

QUESTIONS ANCONA

- Have you ever heard of the MAPA project related to the protection of three marine areas including the Conero Park?
 - In your opinion, is the Conero Park protected and enhanced by the institutions?
 - Do you think that the citizens of Ancona are informed about projects concerning the protection of the Conero Park?
 - What do you think could be done to improve the protection and valorisation of the Conero Park?
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INTERVIEW ANCONA 7/03/26

OPENCOESIONE PROJECT CLASS 3A AFM

PART 1

ERNESTO

The sails can only be opened with the bow in the wind, because they will spin in the direction of the wind. We must assign the sails in the best possible condition: it is good that the manoeuvring area is free while working around.

Today the conditions are good: we have to go in that direction and pass in front of the port of Ancona. Ancona, in Greek, means "angle", "ellbow". The Greeks had chosen this port, which the Romans would never have realised because it is facing north. We need to evaluate the economic fabric of the area: there are manufacturing industries, shipyards and Fincantieri, one of the two large Italian companies where cruise ships are built, with eight shipyards in Italy.

Falconara is also famous because it is the closest port to Albania coming from the north. In absolute terms, the closest ports are those of Puglia, such as Brindisi.

On the open side of the harbour, a road dam has been built with special holes to ensure the circulation of water and prevent the basin from becoming stagnant. This is a commercial port that includes multiple compartments. International ports welcome transoceanic ships, but those from China cannot enter this port because the seabed is too shallow: 30,000 container

ships must necessarily head to Trieste, which is the most important port for traffic to northern Europe. The ships also stop in Piombino and Malta for transshipment operations. Those waiting to enter the port are guided by a pilot: in any port in the world there is an employee who takes them back inside.

There are rights of way at sea: the sailboat has priority over other pleasure boats and also on commercial ships, always without prejudice to the prevalence of common sense. A 200-metre ship makes it very difficult to stop: if the boat is in front, that ship doesn't even notice it. Where you see the big ships down there is the Fincantieri. We will pass near that huge overhead crane and you will see the docks where ships are built, assembled in blocks, like Legos. You will also see one under construction: they are very luxurious cruise ships to the northern seas, called Viking. Cranes, on the other hand, are used to unload containers, which are introduced into the European circuit after a customs procedure according to European regulations.

On the marine area: several projects have been made to establish a marine protected area in the area to which we are sailing. However, there is a certain dispute, because 100% protection - as already exists on the Tremiti Islands - would prevent boats from mooring. Since the Posidonia in the area where we are going is present in almost insignificant quantities, it is necessary to take into account both environmental protection and recreational and economic use. If an area is protected but inaccessible, no one can enjoy it. The possibility of anchoring through the gavitelli is also being discussed: it is a weight on the seabed with a chain that carries a buoy on the surface, to which you can hook without throwing the anchor, which instead plows the seabed.

Now we are passing in front of Fincantieri in Ancona. What you see on the right is a basin closed by a bulkhead, without water: the ship is resting on special hooves. Soon the dock will be flooded, the ship will begin to float and the emerging parts, called dead work, will be completed. The living work is instead the immersed part.

Ancona is distinguished from all other areas by a very particular element of marine biodiversity: the mussel. The so-called moscioli.

STEFANO

The mussel is a whole-fledged, but wild mussel: it grows spontaneously on the rocks of the area around the Conero. Studies at the Polytechnic University of Marche have shown that it is much richer in omega 3 than a normal mussel. It also stands out for its exceptional flavour. It is not the typical breeding mussel: it is not uniform in size, it is not cleaned externally, and it is covered with corals that form in the wild because it is clinging to the rocks. Unlike farmed mussels - such as those of Senigallia, about fifteen miles to the north - the mussel is not harvested in the farm but directly from the rocks.

This year the mussel was not present: it has not developed. The collection was prohibited even in small quantities. In the past, up to 3 kg per person, in the wind and without a cylinder were allowed. In 2025 a ban with a fine of 2,000 euros was introduced, because the mosciolo has become a protected species and a Slow Food garrison. The strong deficiency

was caused by the mucilage of two years ago, which prevented the formation of mussels by depriving them of oxygen.

