



## *Good Practice*

### **Lobby and advocacy in the Province of Forlì-Cesena (Italy)**

**During the 12<sup>th</sup> seminar, the Province of Forlì-Cesena presented a case study demonstrating how lobby and advocacy – that is the involvement of stakeholders in the decision-making process – made it possible to mediate between the various choices arisen in the period between the event and the implementation of the mitigation measures. The mediation led to a final safety project that mainly keeps the land use unchanged but also holds a minimum amount of risk, which however was considered acceptable by all the parties involved. Before designing a project, it is necessary for the analysis phase to take into consideration not only the environmental and physical elements, but also the aspects of social acceptability. Experts in different fields and good mediators are therefore needed to make the assessments in order to create a more complete and clear picture for the works planner.**

#### **Legal framework**

Lobby and Advocacy are crucial for a spatial risk mitigation plan. A project that takes the involvement of different stakeholders into account allows for the technical interventions to be more efficient if compared to the possible negative social and environmental impacts triggered by the project.

In Italy there are specific laws, especially for environment-related issues, concerning a “participated process”, which establish that the Public Administration must involve the stakeholders during the various phases of the decision-making process, which will lead to a choice that affects the whole community.

Moreover, the activity of the Public Administration is regulated by the key law no. 241/1990 that has a general application and sets for a general ‘participation in the process’ by the subjects who will be directly affected by the final decision and the ones who have the right to intervene by law.

#### **Case study**

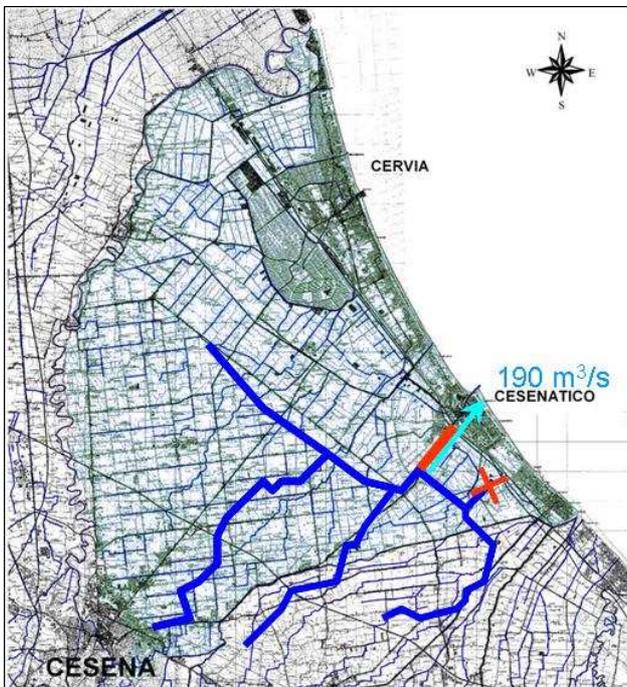
On 6, 7 and 8 October 1996, some areas belonging to the Provinces of Bologna, Ravenna, Forlì-Cesena and Rimini faced extraordinary rainfall that brought about huge floods and extensive damage to people and buildings. The total flooded surface was about 1,400 km<sup>2</sup>, 500 people were evacuated, about 40,000 people and 12,000 buildings were affected.

In the plain the event was not caused so much by over flooding rivers, which were well below the safety levels, as by the drainage canals network which caused extensive floods in the lowest areas.

After the event, the Government declared the emergency state and a plan for emergency infrastructures was adopted and then modified later.

After carrying out the specific works aimed at enhancing the inadequate existing pumping stations and raising the river banks, the third phase set out to face the problems concerning the drainage canal network.

Four canals drain the area (canal *Allacciamento*, *Rio Granarolo*, *Rio Mesola del Montaletto*, and canal *Vena Madonna*) and currently they all flow into the harbour-canal (Porto Canale) of Cesenatico.



