

INNER AREAS IN ITALY

A TESTBED FOR ANALYSING, MANAGING
AND DESIGNING MARGINAL TERRITORIES



EDITED BY
ITALIAN NATIONAL NETWORK OF YOUNG RESEARCHERS
FOR INNER AREAS COMMITTEE

BABEL
URBANIZATION

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ACRONYMS

ADSL	Asymmetric Digital Subscriber Line
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
CNAPPC	Italian National Council of Architects, Landscape Designers, Planners and Architectural Curators
CREA	Council for Agricultural Research and Analysis of Agricultural Economics
DEF	Economic and Financial Planning Document
EU	European Union
GAL	Local Action Group
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
INEA	National Institute of Agricultural Economics
ISMEA	Institute of Services for the Agricultural Food Market
ISPRA	The Italian Institute for Environmental Protection and Research
ISTAT	Central Statistics Institute
MaaS	Mobility as a service
MEA	Millennium Ecosystem Assessment
MEF	Ministry of Economy and Finance
MIBACT	Ministry of Cultural Heritages, Activities and Tourism (current MIC Ministry of Culture)
MIT	Ministry of Infrastructures and Transport (current Ministry of Sustainable Infrastructures and Mobility)
NUUV	Evaluation and Verification Unit of Public Investments
NADEF	Update note of DEF (Economic and Financial Planning Document)
OCSE/OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
PNRR	National Recovery and Resilience Plan
PO FESR	Operational Programme of the European Regional Development Fund
PSR	Rural Development Programme
SAU	Utilised Agricultural Area
SIC	Site of community importance
SNAI	Italian National Strategy for Inner Areas
SPA	Special Protection Areas
TPL	Local Public Transport
UNCEM	Unione Nazionale Comuni Comunità Enti Montani - National Union of Municipalities
UVAL	Communities and Mountain Authorities
ZPS	Public Investment Assessment Unit

Regenerating rural systems of inner areas starting from territorial capital: reflections on a possible utopia

Catherine Dezio

The composite dimension that distinguishes rural systems and the intrinsic potential to become an active regenerative resource for fragile territories is well represented by the concept of “rural heritage as territorial capital” (Dezio, 2020a). Starting from this reconceptualisation, how can rural systems contribute to the rebirth of inner areas? To answer this question, the coevolutionary relationships (Norgaard, 1984a; Norgaard 1984b) of the many dimensions of rural

territorial capital will be explored, with a view to closing the gap between sectors, scales and levels of government. The aim of the chapter is to feed the discussion on rural issues in inner areas, already introduced within the National Strategy for Inner Areas (2013), in order to stimulate an open, accessible and transversal debate, alternating analytical reflections on current transformations with possible antifragile utopias.

1. In the following contribution we refer to rural areas following the OECD criteria (2009), based on population density. However, although it is not the main subject of this contribution, it is raised that the OECD criteria obviously cannot be considered exhaustive. Despite the

efforts made in recent years, a sufficiently adequate definition of rural municipalities has not yet been reached. The notion of rural municipalities still remains undefined, says Blanc (1997), due to the existence of a plurality of factors that combine to qualify a rural space (Storti, 2000).

RURAL SYSTEMS AND INNER AREAS: FRAGILITIES AND POTENTIALS

Over the last century, the changes that Italian rural systems have undergone are considerable and have led to important consequences for entire territories and communities (Bevilacqua, 1989; Lanzani, 2003; Agnoletti, 2010; Lanzani, et al 2015; Colloca, 2018; ISPRA, 2018a). On the one hand, a model has spread in which productivity is no longer the only objective to be pursued, but coexists with other purposes such as environmental protection and food quality, thanks especially to the CAP reforms since 1992 (Henke, 2002; European Commission, 2012; Frascarelli, 2017). On the other hand, agricultural activity continues to produce devastating and irreversible transformations on agri-environmental systems. Some of these are: intensification and monospecificity (Valorosi, 2002), the presence of pesticides in water (ISPRA, 2018b), loss of biodiversity (WWF, 2020), reduction of cultivated area (Pagnotta et al, 2014), the destruction of original historical traces (ISMEA, 2018), as well as the abandonment of agriculture and related assets (Benayas JMR et al. 2007; Lasanta et al., 2017; De Rubertis, 2019). The latter, in particular, introduces the following paper, which intends to propose some reflections on the regenerative potential of rural systems in depopulated areas.