ERNESTO

Let's go back to talking about biodiversity, why a marine park is made, why it is not done and where it is done. Marine parks are usually established in the most beautiful places, also to preserve them from human impact. Near us, in Termoli, there is the Diomedea park: the name derives from the birds called Diomedea, which nest in those islands, according to legend linked to the mythological figure of Diomedes.

The Conero Park is still a bit far away. What you can see in the distance is Mount Conero in its Ancona part, with the Punta reaching about 572 metres. In the eastern Adriatic, in Croatia, they are realising another park on the island of Silba, in the northern part.

GRAZIA

Have you ever heard of the MAPA project related to the protection of three marine areas including the Conero Park?

ERNESTO

— On the MAPA project: no, I haven't heard of it.

GRAZIA

In your opinion, is the Conero Park sufficiently protected and enhanced by the institutions?

ERNESTO

— On the Conero Park, if it is sufficiently protected and valued: the answer is based more on hearsay than on certain data. In the past, some environmental organisations had proposed to completely ban navigation in the area, in a more drastic way than the gavitelli hypothesis. However, you have to consider that there is a marina here with about 1,000 boats. The political forces found themselves in conflict between those who supported the establishment of the park and those who practised the sport. For now there are no restrictions on the sea side. On the land side, on the other hand, the Conero Park is already protected: any new construction within the park area is prohibited. The protection begins from here and extends beyond the Two Sisters — two rocks that emerge from the water, whose name derives from a legend linked to their resemblance.

GRAZIA

Do you think that the citizens of Ancona are sufficiently informed about projects concerning the protection of the Conero Park?

ERNESTO

— If the citizens of Ancona are informed about the protection projects: absolutely not, I don't think so. There's not much awareness. The awareness-raising meetings mostly involve the operational part - shipowners, boatmen, nautical clubs - but not the citizenship in a broad sense.

GRAZIA

What do you think could be done to improve the protection and valorisation of the Conero Park?

ERNESTO

— What could be done to improve protection and valorisation: culture is the main element. Respecting something means, for example, not throwing a plastic bag in water and not turning the other way if someone else does. We need to educate the new generations not to ignore these behaviours. Today throwing spent oil into the sea is a crime. What can be done? Educate, sensitise, having respect also for the sportsman. We must not fall into the logic of the systematic no. We must ask ourselves how to make parks attractive from a tourist point of view, respecting the ecosystem. Managed tourism is wealth for the territory. The no and the yes must always be argued; it is necessary to create synergies between the various parks and structures that generate economic activities. What could be an economic activity within a park? For example, underwater routes with statues, sailing or canoeing courses, sporting events. We must not fossilise only on the environmental aspect: the park must be a resource for future generations.

GRAZIA

In the mouth of the Trigno, on the border between Molise and Abruzzo, we went to see the situation directly on the spot, because online the reality is not correctly described. We understand that the area is formally controlled and that environmental associations such as Plastic Free operate there, but the structural presence of the bodies in charge of control is very different from that declared. Yesterday, during interviews with representatives of the water management body, we asked if they really carry out regular checks on the conditions of the area. They asked us for photos, because on the spot there are truck wheels, mattresses, appliances — everything. The checks take place, but in an episodic manner.

ERNESTO

Re-connecting to the issue of sustainability: we must give it a gradient that also has value from an economic point of view. Environmental sustainability is one of the souls of sustainability, but not the only one. Looking at environmental sustainability means considering many aspects of it: abandoned waste, climate change, European political choices. Sustainability, seen all round, has three great souls. Europe has declined them as ESG: Environmental, Social, Governance. In fact, we have always been talking about the three E's: Environment, Equity and Economics — environmental, social and economic. Economic exchange is a fundamental tool for the survival and development of the human being: we cannot ignore it, just as we cannot ignore the impact of our activities on the environment and social fabric.

Preserving biodiversity also means seeking balance between species: microalgae that produce mucilage, for example, have a negative impact on the mussels and the ecosystem as a whole. Too many wild boars are a problem, too many wolves are a problem. Balance is difficult to maintain, but it is necessary. The problem of marine parks must become, for the new generations, a resource.