**Fig 1** The four canals that drain the area.

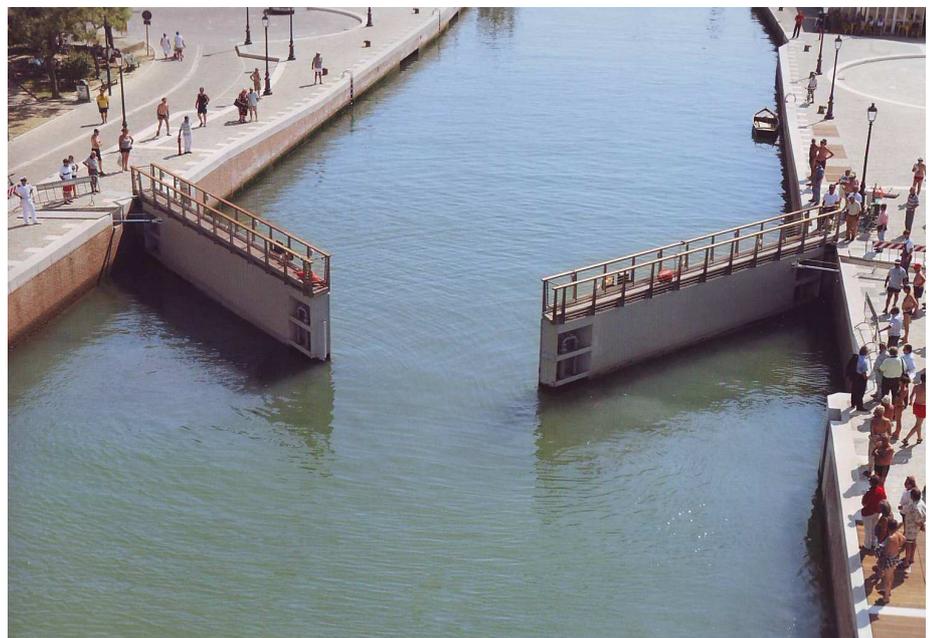
The rate of flow to discharge if the harbour-canal is closed (for example when there is a sea surge together with a flood upstream), is about 190 m<sup>3</sup>/s in case of events with a return period of 200 years.

At first a new canal was being designed, called Leonardo, which would deviate the existing canals *Allacciamento*, *Mesola del Montaletto*, *Vena Madonna* and *Venone* and which would flow into the sea away from the

harbour-canal mouth and which would not interfere with the nearby smaller canal *Tagliata*, used to manage the tides of the waters created by the pumping station.

In those same years it seemed necessary to protect the centre of Cesenatico from the sea surge as the water flooded in the town more and more often starting from the harbour-canal, also because the sea bed kept getting higher as more sediments deposited on the ground and therefore the farmland level was getting lower and lower with respect to the sea level.

In 2001 the Basin Authority submitted the project for the Porte Vinciane (sliding barriers built at the harbour entrance of the harbour-canal) to the Ministry for the Environment that approved and financed it without any delay. The works were assigned to the Municipality of Cesenatico, which had to carry out other works aimed at protecting the coast, such as artificial dunes, gardens and street furniture.



**Fig 2** The Porte Vinciane (sliding barriers)

## Lobby and Advocacy actions

When the project was presented to the local population, it did not raise very much appreciation. Local residents (as individuals and as categories) were not sure about the effects on the nearby town of Cervia, especially for these reasons:

- Coastal erosion would start again due to the piers being placed at the mouth of the new canal;
- Beach area would be reduced with consequent financial damage to the bathing establishments located on the new canal path;
- Water conditions would worsen where the new canal would flow into the sea

The categories economically involved (hoteliers, retailers, bathing establishment owners) supported the advocacy activities in order to influence the decision makers: the Water Management Authority, the Basin Authority and the Region Emilia-Romagna.

As the first project draft included works that would have had a negative impact on areas with significant economic and touristic importance, the categories involved tried to benefit from a project variation that would preserve the current conditions and the interests of the parties involved. After the advocacy actions, a feasibility study was carried out within the framework of enhancing soil defence, water resources and water amount in the area between rivers Savio and Rubicone in the municipalities of Cervia, Cesenatico and Cesena.

