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# **A CONTRIBUTION TO A TERRITORIAL AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT: AN EXPERIENCE IN THE PROVINCE OF RIETI (ITALY)**

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## **Introduction**

The aim of the present contribution is to propose that the specific problems connected with the sustainable use of water and the soil and the interdependence between agriculture and urbanization be inserted in a wider perspective, referable to the themes of local development, the relation between environment and production, and the establishment of contexts of planning interaction according to a relational and interactive approach. These are themes that permit not only the problems at issue to be interpreted from a different viewpoint, but also to develop a more pertinent and significant territorial action.

The approach provided the basis for a recent project in the Province of Rieti, an inland area of the Lazio region (central Italy), which extends from the plain of the river Tiber to the mountains of the Apennine. The area in question is characterized by various territorial contexts (river valley, inland plain, hill country with important agricultural activities, mountain terrain, etc.), by important natural and cultural resources, and by the pressure of the nearby metropolitan area of Rome. The project led inter alia to the formulation of the territorial plan of provincial co-ordination<sup>1</sup>. Some remarks on the Rieti project, though inevitably limited, partial and certainly not exhaustive, should help to illustrate the general approach, the conclusions reached and the actions developed.

## **Territorial project and local development**

The concept of "sustainable development" is now widely abused. Its distant origins, though they gave rise to a fruitful line of reflection, have been lost sight of, thus giving rise to considerable ambiguity. The concept of sustainable development lends itself to considerable distortions and, in many respects, serves more to conceal than

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<sup>1</sup> The project arose from the collaboration between the Provincial Administration of Rieti and the Department of Architecture and Town-Planning of the University "La Sapienza" of Rome. Though institutional in type, the project was characterized by a marked attention to the involvement of various social partners and essentially took the form of a local development project.

to expose some “bad habits of thought”. One of the first such distortions is to suppose that the environmental question is sectorial, and that it is possible to separate the various issues, problems and objectives (the soil, water, etc.) from the complexity of their interrelations and, above all, from the dynamics of the development and socio-cultural transformation of local society as a whole, which in turn is interconnected – in different ways and through a multiplicity of channels – with different global levels. The environment cannot be separated from production systems or settlement patterns; a territorial project cannot be separated from a social project and from the way development and in particular local development is envisaged; the interdependence between agriculture and urbanization cannot be separated from the interpretation of development. The separation of these fields reflects the more general Cartesian approach, typical of modernity, which tends to classify, separate and identify objects, to construct and to analyze according to abstract mental categories, divorced from their context and their interrelations. It would suffice to refer to anthropologists and sociologists like Bateson and Bourdieu to emphasise that “the real is relational”: what counts is not the categories themselves, but the relations and interrelations between them, the relation between the different dimensions of the problems.

These relations and interrelations, it should be stressed – and this is the second consideration – cannot be completely controlled (or fully understood). The reasons are various, many of them well known: multifarious and global character of the relations, multiplication of the decision-making centres, indeterminacy both of the natural and of the socio-cultural processes, lack of rationality in the decision-making processes, etc. The concept of governance enables us to regard processes of this type in a different light: “[...] territorial government can only be one of governance, i.e. not so much direct intervention (physical or regulatory) on things, as action aimed at agents that have (or plan to have) relations with things and that through them establish relations between each other: they conflict, compete, negotiate, co-operate with each other, in other words form networks of interaction” (Dematteis, 1998). This approach introduces a completely different logic of territorial action. It is as well to specify, however, that governance is not “governable”, i.e. it is not confined to an activity or function of control or regulation by a specific authority (which is clearly the public authority), and also that it does not occur through a plan. Territorial action, in the way it was conceived and implemented in the Rieti project, is expressed through the creation of contexts of interaction and the development of constructive processes of interactive planning within social networks. The results of this process provide the project’s collective terms of reference.

