have been defined in scientific terms, by means of GIS-based analysis and interpretation of aerial photographs. It was suggested that this process of definition and identification of landscapes leads to a “romantic” and “old-fashioned” interpretation, “à la Humboldt,” according to Interviewee D, and interprets in a very narrow way the definition of landscape provided by the Council of Europe. As both Interviewee D and E remarked, the European Landscape Convention clearly implies that landscape does not even exist without the mediation of people’s perception (Selman, 2006). Landscape, according to the Convention, far from being defined by aesthetic qualities and scenic views, is shaped by people’s experience and interpretation. However, landscape and landscape character areas were defined by experts and not by people (or municipal administrations, who ought to represent their citizens) on scientific grounds.

Drawing upon the findings presented in this paragraph, the next section will put the general and theoretical insights provided by the interviewees into a specific context by looking at a case study. The issues of integration, cooperation, inclusion and transparency, in this section analyzed by means of a qualitative piece of research, will next be examined with reference to the Sardinian city of Sinnai, one of the municipalities whose territory overlaps the coastal area as defined by the plan, and thus compelled to adjust its masterplan according to the RLP requirements. This allows for a deeper understanding of what the general framework presented in this paragraph entails at the local level, and what the consequences of the normative approach set by the RLP can be in terms of communication, cooperation and mutual trust between the regional and the local governments.

Local communities and the Regional Landscape Plan

The process of adjustment of the Masterplan of the city of Sinnai (MPS) to the RLP is quite complicated. The MPS has to conform itself to the descriptive, prescriptive and propositive contents of the RLP, to the general planning rules and directives established by the RLP
for the coastal zones, and to the strategic policies for “conserva-
tion and protection, maintenance, improvement or restoration of
the landscape values identified in the landscape units.” (PIC, arti-
cle 7, paragraph 1). The relationships between landscape values,
characteristics of the zones and categories of strategic actions are
described in Appendix A of the PIC.

In this section, a significant and problematic issue concerning
the change of the MPS in order to follow the RLP is put in evidence
and discussed. This aspect is referred: i) to the areas which belong
to the “Coastal zone” according to the PIC; these zones roughly cor-
respond to the “Coastal tourist zones” (labeled as “F” zones) of the
MPS; ii) to the residential areas, identified as “C” zones in the actual
MPS immediately adjacent to the consolidated urban fabric of the
city; these zones may or may not correspond to the “Programmed
expansions” of the PIC.

This question is extremely important, in the context of the adap-
tation process of the urban planning rules of cities and provinces
to the RLP, for the city of Sinnai, whose territory is partly inside
and partly outside the boundary of the coastal zone defined by the
PIC. Outside the boundary is the consolidated urban fabric which
roughly corresponds to the historic center, the most recent devel-
opments and the expansion zones (the “C” zones), where the city
development is planned by the MPS but has not taken place yet.
The coastal zone, which is an administrative island of the city (that is,
a territory belonging to the municipality but non-contiguous with
the main part, the one where the urban area is located), has a con-
solidated small residential nucleus, and some areas where houses
should be built in the near future, according to the masterplan,
which defines these zones as “F” (tourist) zones.

The question of the adaptation process of the actual plans
to the RLP is of paramount importance for the effectiveness
of the new planning policies of the Sardinian regional admin-
istration, and for the definition of a general model for the
strategic assessment of city planning based on the analysis of per-
ceived needs and expectations of the local communities, through
sustainable-development-oriented governance processes (Cau and
Zoppi, 2008).

Sinnai is an important urban center of the metropolitan area
of Cagliari, the regional capital city of Sardinia; it shows a constant
demographic increase in the period 1951–2001, with a resident
population of around 16,000 in 2004. The city jurisdiction covers
an area of about 220 km². Land uses are highly diversified, both in
the urbanized and in the rural areas. An important coastal adminis-
tration area is almost entirely coincident with the village of Solanas,
characterized by settlements for coastal and marine tourism. A
diversified and complex structure characterizes the local commu-
nity, its economic and social activities, and its relationships with
its landscape and environment.

The city of Sinnai shows a significant local dynamics, as the
Province of Cagliari Area Report (PRA) of the Regional Programming
Center puts in evidence (Regione, 2006b) which grounds the choice
of this context for the case study of this section. Another interesting
feature of this context is that it is circumscribed enough; as
such, it is easy to be analyzed and understood, with reference to
the economic and social processes which develop within it.

The PRA indicates that Sinnai has a demographic weight greater
than the average amidst the cities of Southern Sardinia, with a com-
paratively high annual growth rate in the period 1991–2001, and
a low old-age index. The percentage of cultivated land in the city
jurisdiction is comparatively high, and construction industry is the
most developed and attractive for the local labor force. There is
a significant supply of rooms and beds in hotels, residences and
camping sites. The level of education of the residents of Sinnai is
above the average of Southern Sardinia, while youth unemployment
rate is very high (above 20 percent).

Sinnai is a young, demographically expanding city. It is an
urban context with a lot of unemployed people and people look-
ning for a job for the first time. Many of the young unemployed are
investing in their professional education. The productive system
of Sinnai is strongly dependent on agriculture and construction.
Services and hi-tech are weakly developed. Marine and coastal
tourism in the administrative island of Solanas is important and
could be increasingly important in the future for local economic
development. All these remarks are discussed in the PRA, which
states the foundations of the economic and social programs of the
Sardinian regional administration. These programs are based
mainly on the availability of the Structural Funds of the European
Union.

Sinnai has identified its economic and social development per-
spective with important residential developments, for tourism, in
the coastal zone (an important share of the Eastern part of the
Gulf of Cagliari), and for new residents, in some areas adjacent to
the consolidated urban fabric of the city. Construction and tourism
would fuel the local depressed economy, and in the long run a bal-
anced and stable economic development would take place, based
on the short- and medium-run impacts of the increase in income
and employment.