The abandonment of rural territories is a historically rooted phenomenon, which we can now define as systemic, as it has affected a large part of southern Europe for many decades and with slow continuity (Lasanta et al, 2017; ESPON, 2018; Del Planta, Detti, 2019; De Rubertis, 2019). In 1961, the agricultural economist Emilio Sereni spoke of a “prelude to the agricultural landscape’s disintegration” (Sereni, 1961). This observation referred to the idea that the abandonment of these geographies was a physical phenomenon with profound structural consequences (Gentileschi, 1991), but also a moral and cultural fact, the result of a descending history of places, people and memories (Teti, 2017). That’s why we talk about rural abandonment, and not agricultural, because of all the rural settlements and their tangible and intangible heritage that are involved (Barberis, 1966; Vecchio, 1989; Macchi Janica, 2016).

The data on a national scale tell us how the phenomenon is still dramatically current. For decades, the Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) has undergone a progressive contraction (by 2.3% from 2000 to 2010; 6th Italian general census of agriculture, ISTAT 2010) and is accompanied by a significant reduction in small farms (in particular, farms with less than 1ha decreased by 50.6%; ISTAT 2010) and by a general demographic stagnation of rural municipalities (De Rubertis, 2019). This constant depopulation tells of a rampant fragility in Italy (see chapter by Agim Kërçuku in this volume), which includes agriculture in its complexity. It not only refers to production, but also to distribution services.

2. The cited article describes the depopulation phenomenon referring to rural municipalities and for the Degurba classification of Eurostat (residual compared to urban poles and clusters) both in the OECD definition (population density below 150 inhabitants for sq km),

Every year, but even more now in the time of a pandemic, depopulated rural municipalities are at risk of losing the minimum supply services for people who decide to stay there. The confirmation of the alarming situation comes from research conducted by Confesercenti (2019). In the last 9 years, the phenomenon has involved 35,000 neighborhood shops and in 2019 alone, 5,000 retail shops have closed, with a closing rate of 14 per day. With obvious cultural and geographical differences, the phenomenon approaches American food deserts, literally defined as “areas where people have limited access to a variety of healthy and convenient foods” (Dutko, Ver Ploeg, Farrigan, 2012). The neighborhood shops are places of sociality and safety principals. If the shops close, degradation increases and quality of life decreases. These are essential services that are becoming scarce together with depopulation and economic crisis. Recalling that 60% of the Italian territory is occupied by inner areas, defined as “areas significantly distant from the centres offering essential services but rich in important environmental and cultural resources” (SNAI, 2013), we could also include food supply (which is underestimated by the SNAI) in the term “services”, in addition to schools and health care (see chapter by Bruna Vendemmia in this volume).

Having said this, it has been found that there is a considerable overlap between the municipalities of inner areas and those defined as rural by both the OECD and Degurba (De Rubertis, 2019). For this reason, but not the only one, talking about rural systems and inner areas in Italy will often mean facing two sides of the same coin, with their weaknesses but also with their opportunities.

In inner areas, agricultural, pastoral and forestry sectors may have the potential to assume a regenerative role. They can be economic driving forces, especially thanks to their intrinsic multifunctional capacity, and they can contribute to environmental protection. The management of agricultural land can play an important role in areas characterised by high levels of landslide risk and hydrogeological instability (see chapter by Gloria Pessina in this volume). Furthermore, the supervision of pastoralism in mountain areas contributes to the vitality of these areas, to the maintenance of biodiversity and to the contrast of soil degradation (Lucatelli, Storti, 2019).

To achieve all that, and much more, it is essential to work on the continuity of good agricultural activity to allow the permanence of populations and a generational change useful for maintaining life and presence in these territories. We need the good agriculture of good traditional practices, which in these contexts is fragile and requires support actions. The composite dimension of rural systems has in itself the potential to become the humus underlying regenerative local development paths, aimed at reversing the demographic trend that characterises inner areas.

Given the ecological and cultural importance of the territories surrounding many rural municipalities as providers of ecosystem services (Forman, 2019; Saragosa, 2019), talking about the regeneration of these territories becomes an opportunity to investigate, and, if possible, deconstruct, the relationships that exist between strong territories and weak territories and how these narratives are able to influence

both problems and solutions. In this sense, it can be said that there is a basic error: Italy should not be told as the dichotomy between metropolis and rural villages. Rather, rethinking our country with a global approach, which looks at a single plural made up of cities, villages and landscapes (Pileri, Moscarelli, 2018), means adopting a point of view capable of including complexity made by networks of relationships and interactions, rather than administrative borders (Bock, 2020).