Another distortion is to suppose that the environmental question is a purely technical matter and that its solution may be found in a prevalently technical dimension. This often implies a logic according to which development, if it is to be sustainable, must be made compatible with the characteristics of the environment without placing its

foundations in serious question. Without going into the question of the different approaches to sustainable development, it needs to be emphasized that the question cannot dispense with a radical critique of the currently prevalent model of development, in many respects now considered the “natural” one, and one that has widely colonized the collective imagination and the modes of interpreting the problems. In some way, as Latouche says, we must think not of an alternative development, but of an alternative to development. In this sense, to recur to our previous assertion, the technical dimension cannot be separated from the political and cultural one, and from the way in which the territory, the environment and development are conceived and planned by the local society.

Lastly, sustainable development does not propose a preconstituted model; it cannot be a new ideology and in proportion as it becomes one, we must dissociate ourselves from it. What we need to do, rather, is to activate and develop creative processes able to conceive and realise sensible, innovative and co-evolutionary approaches to development, especially by involving all the protagonists, by heightening their sense of responsibility, by changing the ways in which the political process is conceived and conducted, and by developing widespread project capacity.

It is beyond the scope of this paper to give a comprehensive account of the project implemented in the Province of Rieti. We will confine ourselves to emphasising just some aspects that characterized its formulation and that may be considered significant in this context. Local development, on which a wide-ranging debate is being developed both in Italy and in Europe (though here too with a growing proliferation of positions and with the risk of causing considerable ambiguities<sup>2</sup>), has been interpreted in the Rieti project above all in terms of an anthropological and cultural re-appropriation of the territory. The territory is interpreted as the product of a “social and historical process”, of a social and cultural fabric, and of an historical stratification of the presence of man; the inhabitants, in this sense, are “producers of territory”. The territory is the world of connotations of a local society in its corporeal and physical dimension; as Lévy says, it is an anthropological space. A territorial project is therefore closely related to the way in which a local society conceives of itself.

The predominant model of development at the present time is often “heterodirect”: it is standardized and subordinated to the global competitive dimension, which regards inland areas of this kind as “marginal” to the pursuit of a form of development which is that of the North. A radical critique of this model requires that this kind of development itself be revised on the basis of the territory’s own natural and cultural resources, its own ability to reconsider and propose its own role in an independent way, outside preconstituted models – especially in contexts like these, characterized

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<sup>2</sup> We will recall just some essential bibliographic references: De Rita G., Bonomi A., *Manifesto dello sviluppo locale*, Bollati Boringhieri, Torino, 1998; Magnaghi A. (ed.), *Il territorio degli abitanti*, Dunod, 1998.

by significant environmental qualities and deeply rooted cultural identities. From this point of view the South, and the many comparable “souths” of the world (of which the Province of Rieti is a good example), represent a paradoxically favourable situation, because they express a different way of interpreting the relations with a cultural world, and a relation with the land. At the same time they represent a reality where the model imported from the North has been shown to have failed, and has often brought with it very negative consequences.

The stimulation of new approaches has meant, in the experience of the Rieti project, especially two lines of work. First, all this means changing our way of regarding the questions: new interpretations need to be proposed, and innovations developed, through a greater and more widespread project capacity. Second, this cannot take place through a top-down process or through the action of a public authority *super partes*. It can only take place through a change in the way of working that is translated into the activation of forums in which the social agents can meet, contexts of planning interaction which are at the same time places of cultural re-elaboration and centres of social networks.

The development of forums, which represented the core of the whole project, responds simultaneously to various requirements: that of reviewing the modes of the institutional and political processes (in a perspective that interprets the political process as a way of interrelating the protagonists at which it is aimed); that of constructing a project rather than mediating interests; that of developing creative and entrepreneurial skills and widespread project capacity; that of highlighting conflicts; etc.