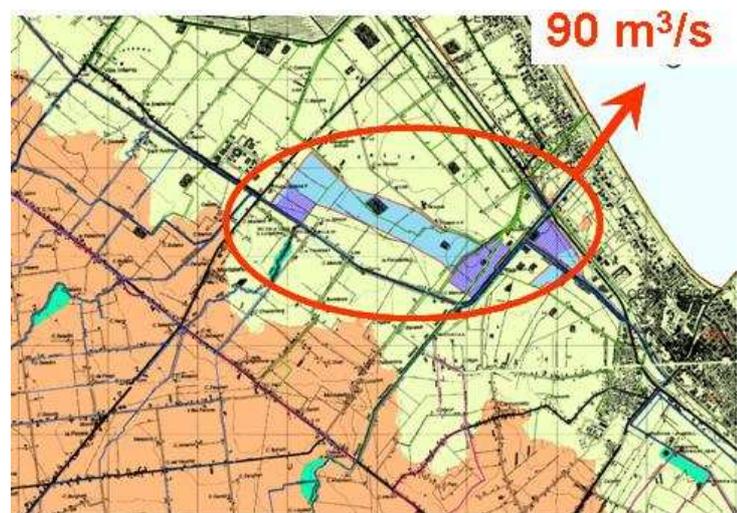
The feasibility study was a key step in forming a programme of the public works required for soil defence in the area between the mouths of rivers Savio and Rubicone aimed at assessing the possibility of building detention basins.

## Results

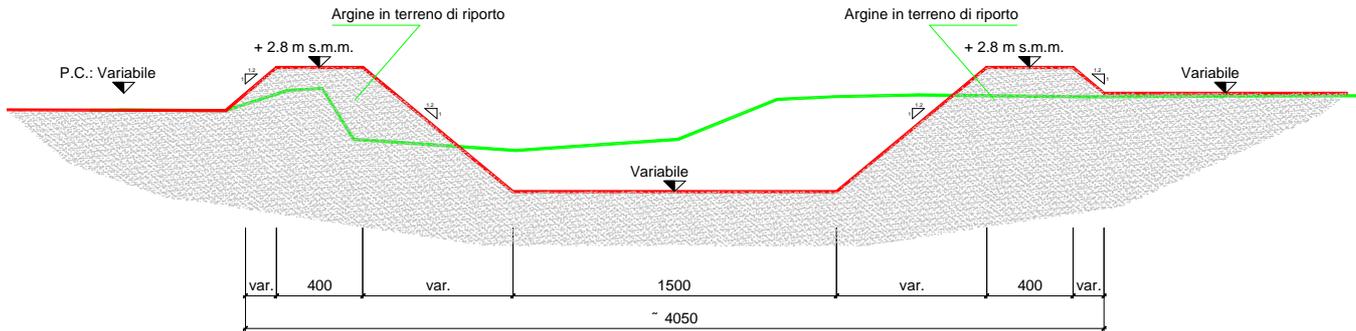
Thanks to specific analyses on hydrologic-hydraulic models and area inspections, the feasibility study showed that by designing detention basins wide enough – to be placed in the areas already dedicated by previous studies and agreements between administrations – the rate of flow to discharge and bring to the sea could decrease from 190 m<sup>3</sup>/s to 90 m<sup>3</sup>/s.

To reach that goal, it was enough to reshape the canal Tagliata, which would entail various benefits:

- Smaller environmental and social impact on the mouth area, on the beach and on the beach strips nearby;
- Possibility to design a sluice gate to convey the dirty waters coming from agriculture and farming settlements into the harbour-canal so that the waters could be unloaded far from the sea shore;
- Lower costs.



**Fig 3** The area dedicated to the installation of the detention basins

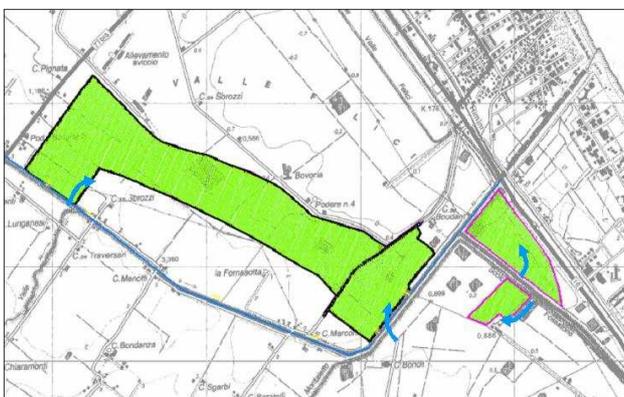


**Fig 4** The reshaping project of the canal Tagliata

The reshaping of the canal Tagliata allowed a remodelling of the river bed for a total width (from bank to bank) of about 30-35 m, with great improvement if compared to the previous 20-25 m.