Unfortunately, this was not the narrative conducted by the latest policy of regeneration of inner areas (see chapter by Rossella Moscarelli in this volume), the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI, 2013), which still foresees the city-countryside dualism as development-backwardness, with a strong focus on administrative boundaries. Having said that, however, there are many positive aspects of the SNAI. We know that the SNAI, launched in 2013 on the initiative of the Minister for Territorial Cohesion, Fabrizio Barca, and, coordinated by the Agency for Territorial Cohesion, aims to regenerate the territories of inner areas through not only the adaptation of the services on offer, but also the enhancement of local resources. The merit of the described approach, known precisely as resource-based development or as “development oriented to the place”, hoped for virtuous development paths starting from the enhancement of territorial capital (understood as a set of specific local conditions that cannot be replicated; Fratesi, Perucca, 2014).

Guided by this purpose of the SNAI and with the support of CREA and of the National Rural Network, the Inner Areas Technical Committee played a guiding role in identifying this resource capital and in the design of public intervention in the selected areas for the strategy, while clashing with the rigidities in the implementation methods of the RDPs, with the limited resources available to the regions and with the limited administrative capacity of local authorities (Lucatelli, Storti, 2019). The solutions adopted differ according to the contexts, but very often they are based on synergies between different tools and result from the meeting with the LAGs present. These solutions have led to the awareness that improving the design of interventions is only possible thanks to a great deal of ethical re-foundation for individual institutions, and then thanks to a new predisposition to cohesion and cooperation between different levels of governments and territorial actors.

From its inception to today, the SNAI should have produced similar effects. Actually, some inner areas have managed to do better than others, not only perhaps due to the lack of continuity in the national direction, but also due to how regions and municipalities have been able to catch (or not catch) the strategy challenges. This is why the regeneration of inner areas cannot only be occupational but also social and narrative. This means that small municipalities should first be able to make a systemic idea of territory their own, in which the development of a single municipality is only achievable with the cooperation of many. This, too, is part of the resource-based method, which leads to a reinterpretation of inner areas as experimental laboratories, for all dimensions of rural territorial capital.

REGENERATIVE APPROACHES STARTING FROM THE MANY DIMENSIONS OF RURAL TERRITORIAL CAPITAL

Some recent research studies have reconceptualised the multidimensionality of rural systems as “country capital” (Garrod et al., 2006). This implies the redefinition of the many rural resources, both tangible and intangible, as a single capital to be known and protected, but also on which to draw and invest, with responsibility and awareness.

The core of this approach is based on the concept that long-term human well-being depends on the correct short-term use of resources, whether natural or cultural (Garrod et al., 2006). The UK countryside agency defines rural capital as “the fabric of the countryside, its villages and small towns” (Countryside Agency, 2003). Although this definition may seem simplistic, it actually succeeds in suggesting the richness of the countryside fabric: the environment and landscape and its ecological and production cycles; settlements and artifacts; traditions and culture; small and medium-sized local economies (Garrod et al., 2004; Garrod et al., 2006).

This multidimensionality necessarily implies a co-evolutionary reading, or a point of view in which the environment is seen as a dynamic product of the continuous interaction between the anthropic and natural systems (Norgaard, 1984a; Norgaard, 1984b). This point of view is consistent with the resource-based approach proposed by the SNAI, inserting good intentions to a holistic and systemic interpretation of the endogenous resources.

A resource-based approach as the foundation of a territorial regeneration project, in the context of rural systems, is not a historical novelty. At the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Kropotkin, major exponent of the environmental anarchist movement, wrote the book “Fields, factories and workshops” (Kropotkin, 1899). In his book he addresses the agricultural problems linked to policies that led to land abandonment. To combat abandonment, Kropotkin argues that it is necessary to reconsider the land as a common heritage, to place agriculture at the centre of productive activities, developing cultures starting from local traditions (Kropotkin, 1899; Scudo, 2011).

It is from here that we want to start again, in order to be able to redefine the many dimensions of rural resource, both tangible and intangible. And this, in line with an approach that knows how to deal with the different components (environmental and anthropogenic, tangible and intangible) and the interactions between them, in the spatial and temporal transcalarity that distinguishes it (Magnaghi, 2014). We are talking about a historical approach, perhaps only apparently consolidated, which, starting from Gambi (1961), was in turn influenced by the historian Cattaneo, passing through Serpieri (1946), Sereni (1961), Rossi Doria (1965) and Bevilacqua (1989). This approach has the potential to guide strategies and plans that have as their objective a regeneration capable of bringing together tangible and intangible and socio-cultural and environmental aspects in the same interpretative framework.