We will try below to discuss in broad outline some of these aspects in the specific context of the Rieti project: more particularly the fundamental policies and the transdisciplinary and intersectorial approach; some innovative interpretations of the relation between environment and production; and the work of the forums.

### **Knowing how to conduct change**

This slogan sums up the project’s four fundamental objectives, its “indispensable points”, which also represent its cultural foundations. These objectives are:

- “*construction*” of a provincial identity. The theme of the local identity is a rather powerful theme in a territorial context like that of Rieti, which is of relatively recent establishment (1927). The Province was in fact created from the fusion of disparate parts, profoundly linked (then as now) with the history and culture of the surrounding regions and provinces: the Abruzzo, Umbria, the context of Rome. So the local identity is no longer linked merely to the territory to which it belongs; the question of identity is a problem of relations, internal and external relations formed and developed in time;
- promotion of development and local society. The whole planning process was prompted by a critical “re-reading” of the features of the development that has

affected the Province of Rieti in the recent past. We cannot in fact think of the territory of a Province without thinking of the guidelines that the local society wants to adopt or the aims it wants to pursue. The territory becomes mediator (in the sense of medium of communication) of this planning process. In the specific case of Rieti, the fundamental consideration is that the Province has “escaped development”, i.e. escaped this predominant development model. The area has in fact been considered “marginal” in the logic of a highly competitive development model, strongly pervaded by globalization. But this “marginal” position has been transformed from a negative to a positive feature, precisely because it has enabled the forms of territorial, social and cultural impoverishment, de-territorialization, and the squandering of environmental resources to be reduced. These negative effects have been felt only in circumscribed areas (the Rieti-Cittaducale Industrial Zone, Terminillo with its short-term “hit-and-run” tourist model, etc.) and on a fairly limited scale. A further negative effect was the action of the former Cassa per il Mezzogiorno (Development Fund for the South of Italy): the policy of state handouts, with which it supported this model of development based on heavy industry and major infrastructures, was later revealed as a failure. The result is that the Province of Rieti paradoxically still retains a cultural and environmental heritage that is fairly intact, with a high carrying capacity, and with a significantly high quality of life. What is needed now, and the plan has led in this direction, is that alternative perspectives be re-proposed. These perspectives should be based above all on the local natural resources, products and cultures, which should be enabled to dialogue positively with the dynamics of globalization and with the ever active external pressures, beginning with the strong influence exerted by the metropolitan area of Rome. This also means reinforcing and reconstructing the deep-rooted social fabric, in such a way as to enable it to take care of its own territory, and to devise alternative forms of development;

- environmental compatibility. In this new perspective the environment clearly represents a strong point, a fundamental reference. This means developing and reconstructing a co-evolutionary relation with the province’s own environmental context, also within the dynamics of production. In many respects the Province of Rieti has based its own identity and wealth on a balanced relation with its natural resources: water, woodland, olive groves, etc. What is needed is to invest in a relation between society and territory that is able to reproduce enduring social and cultural values that may re-interpret the environment also in its symbolic dimension. For this purpose, the environment cannot be considered on a purely sectorial basis, as an external compatibility; it has therefore been directly integrated in the planning process, and involved in the process of reviewing the approach to development itself;
- creating widespread project capacity, creativity and entrepreneurial skills. These aims can only be pursued through the mobilization and direct involvement of the social agents, the local protagonists. The lack of a ruling class can only be overcome by mobilizing cultural and social resources and planning skills around

territorial issues. The work through the forums has tried to operate in this direction.

In the Rieti project it was decided to tackle some “major themes” in a synthetic and interdisciplinary form, starting out from the major questions that concern the territory of Rieti and local development, and more in general the recent economic and social dynamics at the local and global level.

