



SEVeso Project – Support Eco-Victims: strategies and tools for supporting rights and compensation for the victims of environmental harm

D.1.2. CONTEXT ANALYSIS: “MANTUA LAKES AND CHEMICAL POLE” SITE OF NATIONAL INTEREST (SIN)

ABSTRACT



Acronimi dei partner e componenti gruppo di ricerca

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D.1.2. CONTEXT ANALYSIS: “MANTUA LAKES AND CHEMICAL POLE” SITE OF NATIONAL INTEREST (SIN)

ABSTRACT

The SIN “Mantua Lakes and Chemical Pole” covers an area of 10.27 square kilometers (representing approximately 15% of the municipal territory of Mantua), of which 60% consists of land and the remaining 40% consists of the Middle and Lower Lakes, some sections of the Mincio River and its banks, and aquifers.

To collect pertinent information on the areas where the SIN is located, a context analysis was carried out, comprising a research activity acquiring data and information to understand the history of the SIN and establishing its possible future, identifying industries, organizations, associations, and neighborhoods, and finding data on the environment and health.

The research group of the University of Bologna, which worked on this case study, used numerous sources to gather the information needed to analyze the context: literature, official documents, criminal judgments, articles from the newspaper “*La Gazzetta di Mantova*”, as well as television broadcasts, videos posted on YouTube, and interviews with key informants.

In particular:

- 1) Regarding the research in the newspaper, numbers covering the period from January 1 1972 to October 31 2024, were consulted, and articles of interest to the research were extracted. The years from 1972 to 1986 were examined via the website <https://www.bdl.servizirl.it/vufind/Record/BDL-COLLEZIONE-101>, where the issues can be browsed only via a browser. Newspaper issues from January 1, 2016, to December 31, 2024, were examined via the paid subscription to the periodical, which allowed access to the digital archive using login personal credentials and enabled articles to be extracted using a search with the following keywords (which were also associated with each other): lakes, decontamination, judicial processes, chemical pole, cancer, Ente Parco, Tavolo del Mincio. Issue for the years 1987 to 2015 were consulted both in PDF files and on microfilm, both of which are available at the *Teresiana Library* in Mantua.
- 2) Concerning the interviews, between July and October 2024, 13 key informants from the Mantua area were interviewed: three members of the *Tavolo del Mincio*, two members of the *Associazione Medici per l'Ambiente* (Association of Medical Doctors for the Environment) (one

of whom was also a counselor for the Municipality of Mantua at the time of the interview), a technician from the ATS (Local Health Authority), four municipal and provincial officials with expertise in the SIN area and decontamination, a former magistrate, a lawyer representing civil parties in the trials of SIN industries, and a former employee of *Cartiera Burgo* (Burgo Paper mill). Information and qualified opinions were gathered on the attitudes of industries and institutions and on public awareness of issues related to the environment and health.

- 3) For scientific data on health and the environment, please refer to the report “Knowledge on the environment and health for restorative justice and deliberative democracy: support for the creation of an epidemiological risk atlas,” prepared by the group of the Institute of Clinical Physiology of the National Research Council (CNR).

Over time, the debate on pollution and decontamination measures in the SIN area has involved public institutions (regional, provincial, and local), associations, citizens, and enterprises.

Local and provincial institutions have played a crucial role in managing and monitoring environmental issues in the SIN.

The Municipality of Mantua, in collaboration with the Province of Mantua, actively participated in round tables and issued specific ordinances, such as the ban on cultivation in contaminated areas. ARPA-Lombardia Region (Regional Agency for Environmental Protection) conducted detailed environmental investigations and periodic monitoring to assess the state of contamination and the effectiveness of the decontamination measures.

The Mincio Regional Park, which intervened as a civil party in the judicial trial for the failure to decontaminate the SIN, collaborated in defining the emergency safety measures and subsequent decontamination.

Furthermore, institutions have taken a clear stance against new industrial speculation in the area, emphasizing the need to protect the environment and citizens' health. For example, an observatory has been set up to monitor pollutants in the Osone and Goldone canals, demonstrating the commitment of local authorities to controlling and preventing pollution.

At the same time, various associations and citizens' committees have raised concerns about pollution in the area over the years, promoting awareness-raising initiatives and participating in discussions with institutions and industries. These groups have played a key role in keeping public attention focused on environmental issues and in calling for decontamination and preventive measures.

The main companies operating in the SIN have been subject to legal investigations in relation to environmental crimes and are now engaged in the decontamination and safety measures of contaminated areas. At the same time, environmental associations and part of the population have expressed dissatisfaction with the timing and effectiveness of these interventions, considering them insufficient or late.

While some controversial issues have been resolved, the long-standing tension between economic development and environmental and health protection persists with three main issues remaining unresolved:

- 1) the tools and methods for informing citizens, in order to make them aware of the state of health in the area;
- 2) land decontamination, and means to repair damage caused to the environment and to the health of inhabitants;
- 3) measures to reduce the risk of environmental disasters to build a better world for future generations.