This development perspective, which the city has expressed in
its MPS and in its planning code, must be reconsidered with respect
to the RLP, because the PIC is in contrast to the MPS. Since it is
mandatory for the cities to redesign their masterplans to fulfill
the PIC, it is evident that a harsh dialectics may arise in the adap-
tation process. From this point view, the Sinnai case is certainly
paradigmatic.

Moreover, it must be noticed that the city of Sinnai had recently
(2002) adapted its MPS to the previous RLP. Thus, the MPS is con-
sistent with the planning implementation code which was in force
before the new RLP. By doing so, Sinnai would deserve a mention,
since very few coastal cities adapted their masterplans.2

The MPS was established by two Deliberations of the City Coun-
cil (no. 87/October 30, 2000, 41/July 17, 2001 and no. 63/October
30, 2002), and published on the Bulletin of the Autonomous Region
of Sardinia no. 40/November 26, 2002. The MPS has a simple and
linear structure, which favors a concentric development of the
city residential areas. This concentric development allows future
residential developments to take the same characteristics of the
historic and recent developments of the urban fabric. The inner part
of the fabric is the historic center of Sinnai. Residential completion
and expansion zones are concentric and adjacent to the historic
center. The planning rules of the MPS for the expansion zones have
to be implemented through detailed plans. A few of these plans
have already been designed and approved by the city, and are actu-
ally being implemented by groups of landlords. However, in most
cases these plans have not been designed and approved yet, due to
the relatively recent approval of the MPS (end of 2002), and to the
safeguard rules established in September 2004 by the regional law
no. 8, which stated that in the coastal areas the implementation of
the masterplans had to stop until the approval of the RLP.3 Thus,
only one year and a half had passed from the MPS establishment
when Law no. 8/2004 was approved.

2 The previous RLP referred to the city of Sinnai was the RLP no. 13 (South-
Eastern Sardinia), established by the Law enacted by decree of the President of the
Autonomous Region of Sardinia no. 278/August 6, 1993, published on the Ordinary
This Law was cancelled by the Regional Administrative Court of Sardinia with the
This Law was cancelled by the Regional Administrative Court of Sardinia with the
Sentence no. 1207/2003.

3 This law (named “The saving-coast law”) identifies the coastal areas as those
included in a 2-km belt from the coastal line. The safeguard rules expired in Septem-
ber 2006, after the RLP approval.
The process of adjustment of the MPS of 2002 to the RLP is extremely problematic and conflictual. One important reason of the conflict is that the planning process concerning the expansion zones adjacent to the consolidated urban fabric of Sinnai and the coastal tourist zones of the administrative island of Solanas cannot be implemented as planned by the MPS. This section analyzes this conflictual issue. The analysis starts from the results of two preceding essays (Zoppi, 2007a,b).

Planning proposals consistent with the RLP (open space for recreational uses) for not-yet-planned residential expansion and coastal touristic zones of the MPS were defined and proposed to the local community. The assessments were based on CV and MCA. Questionnaires were delivered to random samples of the residents. Through the responses to these questionnaires it was possible to evaluate the desirability of the future scenarios which would be generated in the former residential expansion and tourist coastal residential and hotel zones by the implementation of the MPS.

The CV method is a favorite tool of regional and urban economists. CV case studies, which are based on people's expressed thoughts and convictions, quantitatively assess the degree of consensus in terms of people's willingness to pay (perceived opportunity cost) for some public good. It is commonly used in the context of environmental goods.

The responses to the questionnaires were used to weight and rank a set of decision criteria which can be used to compare four future scenarios by means of MCA; two of them are consistent with the RLP (one concerns an area classified as a C zone and one an area classified as an F zone) the remaining two, consistent with the MPS, are referred to the same areas.

This section is organized as follows. In the first paragraph, the potential conflict between the city of Sinnai and the Sardinian regional administration is discussed. The second paragraph summarizes the findings of the CV and MCA case studies, and discusses the implications of integrating the CV and MCA methodologies as a way of dealing with the diverse local community views on complex spatial planning issues. In the third paragraph, findings and implications are analyzed in the light of a few conversations between members of the regional government of Sardinia and representatives of coastal towns and villages. These conversations took place before the RLP was adopted, during the so-called cooperative-planning conferences promoted by the Sardinian regional administration between January and February 2006. The analysis of these dialogues makes it possible to define some interesting narratives concerning the apparent inconsistency between the CV and MCA results.

The conflict

The conflict concerning the residential expansion zones and the coastal tourist zones depends on the new rules that the adjusted MPS will establish for these areas in case no detailed plans had been implemented by the time Law no. 8/2004 was approved. The PIC states that, before the approval of the new MPS, new developments can take place if they are allowed in the actual masterplans and detailed plans for the areas of these developments are in force (PIC, article 15, paragraphs 2 and 3).

The areas defined by the actual masterplans as residential expansion zones can maintain their actual status in the future adjusted masterplans if it can be demonstrated that new (not-yet urbanized) areas are needed to accommodate future demographic expansions, beyond the increase in housing supply which may be generated through the implementation of reasonable policies of urban renewal. These policies have priority with respect to residential developments in areas which are not-yet urbanized (PIC, article 74, paragraph 1).

It is easy to show that, using the data published in the actual MPS, no areas defined as residential expansion zones which are not-yet urbanized can maintain their status in the future adjusted MPS.

In other words, Sinnai should lose about 66 ha of residential areas and about 500,000 m² of housing units.