ERNESTO

This cliff descends up to 2 metres below the water, and this is where the famous mosses grow. Depending on the sea conditions, you can stop to the right or left of it. This diagonal reaches the Madonnina, which rests on this same cliff. You always have to leave it on the ground, because getting too close means risking the boat. Below the water, the cliff continues for about 2 miles, but does not interfere with navigation.

These parks are characterised by an extremely shallow seabed. If we went in parallel to the other side, in Croatia, we would be at the height of Zara: there, however, the seabed is immediately very deep — 3 metres from the shore you can already find 10 metres of seabed. This makes the water crystal clear and the particularly beautiful place to visit by boat. Here, on the other hand, the bottom is sandy and low, so you can't see the bottom well, which is only visible where it's rocky.

Portonovo begins a little further. Behind that tip there is Monte Conero. The rock that can be seen in the distance, when the haze allows it, is a Napoleonic fortress - more precisely a military outpost, also realised to exploit the Adriatic coast as a sliding axis, the same for which the railway tracks pass very close to the shore.

Do you see those parts of the coast landslides? It is a frequent situation: the ridge is progressively approaching the water. Transit and parking are prohibited in some areas precisely because the risk of landslides is obvious.

Here we are in the heart of the area of your interest. From here to the end of this small gulf is exactly the proposed area for the Conero Park.

How do we turn all this into your project? We have to win this project. We have to get out of the box: don't just describe the park from a landscape or environmental point of view, but look at it from a different perspective. Have you heard of blue economy? It is one of the topics on which you could build an original key.

If I were part of this team, I would say: okay, that's what everyone does. What are we inventing differently?

In the blue economy, a park like this — what could be its incidence? I don't think many of your competitors have argued this aspect, turning it into something similar to a synthetic business plan. We must convey the message in a few terms, effectively. When presenting a project in a university or professional environment, you often only have three minutes: you can't waste them. You have to go straight to the focus.

STEFANO

In a few years, in Chioggia - on the Venetian Lagoon - an access ban for thermal combustion vehicles will come into force, net of primary supplies. This is a concrete example of applied blue economy: in a protected area it will not be possible to arrive with a diesel engine. Are there alternatives to make the use of a marine natural park sustainable from an environmental point of view? Europe is already working in this direction. The big players of large retailers — Coop, Conad, Esselunga, Carrefour — ask their suppliers to demonstrate sustainability value. Even more so on a protected natural area: it is necessary to understand how to make it useable from an economic point of view. If it is protected but inaccessible, it does not last - because then those who control it, and those who do not.

When we go to build the project on the Conero Park, we must therefore give arguments that answer this question: park yes, but under what conditions, so that it satisfies the inhabitants of the territory and is sustainable over time? And who pays for it? The maintenance of a natural park has costs: if you unload them entirely on the citizen without giving him any advantage, the project does not hold up politically or economically.

ERNESTO

So divide the team by roles: who deals with environmental quality, who deals with the legal and regulatory aspect, who with the economic aspect. How is the park financed? Who sponsors it? A park cannot be ghettoised for the sole purpose of conservation. We need to find a model in which the park lives on its own sustainability.

Concrete examples: canoe rental, swimming lessons, sporting events such as a traversal race. A blue regatta, where the proceeds finance the park and are sponsored by the three territories involved in the Italy-Croatia project, giving visibility at the European level. Activities of cleaning the seabed with divers, structured as a multinational valence circuit, open to schools and diving enthusiasts who pay to participate. The proceeds are used to maintain a system that otherwise degrades.

Let's not wait for Europe: let's start with ourselves, let's build a model that can then interest Europe. If there is no money, the projects do not go ahead. We must also be concerned about this.

A park, if well structured, is not a cost: it is a shuttlecock, like the Olympics. The Olympics themselves are expensive, but they generate a wealth-creating industry. The Conero Park must think in the same way.

Let's not fossilise on the marine aspect: the beach is part of the park. Those who come to the beach need services. Those who arrive by boat need clear rules on mooring. All this is park management, and it is also economy.