The smaller impact on the beach makes it possible to still use the current canal mouth using two banks about 2 m high and about 20 m apart. These are to be placed on top of the dune, covered with sand, and they should contain the flood. The area in between the two dunes is beach and it is possible to walk in it.

The project, besides the remodelling of the canal, includes the building of two detention basins “Valle Felici” (111.3 ha) e “Fossatone” (21.6 ha) and phytoremediation along some of the rivers to solve the problem of the water quality.



**Fig 5** The hydraulic functioning of the detention basins Valle Felici and Fossatone

Together with the hydraulic modelling, simulations were carried out of different uses of the detention basin in order to better place the basins to reach the highest efficiency possible. It turned out that the best place to install detention basins was towards the canal mouth.

One of the main aims of the works, besides hydraulic safety, is to enhance the water conditions and consequently the beach conditions, on which most of the local economy relies.

This can be achieved by targeted phytoremediation along the main rivers of the drainage network, where works were already planned to be carried out. The pros can be summarised as follows:

1. Effective elimination of polluted waters;
2. Landscape improvement aimed at increasing agricultural biodiversity and the natural state of the area;
3. More flood-stopping effect that allows the flood waters to be managed better along the canal Tagliata after the remodelling;
4. The possibility to be granted public funds (region, state, EU) to facilitate the turning of farming land into natural areas as partial refund for expropriation costs.



## Conclusions

The interest groups, organised in committees, mainly put pressure on local decision-makers to plead their cause. They also promoted media action to raise public awareness and share strategies and actions with the whole local community. Their activity led the decision-makers to choose a project that took the interests of the different categories into consideration.

The advocacy actions carried out led to the review of the original project by external experts appointed by the Emilia-Romagna Region who searched for a different solution with lower impact on the territory, ensuring at the same time identical mitigation results.

At first the project was purely engineering aimed at guaranteeing the draining of extraordinary flow with a return time of 200 years, but it was modified to encompass other local interests.

These actions aimed at 'putting pressure' on local policy-makers turned out to be positive both for the interest groups and the community as a whole. As a result a good level of safety in the territory was ensured and the areas occupied by business activities were maintained.

## Lesson learnt

The involvement of the interest groups allowed to find a mediated solution between the original project and the realisation of the intervention plan.

The final project led to the realisation of mitigation works maintaining the land use almost unchanged. A minimum percentage of residual risk remains but it has been considered as acceptable by all the subjects involved.

Before planning mitigation measures, the analysis process must necessarily take into consideration not only the physical and environmental factors, but also the social aspects linked to the acceptability of the final solutions.

In order to reach this objective, new interdisciplinary skills are needed to support the engineers' work.



### **The MiSRaR project**

*The MiSRaR project is about Mitigation of Spatial Relevant Risks in European Regions and Towns. The project is a cooperation between seven partners in six EU member states:*

- the Safety Region South-Holland South, The Netherlands (lead partner)*
- the city of Tallinn, Estonia*
- the region of Epirus, Greece*
- the province of Forlì-Cesena, Italy*
- the municipality of Aveiro, Portugal*
- the municipality of Mirandela, Portugal*
- the Euro Perspectives Foundation (EPF), Bulgaria.*

*The goal of the project is to exchange knowledge and experiences on risk mitigation in spatial policies. The project will result in a handbook in which the lessons on the mitigation process are described and the good practices from the partners are presented. The Risk Assessment and Mapping Guidelines for Disaster Management of the European Commission will be implemented in the handbook. The MiSRaR project is cofinanced by the European Regional Development Fund and made possible by the INTERREG IVC programme.*

[www.misrar.eu](http://www.misrar.eu)

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### **Editorial Note**

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