The PIC also states the planning rules for the tourist coastal zones without detailed plans in force. These are the following:

i. the quality of the existing tourist supply (houses, hotels, camping sites) of urban centers, villages, rural and scattered settlements, and old mining villages, must be fostered (PIC, article 90, paragraph 1, letter a);
ii. tourist projects for the existing settlements and their public areas must be defined and implemented, eventually through a step-by-step approach, in order to promote the improvement of the quality of the tourist supply and to favor a longer tourist season (article 90, paragraph 1, letter b, §1);
iii. tourist projects must aim to increase the supply of rooms in hotels rather than build vacation houses (article 89, paragraph 1, letters a and b);
iv. new projects should increase the tourist supply through the restoration of existing residential buildings and the realization of rooms and suites available for tourists, rather than through construction of new buildings; transformation of houses into hotels can be stimulated by giving extra building permits in areas located outside the coastal zone (article 90, paragraph 1, letter b, §2);
v. settlements in the coastal zone should be relocated outside it; this should take place possibly in sites adjacent to existing residential settlements in order to minimize the impacts on the landscape; relocation of residential settlements can be stimulated by giving extra building permits in areas located outside the coastal zone, allowing for up to 100 percent residential volume increment (article 90, paragraph 1, letter b, §3).

It is evident that the adjustment of the MPS to the RLP implies significant losses of residential volume and tourist houses in the coastal zone. These losses can be detected and quantified on a per-coastal-section basis. Let us consider, for example, two sections of the tourist coastal zone adjacent to each other, identified as F2- and F4-type areas by the MPS, both in the territory of the administrative area of Solanas. The MPS allows to build houses up to 3000 m³ on a 29,000-m² area (F2) for a nominal population of 50 residents, and hotels, 6 The detail of the calculations is omitted here (see Cau and Zoppi, 2008, pp. 308–312). The housing demand in the year 2014 should be referred to 18,415 residents instead of 20,778 as indicated in the MPS. The MPS uses the demographic data available in 1997 to forecast the number of residents in 2014, and, by doing so, it overestimates the average growth rate of the resident population. Most recent data indicate that the average annual growth rate in period 1992–2001, 1.48 percent, which is fairly lower than the 2.1 percent used by the MPS, still leads to an overestimation of the number of residents.

7 The MPS divides the tourist coastal zone of the administrative island of Solanas into several zoning sections.
residences, bungalows and camping sites, up to 16,000 m³ on a
125,000-m² area (F4) for a nominal population of 270 residents.
With the exception of a 3 percent of the F4-type area, where, opti-
mistically, a 485-m³ very small new hotel could be built – which, incidentally, could be allowed only if it were demonstrated that it is a functional improvement of an existing building – all the whole
building capacity of the MPS would be lost, were it adjusted to the
RLP. This loss amounts to about 20,000 m³.8

As a consequence of the adjustment process, the most part of
the building capacity of the coastal tourist zones of Sinnai, and of
the other Sardinian coastal cities, would be lost in the same way,
which may possibly hinder the development of coastal tourism,
and generate a stark institutional conflict between the cities and
the regional administration.

It is evident that the city of Sinnai would be in big troubles, if it
had to set up a new MPS which states that no new houses and hotels
would be allowed either in tourist areas or in residential expansion
areas where new developments could have taken place before the
RLP.

The conflict comes from different reasons. First, landowners of
the areas located in the actual residential expansion or tourist
coastal zones would experience an overnight dramatic decrease in
the values of their properties, since they would lose their building
rights. Second, the city would suffer from the decline of the building
expansion rights since it could not rely on the financial resources for
public services and infrastructure that would come from the impact
fees paid by the developers anymore. Another problem for the bud-
get of the city would come from the decrease of payments of the
communal tax for real estate which includes land property, since
the value of land would dramatically drop without development
rights.

Since in many of the actual residential expansion or tourist
coastal zones it would not be possible to build anymore, a crisis of
the local construction industry would probably occur. This indus-
try is the most important in terms of income and employment for
the local economy, which is characterized by a high unemployment
rate. Its crisis would worsen an already difficult economic and social
situation (Regione, 2006b).

Moreover, in the short run most of the local firms of the con-
struction industry would not be able to convert their expertise
from construction of new buildings to renewal of existing houses and
hotels. A lot of them would be displaced and may possibly be
pushed out of the market by competitors from outside Sinnai.

Lack of competition between supply of newly built houses and
hotels in the residential expansion or tourist coastal zones and sup-
ply of houses and hotels elsewhere – since almost the entire supply
of houses and hotels would be the latter, in the medium and long
run – would possibly impoverish the overall quality of the hous-
ing stock. A progressive decline of the quality of the housing stock
would weaken the competitive position of Sinnai as an attractive
city to spend a vacation, which would in turn boost its economic
and social problems.

Public subsidies for the infant construction industry of Sinnai
would be necessary to support it during the adjustment period, in
order to prevent a significant share of the firms of Sinnai from
running out of business. These subsidies could hardly be available,
since a lot of the coastal cities of Sardinia would need them at the
same time, which may cause important financial problems to the
regional administration.

For these reasons, it is likely that a big resent could develop
against the RLP, and, as a consequence, against the city and regional

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1 Differences between average WTP of a citizen of the city of Sinnai for Plans A and Plans B.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difference between average willingness to pay for Plan A1 and Plan B1 (Euros)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Difference between average willingness to pay for Plan A2 and Plan B2 (Euros)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

administration during the process of adjustment of the MPS to the
RLP.

Findings from two CV-MCA case studies

We used the CV technique known to determine the degree of
consensus on the planning proposals. This technique provides the
estimated willingness to pay (WTP) for the inhabitants of Sinnai from a sample of household surveys.