The first theme was that of the territory’s identity and relations. For the identity of the Province we used the metaphor of the archipelago, which well expresses its composite character and its close interrelations with the surrounding contexts (Umbria, Abruzzo, Marche, the Roman metropolitan area). To this corresponds a character of the people of Rieti that is still closely linked with their own territorial specificity. Their identity is still defined by the relations between the various contexts within the Province and between them in turn and the outside world. This poses the question of how to grasp and valorize the sense of this specificity and diversity, both from the cultural viewpoint and from that of the territorial role in a dynamic of globalization: What relation should be established with Rome and what with the other surrounding Provinces? How should a role traditionally considered marginal be interpreted in an innovative manner? What development should be proposed on the basis of the Province’s own resources in relation to the wider context? etc. Such questions also need to be tackled in a perspective of establishing networks of relations both within and outside the Province.

The second theme was that of interpreting in an integrated form the relation between environment and production. This means critically reconsidering the development models that emerge at the local level, according to the territorial articulation formed within the same forum. The environment cannot be simply the object of a policy of conservation, but must enter into the definition itself of the means of development. This is because the environment furnishes the fundamental resources in a local development model; is a resource in itself; and must guide development in such a way as to ensure its sustainability. At the same time the environment cannot be conceived in a manner uprooted from the more comprehensive economic and social dynamics and hence interpreted in a purely conservational form. The environment is a heritage of fundamental importance for the Province of Rieti. It represents a key card to be played in a context in which the presence of a city like Rome and the existing settlement dynamics are transforming the whole territorial system of central Italy into a kind of mega city-region. In such a context areas like that of Rieti are no longer marginal but dependent on, and profoundly integrated with, those where the development is concentrated. For they furnish it with the necessary resources and environmental functions: water (it is enough to think of the enormous reservoir represented by the Province of Rieti for Rome and not only for Rome), the large areas of unspoilt countryside at the territorial scale, the natural regeneration, the

exploitation of the natural and cultural heritage, the quality of life and the tastes (also at the gastronomic and wine-producing level) associated with it, etc. In the same way “production” must be interpreted, not in the traditional competitive forms that place different territories in opposition to each other (and that lead to some being subordinated to others; and Rieti would be profoundly at risk from this point of view), but in terms of capacity to produce income, to “put to work” its own social fabric, its own environmental context, its own cultural heritage, assuming its own territorial role within wider dynamics. The defence of the environment does not mean conservation alone. Rather, it means identifying those co-evolutionary factors that may permit the society settled in it to live and to produce also by transforming the landscape in an innovative manner, while at the same time maintaining the most scrupulous and sensitive “care” for it. The environment is not protected through rigid regulations and straightjacket constraints, but by radically guiding the modes of production and settlement.

The third major question relates to the points of social crisis, which apparently have no direct relation with the physical territory, but which in reality profoundly influence it. Not only that, but the social problem becomes a question fundamental in itself and of central importance in the formulation of a model of local development. The gradual abandonment of the mountain areas and the ageing of the population that remained there; the more general exodus to Rome, especially from the Fifties onwards; the transformation of society and the adoption of life-styles more geared to affluence; the recent registration of a kind of “counter-exodus” (even if limited in the main to weekends and holiday periods) of former inhabitants of the Province who would like to return or of Romans seeking a better quality of life than that of the city (even if it means commuting); the employment crisis in the areas that suffered the most from the dynamics of the Ford model of development; the pockets of social unrest in the outward-expanding suburbs of Rome, etc.: these become central issues for anyone wanting to tackle the problems of a territory and the society that lives in it. The themes traditionally linked to the organization of the social services, to jobs, to access to the territory, to settlement are also treated in this perspective.

To these “major themes” of the territory of Rieti has also been added a wider problem, connected with the question of water, so closely identified with the territory itself, and that of the river system that simultaneously represents one of the essential components of a wider environmental system.

### **An interpretation of the territorial changes and of the relation between production and environment**

The situation of the Province of Rieti and the role it plays or could play can only be grasped by a larger-scale ‘reading’ of its relations with its surrounding territories (beginning with that of Rome), as well as in a more general perspective of



globalization. These relations are of an environmental, cultural, economic and social order.