The triangulation with the Diomedea Park and the Croatian area can become an integrated experience for users — even international ones. The parks must be enriched with underwater and non-subaqua topics, and made useable through sailing, canoeing, sports

activities. The social aspects and the involvement of the older generations must also be considered, who tomorrow will be called upon to support these projects.

PART 2: VIDEO QUESTIONS

PASQUALE (interviewer)

We are in the company of Ernesto and Stefano, two sailors living in the Ancona area who usually frequent the Conero Park. Before starting with the questions, I ask you to tell me a little about this area and how you live during the summer season.

ERNESTO

The Conero Park is this beautiful bay at the foot of Mount Conero, which you see on our left. We usually go to it on weekends, when work and weather-marine conditions allow it. It is an area that allows you to enjoy a mountain close to the sea, with the tranquillity of not having an excessive anthropisation behind the beaches. It is a beautiful area where you can spend days in friendship and tranquillity.

To our left you can see the cliff that lasts to the Madonnina - the statue that delimits the area - from which our moscioli come, also known in the gastronomic field. It is a very pleasant oasis, about 6-7 miles from Ancona, easily accessible from the harbour.

PASQUALE

We talked about the park. For you boaters who frequent the area, could the creation of a park represent an advantage or a disadvantage?

ERNESTO

It depends on what we mean by the word park. A park intended as a restriction for shippers would not be rewarding for anyone, and neither would it be for beach users if it became a ghettoised area. I'll give the floor to Stefano.

STEFANO

I agree. Recognising an area like this — unique in the context of the central and western Adriatic — as a park can represent added value, if properly managed. It must not become a limitation, but a tool to preserve a territory that changes on its own. This cliff requires a delicate management: in the summer period we witness with a certain regularity to landslides and remodelling of the ridge. Preserving it yes, and recognising it as a park can be beneficial. But recognising it as a park must mean being able to continue to live it - sea side and land side. We have an important shipping history, a fleet of boats, relevant port infrastructure. Let's give him continuity in living it. The blue economy should not be shelved.

The induct generated by this stretch of the Adriatic coast does not only concern Ancona, but also the neighbouring villages such as Numana and Sirolo, which organise charters and

small boat rentals. So in the regional economy, a possible Conero Park must represent an induced, with rules that know how to enhance without limiting the use.

PASQUALE

What could be done to find a meeting point between sailers, bathers and the needs of the park?

ERNESTO

I do not perceive a conflict between these categories: the environment is the same, and being able to use it both on the sea side and on the land side, from a unitary perspective, can only be advantageous. It will be appropriate that the interests of one do not prevail over the other, and that this ecosystem is considered as a system with multiple landing points. During the summer period, buoys are already placed that prevent boats from approaching the coast for about 200 metres. So the bather and the boater are not in antagonism.

PASQUALE

What can a protected park give to a territory?

ERNESTO

A regulated fleet could, for example, prohibit the discharge of wastewater into the protected area. Modern boats like this already have wastewater storage systems, which are then discharged in the planned ways. So the boater already adopts certain behaviours. But to improve further, I leave the floor to Stefano.

STEFANO

Common sense will guide the route, even if fair regulation could induce those who do not have enough civic sense to behave better - both on the sea and on the land side. Working on the awareness of those who live in these environments will be the fundamental element. More stringent rules, within a valued and protected area, are an advantage for everyone, provided that they still allow you to live and enjoy the territory. Making it a park - in an economically lively context, in the centre of the Adriatic - could be a good connector in an Italy-Croatia route like the one you are working on.

ERNESTO

To conclude: new rules inside the park could concern, for example, the maximum speed of boats, the prohibition of unloading, minimum mooring distances. But as Stefano said, these are rules also dictated by common sense. The main solution is to inform: to let people know that this is a park, an ecosystem that is maintained on an increasingly precarious balance, in which small attentions added together become great attentions. Everyone, for his part, must do his own - for the benefit of all and future generations. So: we inform, let's not narrow the field to just no, because the no for the benefit of anyone is useless.