The CV results show that the residents of Sinnai would disagree
with the classification changes which the adjustment of the MPS
to the RLP would imply. Table 1 summarizes these results.

Definitely, the residents seem to prefer the MPS rules over the
PIC, that is: (i) a new residential settlement (Plan A1) over a new city
park (Plan B1) in an area adjacent to the existing consolidated urban
fabric, classified as a residential expansion zone by the MPS; (ii) a
new tourist settlement (Plan A2) over a new recreation (aquatic)
park (Plan B2) in an area classified as a coastal tourist zone.

However, the same respondents revealed a very different atti-
dute toward new residential settlements and new city parks when
asked to classify eight criteria to assess future city planning scenar-
ios. Criteria and their ranking are reported in Table 2.

If applied to rank the plans through MCA,9 the criteria weights
based on respondents’ classifications would reveal a large prefer-
ence of the B plans, based on the classification changes which the
adjustment of the MPS to the RLP would imply. The rankings of the
planning proposals concerning both expansion and coastal tourist
zones are shown in Table 3.10

From this point of view, these findings demonstrate how the results from the CV method can be used to improve upon the
objectivity and accuracy of MCA. Moreover, the application of this
method allows for a comparison of the results between the CV
method and the MCA, which can be used by the economist or
planners to determine if the criteria were appropriately defined.
In this respect, these findings make an important methodological
contribution, since economists and planners can better ensure that
the policies they advocate are the ones actually desired by local
communities.

In the context of this case study, the CV and MCA results are
not consistent with each other, since, on the one hand, willingness
to pay estimates from CV are negative (Zoppi, 2007a,b),11 on the
other, the global weights of the B plans are quite higher than the
global weights of the A plans. The AHP results depend on the fact
that the B plans prevail over the A plans for Criteria 1, 2, 4, 7 and
8 (see Table 2), which are considered – especially CR11, CR12 and
CR14 – the most important by the vast majority of the respondents.

The deep differences between the MCA and CV results indicate
that the MCA evaluation problem is not well-defined. The chosen
criteria (see Table 2) should be integrated within a larger set which

8 The detail of the calculations is omitted here. It is based on the information provided in the Main Report of the MPS.
9 The Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP) was applied in the cited case studies. See Scarelly (1997), pp. 91–100, for a detailed discussion on this MCA method.
10 For a detailed discussion of the procedure used to derive Tables 1 and 2 see Appendix A.
11 A negative estimate of willingness to pay indicates that the local community does not see, on the average, any increase in its welfare coming from the imple-
mentation of a plan.
should take into account the negative short- and medium-run social and economic impacts which may come from the adjustment process of the MPS to the RLP, that is dramatic decrease in land value, decline of financial resources for public services and infrastructure that would come from the impact fees paid by the developers, decrease in payments of the communal tax for real estate which includes land property, crisis of the local construction industry, and lack of competition between supply of newly built houses in the residential expansion zones and supply of restored houses in the consolidated urban fabric of the city.

Dissemination of information and fairness of the decision processes, which are most likely to be ensured by awareness and participation of the local community in defining and implementing public policies, are certainly important in generating the most socially desirable outcome. Undoubtedly, a higher degree of participation in the plan preparation would have increased the level of consensus of the community of Sinnai with respect to the plans being proposed consistent with the RLP, given the preference for the B plans coming from the criteria weights based on respondents' classifications.

The role of the city administration of Sinnai and of the regional administration of Sardinia would be instrumental in developing a process of this kind for the future of the residential expansion and coastal tourist zones of Sinnai. Moreover, the ranking of the scenarios cannot be the end of the story. The ranking must be presented back to the local community and a public discussion on the outcomes and implications must be held. This is necessary as the rankings are merely a representation of average preferences.

What criterion has proven decisive in determining the ranking and conflict between the regional administration and local communities concerning the implementation of the RLP by analyzing parts of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
<th>Definition and ranking of the criteria.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criterion</strong></td>
<td><strong>Definition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRI1</td>
<td>Availability of public open spaces for recreational uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRI2</td>
<td>Accessibility of public open spaces for recreational uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRI3</td>
<td>Increase in supply of houses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRI4</td>
<td>Availability of restaurant-court space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRI5</td>
<td>Availability of hotels, residences and camping sites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRI6</td>
<td>Increase of the urbanized zones for private uses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRI7</td>
<td>Consistency with the environmental, cultural-historical and settlement context</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CRI8</td>
<td>Accessibility of the residential areas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Table 3</strong></th>
<th>Rankings of the plans.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Plan</strong></td>
<td><strong>Weight</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan A1</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan B1</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan A2</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plan B2</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The conversations between members of the regional government of Sardinia and representatives of coastal towns and villages, which took place during the cooperative-planning conferences promoted by the regional administration in 2006, before the RLP was adopted and approved.

This assessment puts in evidence that the roots of the conflict should be identified by means of narratives different from the criteria used in the CV-MCA case studies, which are very much related to the roles the regional administration and the cities believe they should play in the RLP story, and the roles they believe their antagonists should play.

The conflict revisited (The RLP as a clumsy attempt of setting-up a participatory planning process)

The analysis is developed in the light of the lesson learned from Forester’s The Deliberative Practitioner (Forester, 1999). One of the main points of Forester’s approach is that the practitioner should try to understand and solve conflicts concerning decision-making in the public domain by favoring empathetic dialogue between the fighting parties. Forester’s narrative is that conflictual processes can succeed (that is, can be deliberative) if the parties start esteeming each other, and, by doing so, try to understand and possibly appreciate the other’s point of view.