The territory of Rieti is inserted in two large systems of relations that concern central Italy, which in turn is in part under the direct influence of the area of Rome: on the one hand, there is the very strong relation with the metropolitan area of the Capital; on the other, the Province of Rieti is “enmeshed” in a system of less strong and unidirectional relations that concern the whole of central Italy in a reticular manner. These relations are at their strongest along the backbone of the Apennines; they closely link the territory of Rieti (in terms of functions, communications, economic and cultural interchange, and ecological, scenic and environmental continuity) especially with the Abruzzo (to the south-east) and with Umbria (to the north-west).

The position and role of the territory of Rieti can only be seen within this superimposition and intersection of networks that relate the local to the global, and in which Rome assumes a central role. It is no longer possible to think in terms of “autonomous places” that are separate though interactive. Instead, we must think of “local” areas that are related on various scales and on different wavelengths with widely differing territorial contexts. In our particular case, the process taking place is a kind of “metropolitanization” of the whole of central Italy, its transformation into a metropolitan area, with various degrees of influence and integration. It no longer makes any sense to regard the Roman area with a conflictual, or even competitive, viewpoint, still less in terms of the dialectic of periphery versus centre: a periphery that defends itself from the oppressive influence of the metropolitan city. The territory of Rieti is by now an integral part of a territorial system which has its strong point in the Roman area and within which it plays a specific function. It is dependent on the stability of the Roman system and, in some measure, also on its competitive capacity on a global scale. And its primary role seems to be in the first place the production of environmental goods. Through the environment and the primary activities connected with it, which characterise the territory so strongly and significantly, it is able to play a role in the tertiary sector, linked with leisure activities, the search for quality of life, well-being and social enjoyment.

The Province of Rieti supplies water to Rome, but also provides clean air, unspoilt nature reserves, well-preserved ecosystems, significant landscapes of great cultural and symbolic importance, cultural stratifications linked to the collective imagination and to religious sentiment, holiday homes and scattered settlement for weekends and longer vacations, open-air activities, gastronomic and wine-tasting itineraries, etc.

Of course, it would be necessary to consider who bears the costs of this model, and whether in some way the economically powerful and more central territorial contexts ought not to contribute also to maintaining the quality of contexts whose benefits they enjoy and whose resources they exploit.

At the same time, some areas of the Sabina (the south-western part of the Province) are beginning to be affected by the expansion of the Roman building industry and by the impact of the metropolitan railways. Here, some residential areas are, to all intents and purposes, outlying suburbs of the city of Rome, held in a precarious balance between a coveted quality settlement and a traditionally squalid and degraded urban periphery.

A model of life based on great mobility is coming increasingly to the fore. In this model the place of work is in the city of Rome and in the more important towns, whereas the place of residence is in the more interesting areas in terms of landscape and the environment, at any rate in the province's traditional residential areas. This motivates and solicits a constant demand for an improvement in long-range transport links, especially with Rome. These links, however, would exact a heavy environmental cost and still fail to justify themselves in an overwhelming manner, given the low number of users characteristic of a province that in demographic terms is roughly equivalent to a single district of Rome. By comparison, the existing intermodal transport system, now in a phase of expansion, already seems a significant step forwards.

We are even witnessing partial phenomena of return to the province, in contrast to the great exodus to Rome which has distant origins, but which exploded in the Fifties and continued at very high levels till the end of the Seventies. The quality of life in the territory of Rieti has, and will continue to have (in proportion as it is maintained), a considerable power of attraction. The local inhabitants themselves have never renounced periodically returning to their own homeland and maintaining their own presence there.