A Foresterian analysis of a few dialogues which took place between the regional government and the representatives of the coastal cities during the cooperative-planning conferences puts in evidence that an endless conflict may easily arise since the regional administration and the cities not only are uninterested in understanding the other’s point of view, but also believe they have to play a role which is intrinsically conflictual with respect to the role played by the other player.

In this drama, the regional administration sees itself as the advocate, the defender of the landscape, with a moral commitment to save natural resources and cultural heritage from the danger of the speculative attack of the cities, which are generally prone to the pressures of the local building industry. On the other hand, the cities see the regional administration as an external oppressive power which can prevent the effectiveness of whichever planning policy decided by the local authorities. In doing so, they try to understand how they could eventually save up a little bit of their autonomy. So, the dialogues are almost always based on the apodictic statements of the regional administrators and on questions raised by mayors and representatives of towns and villages who would like to be informed about what is left from the good old days brought a lot of damages because of the bad planning rules and practices that were in use, and a promising future, which the RLP and the new ruling power of the regional administration will contribute decisively to build and lead.

How the regional administration sees the role of the cities

[W]hat was the role of an urban masterplan before the RLP? It ruled over the whole city territory. Since it was the only type of planning instrument, the cities were responsible for defining planning policies and rules for the whole territory under their jurisdiction [that is, urban and extra-urban]. Now, things have changed, since the RLP rules over the whole Sardinian region. Certainly, the RLP has substituted the urban masterplans for the extra-urban territory.

[U]rban masterplans can now take over their original meaning, which consists of planning and defining rules for the urban part of the city territory. On the other hand, they should not plan the whole city territory. Should they plan the whole territory, they should be named territorial masterplans.

How the regional administration sees its own role

First, I would like to point out that landscape protection is a constitutional principle, that is, it comes from the Italian Constitution, and represents the most important objective of our legislative and ruling tasks. I would like that you consider this question out of discussion with respect to the approach the regional administration is taking to define the Regional Landscape Plan.

We have to recognize frankly that in the past the definition and implementation of regional and local planning processes did not consider landscape values as predominant over all the others. The first passage puts in evidence that the regional administration feels it needs to legitimize its ruling role. What better reference than the Italian Constitution? Through the RLP the regional administration is defending a constitutional principle, so, whoever questions the RLP is challenging a constitutional principle. Whoever challenges a constitutional principle is intrinsically subversive, therefore, my dear representatives of cities and towns, if you do not want to be accused of subversion, you will accept the regional administration as the defender of the landscape, and, therefore, as the ruler of regional and local planning processes.

The second passage puts in evidence that the regional administration considers the RLP as a watershed between an evil past which brought a lot of damages because of the bad planning rules and practices that were in use, and a promising future, which the RLP and the new ruling power of the regional administration will contribute decisively to build and lead.

Each of the four sub-paragraphs below is about one of the four points indicated above. Quotations of passages of cooperative-planning conferences are followed by comments.

12 The quotations that follow refer to passages originally written in Italian. Their translation is responsibility of the authors. As mentioned above, a complete account of the conversations of the twenty-three cooperative-planning conferences is available at the following Internet address: http://www.sardegnaterritorio.it/pianificazione/pianopaesaggistico/conferenze.html [last accessed: August 11, 2008].

13 These two passages are drawn from the introductory address of the first conference given by a member of the Sardinian regional government (pp. 3–4 of the account of the first conference, available at the Internet address quoted in footnote 12).

14 The first passage is drawn from the introductory address of the first conference given by a member of the Sardinian regional government; the second passage is drawn from the introductory address of the sixteenth conference given by a member of the Sardinian regional government; the third passage is drawn from a reflection...
The first two passages depict the role the regional administration would like the cities would play in the RLP implementation, that is, they should be followers of what the regional administration has already decided for their extra-urban territory. Not only this, but this vision of the role of cities has another implication.

It implies indeed that the regional administration does not rely on the capability of the cities of ruling their own extra-urban territory, because of their past mistakes. If we recall what was reported in the preceding sub-paragraph with reference to the wrong way regional and local planning processes were implemented in the past, due to the lack of consideration of the predominance of landscape values, it is easy to detect that, according to the regional administration, cities, town and villages were responsible for those mistakes, since they took care only of the urban territory and neglected the extra-urban. This is the reason the RLP rules are defined by the regional administration and municipalities have to follow these exogenous rules for their extra-urban territory.

The third passage indicates that the regional administration believes that the autonomy of the cities has to be bounded also with reference to their urban planning activity, since this activity, were it autonomous, could possibly endanger the effectiveness of the RLP and, ultimately, the quality-increase potentials of the local communities.

So, the RLP puts in evidence that the regional administration considers the autonomous planning activity of the cities as a general threat for their future.

How the representatives of the local communities see their role

We [The City of Golfo Aranci, the local administration of a coastal village located in the north-east of Sardinia] have a heavy load of requests of building permits concerning new developments which are really amazing, since it is still possible to have a building permit in our city until the RLP is approved [the RLP was approved about seven months later]. Do you [the regional administration] think it reasonable that in one year we released the building permits we would have released in ten years, if the law-which-saves-the-costs [this is the nickname of the Regional Law no. 8 of November 25, 2004] had not been established and the RLP was not going to be approved, since everybody fears that everything will be blocked in the very short run?¹¹⁵

The concept expressed in this passage is very recursive across all the cooperative-planning conferences. The cities see themselves as the keepers of the good right of the local communities to decide how to organize and possibly transform the land under themselves as the keepers of the good right of the local communities. They see the regional administration as a malevolent, insensible dictator, who does not take care of the needs and expectations of their citizens, since it feels it has to implement an irrational, abstract design, the RLP.

How the cities see the role of the regional administration

[A representative of a coastal town raises a question to a regional administrator] What is the limit, the watershed between the already-established residential-expansion implementation plans? Take into account that for a few of these plans the regional administration has already released a consistency certification. Your answer to this question is very important for us, because it is really not clear what the limit is.

[A representative of a coastal town criticizes the regional administration] I raised two questions and the answers totally missed the point. If the members of regional administration had not considered the members of the city government of Golfo Aranci inyte, and they had come to Golfo Aranci, it would have been easy for us to make clear our points concerning new developments [for residences and services].¹⁶

The representatives of the coastal town and villages feel themselves dependent on the will and decisions of the regional administrators. Since the rules that are going to be established are fuzzy, and they have no control over the new planning procedures, they try to understand if something from the good old days can be saved. They know very well, anyway, that the saving decision is exogenous. They feel they have lost their autonomy as local administrators.

Moreover, they believe their city planning future will be difficult since it is very possible that the exogenous, fuzzy rules of the RLP will prove ineffective in addressing the real problems of their communities. They see the regional administration as a malevolent, insensible dictator, who does not take care of the needs and expectations of their citizens, since it feels it has to implement an irrational, abstract design, the RLP.

Concluding remarks

This paper discusses two issues concerning participatory planning. The first issue has to do with sustainability of the Sardinian RLP, the first regional plan prepared under new national (Italian) legislation, and therefore innovating within a new policy context. The plan was here assessed by some professionals and academic with reference only to its contents and process. Since this evaluation was based on insights provided by privileged testimonies, the weak points here highlighted can provide useful suggestions both for the review of the first part of the RLP for the coastal areas, and for other Italian regional plans for the landscape (provided that regional differences and peculiarities be taken into account), as plans for the landscape in Italy have to comply with the same national law. Although there was little or no agreement among the five interviewees on whether a plan for the landscape should pursue all the three components of sustainability, it can be concluded, from their opinions, that the plan is unbalanced towards environmental objectives.

First, environmental sustainability of the Sardinian RLP was primarily meant as potential effectiveness in protecting non-renewable resources and habitats, especially because it establishes a series of rules to contrast consumption of land. However, such rules, with their underlying conservative approach and under-

¹⁵ This passage is drawn from a reflection proposed by a representative of the City of Golfo Aranci during the sixteenth conference (p. 32 of the account of the sixteenth conference; account available at the Internet address quoted in footnote 10).

¹⁶ Both passages are drawn from the sixteenth conference (p. 38 and p. 26 of the account of the sixteenth conference; account available at the Internet address quoted in footnote 10). With reference to first passage, it has to be put in evidence that it was not clear at the time the sixteenth cooperative-planning conference was held what would have happened to the already-established residential expansion plans once the RLP was approved. Will they remain valid or cease?
standing of landscape as something which needs protecting rather than managing, were regarded as ineffective in addressing environmental problems and risks in sensitive contexts. Another issue concerning environmental sustainability was that of the lack of an SEA, a tool which enable planners to enhance the implementation of the plan by means of an early assessment of its potential effects rather than a mere statutory requirement.

Second, economic issues appear to have been overlooked, both because of the choice of the type of plan and because of the lack of coordination of the Sardinian RLP with a sectoral plan aimed at controlling tourism activities in coastal areas.

Finally, as for social sustainability, evidence suggests that participation in the making of the plan: i) was limited to those organizations required by law to implement the RLP, and ii) consisted in a top-down process, carried out in the form of information giving rather than consultation. Municipalities and other actors, therefore, had extremely limited chance to influence the plan, while a dominant role was exerted by the regional administration. As a result, institutional coordination has been moved from the plan preparation to its implementation, in the form of adjustment of the masterplans, and of intese (a technical and political mechanism aimed at approving specific projects and development plans by means of an assessment carried out on a case-by-case basis), which allowed an opt-out clause, thus possibly weakening the plan. The intese have a controversial nature, being judged both as a mechanism to bypass the rules contained in the regional plan and as a means to include institutional cooperation in the application of the Sardinian RLP. A greater involvement of the general public is envisioned in the implementation of the plan, both in the SEA process and in the modification of local masterplans. Until a more robust participatory approach which involves wider consultation is adopted, such a tool may prove to be a relatively insensitive instrument in plan implementations.

The second issue proposes a Foresterian narrative to explain the disparities brought out by the application of the CV and MCA methods. The CV results show that the residents of Sinna would disagree with the classification changes which the adjustment of the MPS to the RLP would require. However, the same respondents revealed a very different attitude toward new residential settlements and new city parks when asked to classify eight criteria to assess future city planning scenarios.

With reference to planning, the Sardinian regional administration maintains an overturned concept of subsidiarity. This passage of the regional-law proposal titled “New rules for the use of the regional territory” enlightens this point:

“The goals of the preceding paragraph [The goals of the planning activity of the cities, provinces, and the regional administration] are pursued, on the basis of the principles of subsidiarity, adequacy and efficiency, by means of: a) the attribution to the cities of all the functions concerning territorial government which are not expressly attributed by this or other laws to the region and the provinces; [...]”\(^{17}\)

This overturns the concept of subsidiarity of the Italian legislation, which states that:

“[The attributions of functions] have to observe the principle of subsidiarity. The majority of tasks and administrative functions should be attributed to the cities, provinces and mountain communities, on the basis of their territorial size, and community and organizational complexity, with the only exclusion of the functions inconsistent with these size and complexity. Public responsibilities are also attributed to the part of the public administration closest to the citizens in order to help families, organized groups and communities to take on social tasks and functions; [...]”\(^{18}\)

This overturned concept of subsidiarity puts in evidence how far from an effective cooperative approach is the adjustment process of the masterplans of the coastal cities of Sardinia to the RLP. The PIC establishes that the contribution of municipalities to the adjustment process consists of the following tasks:

1. they have to cooperate to design, implement and update the regional geographic information system, which is fundamental “for the definition and coordination of the landscape protection and revaluation policies”\(^{19}\);
2. they have to identify precisely the landscape goods (buildings or areas) defined according to articles 134, 142 and 143 of the National Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape. These goods have already been approximately identified in the RLP cartography, with reference to the environmental, historic-cultural and settlement structures of the regional territory;
3. they have to adjust their masterplans to observe the prescriptive and proposal contents of the RLP related to all the structures of the regional territory. Even though these contents can hardly be translated into masterplan rules, they are both detailed and debatable at once, which gives the regional administration a strong discretionary power in the approval processes of the adjusted masterplans. This not only may generate, and is generating indeed as we put in evidence above, never-ending conflicts between the regional administration and the cities, but may also cause lack of transparency in their relations concerning the definition, implementation and management of regional and urban planning processes.

So, the role of the cities is very ancillary, since they only have to provide to the regional administration with geographic, economic and social information so that the regional administration may govern and manage regional, province and city planning activity in the most efficient way. The only role of the cities is to support the regional administration.

The Foresterian narrative shows that everything could change, if each participant changed the way he sees the role he has to play, and if each participant changed the way he sees the role the other should play. In particular, the fundamental point is that the regional administration should change its attitude towards subsidiarity. It is worth quoting the definition of subsidiarity given by the European Union’s Glossary:

The principle of subsidiarity is defined in Article 5 of the Treaty establishing the European Community. It is intended to ensure that decisions are taken as closely as possible to the citizen and that constant checks are made as to whether action at Community level is justified in the light of the possibilities available at national, regional or local level, [...]

The Edinburgh European Council of December 1992 issued a declaration on the principle of subsidiarity, which lays down the rules for its application. The Treaty of Amsterdam took up the approach that follows from this declaration in a Protocol on

\(^{17}\) Law proposal no. 204 of January 3, 2006; not-yet discussed by the Sardinian Regional Parliament.

\(^{18}\) Italian Law no. 59/97 titled “Law which delegates the Italian government to establish the procedures to attribute administrative tasks and functions to the regional and local administrations, in order to reform the public administration and to simplify the administrative procedures”, article 4, paragraph 3, letter a.

\(^{19}\) PIC, article 2, paragraph 2, letter d.
the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality annexed to the EC Treaty. Two of the things this Protocol introduces are the systematic analysis of the impact of legislative proposals on the principle of subsidiarity and the use, where possible, of less binding Community measures.20

In other words, the principle of subsidiarity indicates that the regional and national (and of the European Union) authorities should not interfere with the administrative autonomy of the local communities as long as the local communities are willing and able to deal with and successfully govern certain matters. Urban and city planning are certainly among these matters.

The contribution of this essay to define an on-going strategic assessment of the RLP identifies two main normative points. First, the right concept of subsidiarity has to be restored in the RLP planning implementation code. Second, the regional planning activity has to be based on a true cooperative-planning approach so that the relations between the regional administration and the cities may lose their conflict-derived inefficiency.

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Appendix A. MCA procedure used to derive Tables 2 and 3

The MCA uses the Analytic Hierarchy Process (AHP). AHP provides a taxonomy of the planning scenarios based on goals and criteria. In this sense, Multicriteria Analysis is more informative than the Contingent Valuation method. For the case studied in this paper, the hierarchical structure of the decision process, that is the process which provides the ranking of the two planning scenarios, consists of three levels. The highest hierarchical level is the general goal (GG). The second hierarchical level is the criteria that give the GG content and meaning. The third level consists of two planning scenarios, one consistent with the actual MPS and one consistent with the RLP—the detailed plan described in the third section of this paper. The two future scenarios are subsequently referred to as Plan A and Plan B.

For this study, the GG is defined as: “Improvement of the urban quality of life of the city of Sinnai through the implementation of a set of planning policies that would strengthen the urban organization of residential areas and public services.” Ideally, before a GG is defined, it should be discussed and verified through a negotiation process involving public officials, politicians, practitioners, scientists, citizens, entrepreneurs and others. For this experiment, discussion and negotiation did not take place on account of limited financial resources.

The criteria associated with the 2nd hierarchical level and their measures are defined in Table 2.

The MCA provides a ranking based on global weights assigned to the two scenarios. The global weights are determined by the local weights assigned to each level.21 The local weights are based on a binary comparison of elements belonging to the hierarchical level and are done with respect to the elements of the preceding hierarchical level. Therefore, the two scenarios of level 3 are compared with each other along each of the criteria of the second level; the criteria of the second level are compared with respect to the GG of the first hierarchical level. The results of each binary comparison can be expressed quantitatively by means of Saaty Semantic Scale (SSS) shown in Table 4 (Saaty, 1988).

The second level consists of the eight criteria defined in Table 2. Seven out of eight are quantitative, while the sixth criterion is qualitative. The binary comparison of the two plans with respect to CRIS is implemented in qualitative terms, based on consistency with reference to the environmental, cultural-historical and settlement directives given by the RLP (PIC, pp. 20–71).22

The procedures to calculate the local weights of the two planning scenarios of the 3rd level, the weights of the criteria, and the global weights of the two planning scenarios are described next.

A.1. Step 1: Normalization

The first step to calculate the local weights of the two plans, the performance measures of the plan with respect to each quantitative criterion have to be normalized.

A.2. Step 2: Thresholds

In order to utilize SSS for binary comparisons of the two scenarios, the following taxonomy of thresholds is defined:

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20 The Glossary is available at the following Internet address: http://europa.eu/scadplus/glossary/subsidiarity_en.htm [last accessed: August 11, 2008].