What is more important to emphasise is that those who periodically come (or return) to the area establish a strong and significant relation with the local territory and culture, and care for the heritage with which they enter into relation. The "olive groves of the Romans" are still maintained productive; they have not been abandoned. Those who establish a relationship of this type generally care for the existing heritage; they have a vested interest in maintaining the quality of the environment and the context of life in which they are incorporated, because it is what they are seeking. The relationship is no longer linked to residence, nor to production in the strict sense, but it cannot be denied that it is one of belonging, of re-appropriation of the local heritage. Clearly it is a relationship of "tertiary" type, linked to "urban" rather than to rural culture. But it is this relationship, rather than other forms of exploitation of the province's resources by local or outside agents, that is best able to maintain the quality of the territorial context. Very different, in fact, is the relationship established with the territory by short-term "hit and run" tourism, linked especially to the tourist exploitation of traditional type of some of the Province's areas of major scenic appeal, such as Terminillo (the "mountain of

Rome”); in a context of wider competition these tend to lose their advantage over other areas. It is a question of *learning how not to undersell one's own territory*. These short-term attempts tend in fact to disappoint the hopes of regeneration. The tourist influx into the Amatriciano, in the north-east of the Province, even if not linked to traditional forms of tourism, is impressive in scale and utterly superior to that based on Terminillo, where the aim is to follow traditional strategies of tourist promotion. Planning local development means developing a new territorial culture, a new mountain culture, a new environmental culture which may be able to establish close, lasting, empathic and high-quality relations between the territory (in its various forms) and those who enjoy it.

Here a problem of “citizenship” is also posed. It should not be forgotten that those who establish a positive relationship of this type with the territory of Rieti, though not strictly residents, do not have any less important role in looking after it and in maintaining its quality. They are not “dangerous” interlopers who undermine the integrity of the territory; very often they are people who are far more willing than local residents to spend money in order to maintain this territorial quality. It is obvious that they bring with them an “urban culture” of the environment, and hence one no longer linked to a relationship of production, based on the prudent utilization of the typical resources of the territory and peasant farming. It is a relationship of “tertiary” type. And this brings with it some typical phenomena: expansion of scattered settlement in the hilly areas; realization of new residential building on the outskirts of the historic hill-towns of the province. This is a tendency to which not even the local inhabitants or those who return to their own home towns are exempt; they too are not disposed to forego some pleasures and conveniences (a comfortable and spacious home, the presence of added facilities, direct incorporation in an environmental and rural context). But this does not represent a priori a negative fact; the landscapes have changed in the course of history and continue to change: the plain of Rieti (in the central part of the Province) never existed in the way it does today; the Sabine olive-groves never extended so high up the mountain slopes; the chestnut woods have only spread in the way they have in modern times, etc. The problem arises when these settlement phenomena lead to an erosion of resources, to environmental degradation, to a mindless and disrespectful exploitation of contexts of life. In this sense, we need to aim at quality and qualification rather than “repression”, especially if this is enforced through legislative constraints. In local planning policies and strategies we need to aim, instead, at the quality control of phenomena, at the definition of quality criteria for settlement organization and for the morphological and formal aspects. But above all we need to develop and provide incentives for a settlement and building culture that exploits the potential of the heritage that already exists in the territory of Rieti, and especially in that of the Sabina. The Province's notable building tradition needs to be fostered and recovered through training courses able to provide the labour market with more suitable and, in some sense, more competitive skills.

This belonging of the territory of Rieti to different networks, both local and global, this mixture between primary and tertiary function of the environmental resources, this expansion of “urban culture”, is strongly reflected on the development of the primary activities and more widely on the culture of the territory and of its environment.

The territory of Rieti is characterized by the co-existence of a primary activity that produces income and a “tertiarized” primary activity, whether affecting the Sabina or the more inland areas, and whether consisting of the production of olive oil or the system of woodland resources.

On the one hand, that is, we have a primary sector that, in contrast to what is the case in all the other provinces of Lazio, is still very much alive, indeed, in a phase of renewed growth (farms have increased, not declined, in recent times). It is the sector that continues to hold its position in the territory of Rieti, in contrast to an industrial sector that is in deep difficulty. But it is a form of production that contributes to total income in a very contained, albeit significant manner, especially if compared with the situation in other provinces of Lazio. It is a sector that, apart from benefiting from European Union subsidies, is especially linked to the production of supplementary income, in a model predominated by smallholdings, family-run farms and the maintenance of other forms of income (if not the family’s main livelihood) in other activities, especially in the services sector.

On the other hand, we have a strong growth of a primary activity linked not (or not only) to the production of income or farm products, but (also) to the sheer pleasure of conducting rural activities. This is especially the case in the Sabina. In the inland areas, on the other hand, especially those in the more mountainous area, where the primary activity has largely been abandoned and woodland is spreading, it is translated into a mainly naturalistic exploitation of the environment and in the carrying out of parallel activities: fishing, hunting, gathering of mushrooms, truffles, etc.

These two modes of primary activity co-exist, without intersection, indeed they tend to compete with each other for land, if not to come into conflict with each other. This situation will continue to be perceived as, and will remain, a difficulty until such time as these two modes learn to integrate themselves positively and constructively, i.e. until the tertiary function of the environment and of farming is transformed into an income-generating productive activity by those who already practise the primary activity in this way. And this will happen, not in the logic of the exploitation of resources, but in that of the development of services and the aiming at the quality and specificity of the local environment in such a way as to differentiate it from the other territories by which it is surrounded. Some measures aimed in this direction are already beginning to emerge.

The need also to develop the secondary activities also forms part of this logic (redirecting industrial policy along lines such as to withstand comparison with other

much better equipped and competitive regions): development of the food industry linked especially to the processing of local products, whose high quality is generally recognized; development of the production cycle of wood aimed specifically at the quality of products; capacity to realise economies of scale in relation with the numerous and diffused small primary producers in such a way as to make it more attractive for them to collaborate; direct and local integration of these activities with social enjoyment; holding of trade fairs for the promotion of local products, etc.

It should be noted, lastly, that the territory of Rieti is a place of confrontation, and also in part of conflict, between two cultures: on the one hand, the rural culture and the rural world on the one hand; and, on the other, the urban culture, and more particularly the “urban” mode of understanding the environment, of which the province’s parks are in many respects the most evident manifestation. The territory of Rieti is in fact characterized by the expansion of urban culture: it testifies not only to the breakdown of the system of handing down culture from generation to generation, but also to reciprocal contamination, at least in potential terms. In fact, however, the contamination is no longer potential: if it is true that the urban mode of understanding the environment is fostered especially by those who come from the city and who live in the country for only a few days each month or each year, it is equally true that the local inhabitants themselves are ever more widely choosing the models of urban life (mobility for reasons of work, activity in the services sector, predominant residential choice in urban contexts, etc.), whether out of necessity or out of choice. And it is the younger generations that are in the first place most directly involved in this trend. They testify to a progressive disaffection for agricultural activities which poses problems about the replacement of manpower (so much so that in some inland areas, immigrants from Eastern Europe are assuming an ever more significant role, as in many other inland areas in Italy). But it is short-sighted to believe that this is a recent and induced phenomenon and that the prevalent culture is still that of peasant type. The generations that are now productive, not exactly the younger ones, are already very different from the previous generations and have widely practised farm mechanization, the logic of assisted support, the reduction of activity to income supplementation, crop simplification, the growth of productivity in a market logic, etc. In this way they have determined a far-reaching commingling between the two cultures and their different ways of understanding environmental resources.