21 See Scarelli (1997) for a more detailed discussion.

22 Fundamental annexes of the PIC are: the cartography of the RLP; the sets of planning directives for the coastal areas of Sardinia. The relevant set for the city of Sinnai is no. 27.
i. lowest threshold = tenth percentile;  
ii. second threshold = twentieth percentile;  
iii. third threshold = thirtieth percentile;  
iv. fourth threshold = fortieth percentile;  
v. fifth threshold = fiftieth percentile;  
vi. sixth threshold = sixtieth percentile;  
vii. seventh threshold = seventieth percentile;  
viii. eighth threshold = eightieth percentile.

Scores from 1 to 9 are assigned to each interval starting from the lowest threshold. Each binary comparison, one for each criterion, results in a positive integer from 1 to 9, which identifies the value of “intensity of importance” of the binary comparisons of SSS.

The intensity of importance of the binary comparison for the two scenarios (Plan A and Plan B), for a given criterion j, is denoted by RAPPij, i = A, B, n = A, B, j = 1, . . . , 8.

A.3. Step 3: Geometric average of intensity of importance

For Plan A and Plan B, and CRIj, the geometric average of the intensity of comparison, vij, is computed. Namely,

\[ V_{ij} = \sqrt[n]{\prod_{n=1}^{2} RAPP_{nij}}. \]  

(1)

A.4. Step 4: Scenario local weights

In Step 4 the local weights for the scenarios with respect to each criterion, Pij, are calculated as follows:

\[ P_{ij} = \frac{v_{ij}}{\sum_{k=A,B} v_{kj}}. \]  

(2)

The vector \( P_{ij} = (P_{AIj}, P_{BIj}) \) is the vector of local weights for the two scenarios with respect to criterion \( j \).

The technique described by steps 1–4 is called the “principal eigenvector method” since the vij’s are approximately the principal components of the eigenvector of the matrix \( RAPP_{nij} \) (Fusco Girard and Nijkamp, 1997).

A.5. Step 5: Criteria weights and scenario global weights

The binary comparisons of the criteria with respect to the GG are based on the responses given to a questionnaire administered to a random sample of residents of the town of Sinnai, chosen by associating a random number to each name listed in the phone directory. 400 people were randomly selected. These households were contacted by telephone and asked if they were willing to participate in the survey. Out of these 400 people, 100 people agreed to participate, implying a 25 percent rate of participation. The original phone calls, which simply asked if the respondent would be willing to participate in the survey, were made at different times of the day. One third were made between 7.30 and 9.00 a.m.; one third between 1.30 and 3.00 p.m.; and the last third between 7.00 and 8.30 p.m. The rate of participation was almost constant in the three periods.

If the randomly selected person answered in the first phone call that he was willing to participate, then he or she was sent an envelope containing information on the planning proposals. The person was asked to read the report carefully. The report was the informational basis for answering the questionnaire that would have been administered through a second call, approximately two weeks after the first call. The report contained an informative note on the planning proposals. The report also contained a map showing the location of the most important planning actions. The questionnaire was administered through a second call, instead of being sent through the mail for two reasons. First, this procedure ensured that the person received the information and responded. Second, the interview allowed a person to clarify his doubts and misunderstandings that he may possibly have had on the information sent to him in the report. In this way, the procedure ensured that people who were interviewed were informed on the goals of the planning scenarios before responding to the question on the criteria ranking.

In the questionnaire, the criteria were listed, and the respondents were asked to classify them, from the most important to the least. Equal importance of two or more criteria was allowed. A growing score, from 1 to 8, is given to each criterion depending on its position in a respondent’s taxonomy. The sum of each criterion’s scores across the respondents determines the comprehensive score. There is of course a maximum (MAX) and a minimum (MIN) total score reachable by a criterion. The maximum score could be reached had a criterion deserved 8 in the taxonomies of all the respondents. The minimum score could be reached had a criterion deserved just 1 for each of the respondents. The binary comparison of two criteria i and j having scores \( X_i \) and \( X_j \) assuming \( X_i \geq X_j \) with reference to the SSS, can be calculated as follows:

\[ RAPP_{ij} = \frac{(X_i - X_j)}{X + 1}, \]  

(3)

where \( x \) is:

\[ x = \frac{(MAX - MIN)}{8}. \]  

(4)

It is easy to see that: if \( X_i = 9 \) and \( X_j = 1 \), then \( RAPP_{ij} = 9 \); if \( X_i = X_j \), then \( RAPP_{ij} = 1 \). Through the \( x \) factor binary comparisons between criteria can be normalized according to the SSS.

The geometric average of intensity of importance for a given criterion \( j \) is

\[ v_{ij} = \sqrt[n]{\prod_{n=1}^{8} RAPP_{nij}}. \]  

(5)

The vector of intensity of importance for the eight criteria is

\[ V = (v_1, . . . , v_8). \]

The final step is to calculate the local weights of the criteria with respect to the GG. The local weights of each criterion with respect to the GG, \( \Gamma_j \), is calculated as

\[ \Gamma_j = \frac{v_{ij}}{v_1 + \ldots + v_8}. \]  

(6)

The last part of the procedure is to determine the global weights of the two plans with respect to the GG, denoted by \( P_G \). The global weights use the vector of the local weights for CRI \( j \) with respect to two scenarios \( P_{ij} = (P_{AIj}, P_{BIj}) \) and the vector of local weights of CRI \( j \) with respect to the GG \( \Gamma_j = (\Gamma_1, . . . , \Gamma_8) \). More specifically,

\[ P_G = \sum_{j=1,\ldots,8} P_{ij} \Gamma_j. \]  

(7)

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