A very different matter, and one of importance, is the fact that the peasant culture has entered the collective imagination of the local inhabitants and those who look at Rieti from the outside, especially those interested in this province. This specificity cannot in fact be considered a diminution or limitation, but one of the strongest resources and one of greatest potential, a widely sought element of quality, and one that may assume a significant role in the identity of this province and the way it understands its relations with the surrounding context. A testimony to this is the fact that, from

the tourist point of view, this assumes a decisive role and becomes a guiding element in the new culture of the environment and the territory we have described. The province of Rieti cannot aim merely at the exceptional nature of its resources to be exploited by “hit and run” tourism, nor conceive of the requalification of scattered settlement merely in the terms with which it was developed in such contexts as those of Umbria and Tuscany (by now reserved mainly for some elites). It needs, instead, to learn how to integrate the high environmental quality with the specificity of the local products and characteristics and with the profound and imaginary relation with the peasant culture, which expresses particular ways of life and interprets the environmental factors in largely symbolic terms.

### **Contexts of planning interaction**

The forums that have been established, i.e. “places” of discussion and planning (whose sense, it is as well to repeat, is clearly that of fostering consensus), have been of various type:

- organized structures of “pseudo-permanent” character (though always voluntary), at the level of the whole province and hence capable of more comprehensive views; gravitating around some basic criteria for interpreting the territory (e.g. the relation between environment and production) but always aimed at the relation between territory and development; these forums, in turn, have been subdivided (according to their own self-organization) in work groups according to areas (corresponding to the planning areas into which the Province is divided: Sabina, Montepiano reatino, Salto-Cicolano, Turano, Amatriciano-Alto Velino);
- work groups on specific territorial questions and areas;
- work groups for reflection and proposal on general issues, referable to the whole provincial context (e.g. the points of social crisis).

In general, it is important to have both levels of reflection, interpretation and planning: both that at the local level (often linked to specific problems) and that at a wider level that enables the various situations to be “seen” at the same time.

The forums were organized in such a way as to involve in the first instance (though not exclusively) the non-institutional protagonists, the associations and representatives of the various interest groups. The participants in the forums have included the environmental and cultural associations, the entrepreneurs and producers in the primary sector, the trade-unions, other representatives of specific sectors, the service industry agencies, the representatives of the Province’s internal structures, the institutional agencies, etc.

In the relational approach adopted, the fundamental objectives of the forums were as follows:

- discussing the territory directly or indirectly, bringing the territory to the centre of attention, relating the territory to the kind of development and social project

that we wish to promote, encouraging a cultural re-appropriation of the participants' own territory, and fostering a heightened awareness of the territory's issues;

- gathering together the enormous heritage of know-how which goes well beyond mere information. It is a know-how, a legacy of experience, that has already given rise to an interpretation, a collective re-elaboration, and that has already been aimed at the project;
- turning to account the legacy of ideas and projects that already exists and that is generally well-rooted in the local territory;
- developing widespread project capacity and the constructive re-elaboration of the existing problems, in a context of assuming greater and direct responsibility for one's own territory;
- constructing networks of social relations that may support local development, and developing relations between the social agents;
- developing a more enterprising and creative capacity for initiative and entrepreneurship.

The forums have among other things developed the planning guidelines which have characterized the plan.

Organizing the process of planning interaction has thus become one of the fundamental objectives, and at the same time the main means of conducting the activities of the territory's government. Particular attention has thus been devoted to this question. An attempt has been made to ensure that it represents a pervasive element of the whole activity of planning by translating it into a series of specific actions and programmes. To the organization of the process has been dedicated one of the fundamental parts of the rules by which it is governed, where it is affirmed *inter alia* that the planning process "is based above all on the establishment of contexts of planning interaction and on the activation of constructive processes of elaboration and joint action, which respond *inter alia* to the needs to create widespread project capacity, creativity and entrepreneurial skills, to form close-knit fabrics and networks of social agents, to support initiatives and forms of local autonomy and to develop relations."

The territorial projects, together with actions, activities and initiatives that as a whole tackle the questions relating to the specific areas for which they have been activated, represent the fundamental means for developing this activity. They are developed through forums, local work groups, and variously activated planning networks, also supported by a specific communication project.

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