This clarification is necessary to define the approach to reading the rural territorial capital that will follow in the next paragraphs. The study, approached for different dimensions, apparently sectoralising, is actually capable of attacking the complexity of agriculture while respecting its individual specificities. Remembering that the distinction between culture and nature, in the context of agriculture and food, is more fictitious than ever (Montanari, 2004), it may be useful to read this dimensional analysis trying to understand how nature can become a cultural model for conscious communities.

The Cultural Capital of the Rural System

Starting from the rural cultural capital of inner areas, we should obviously talk about heritage (see chapter by Benedetta Silva in this volume). The cultural places recognised as such on a national scale (museums, archaeological sites, palaces, ecclesiastical assets ...) when surveyed in 2011 by ISTAT, total 4,588; of these, 1,803 fall into inner areas. If we talk about rural heritage specifically, we are dealing with a very broad and little recognised concept that includes all tangible and intangible elements capable of bearing witness to the relationships that a community has established with a rural territory (Zerbi, 2007). The tangible elements are divided into real estate, or buildings for agricultural use or related to crafts or industry, and movable property, or objects for domestic, religious or festive occasions (Zerbi, 2007). The intangible elements represent a heritage of techniques and skills, dialects, music and oral literature, forms of organisation of social life and specific forms of social order (Convention for the protection of the intangible cultural heritage, 2003). There are also two categories of goods that represent the intersection between tangible and intangible heritage: food heritage, as result of an adaptation to the local territorial conditions, climate, cultural traditions, farming and work processes (Porciani, 2018; Montanari, 2010) and traditional agricultural landscapes (Barbera et al., 2014), the product of natural and anthropic elements and whose maintenance over time (and the safety of the territory in hydrogeological terms) depends on the continuity and cultivation methods of local communities.

Consistent with this last category, it is interesting to mention the research by Francesca Vigotti (2020; Box 6.1), which intersects the tool of the National Register of Historic Rural Landscapes with the National Strategy of Inner Areas. In particular, for each of the 123 sites reported in the National Catalogue of Historic Rural Landscapes, a matrix of criteria is structured that can be crucial for the conservation and sustainable development of the rural heritage of territories. This research is an example that the construction of databases or catalogues is only a starting point for activating a common ground on which to place a conscious and collective protection.

The survival of memory that the rural cultural capital of inner areas possesses can only be guaranteed by a different narrative for individuals, community and local administrations beyond the media banalities of typical products, festivals and folk-

Rural landscape systems in the inner areas: fragilities and potentialities of a multifaceted heritage

Francesca Vigotti

Politecnico di Milano

The research investigates rural heritage systems in the so-called Italian *Inner Areas*, on a national level.

Rural heritage systems in the Inner areas might represent a potential territorial safeguarding and a trigger to foster regeneration strategies of areas affected by the dynamics of abandonment. Yet, these systems are conditioned by various vulnerability factors, such as ageing of residents, erosion of cultivated land and related practices, together with the risk of loss of tangible and intangible heritage.

As a first step, the research analysed the indicators and information related to the National Strategy for the Inner Areas (SNAI) and the ones as presented in the context of the investigations that have led to the creation of the National Catalogue and the National Register of Historical Rural Landscapes. Thus, this preliminary study has resulted in the identification of which rural heritage systems

are set in the *Aree Progetto* as defined by the SNAI. Completing the introductory research, selected strategies have been reviewed by identifying specific actions dedicated to the safeguarding and management of rural systems, widespread built heritage and traditional practices and knowledge.

The result of such analysis is a composed base of knowledge for the research applied to selected case studies to be integrated with research in the field. As a final step, practices and tools of research-in-action that might complement the data retrieved from indicators have been identified (e.g. community mapping, interviews) to foster the knowledge, monitoring and conservation of rural heritage systems in the inner areas.

lore. We need to work together for the tangible and intangible heritage, recognised and unrecognised, inside and outside museums, universities, libraries and archives to reconstruct a powerful and antifragile narrative. It must be a narrative capable of showing that the knowledge that we believed to be dead is alive and is capable of including the individual, uniting the community, generating sensitive economies and is capable of reconstructing a past history whilst knowing how to contain the future one (Dezio, 2020a).

Preserving the rural landscape heritage starting from agrobiodiversity and local knowledge. Experiences and suggestions from Latin America for the implementation of the GIAHS approach

Andrea L'Erario

Politecnico di Milano and FAO-GIAHS Secretariat

Since 2002, the FAO-GIAHS programme (Globally Important Agricultural Heritage Systems) promoted an approach for the dynamic conservation of traditional agricultural systems of global importance, based on bottom-up projects in which local populations are both actors and recipients of the actions undertaken.

In many countries in economic transition, the GIAHS approach constitutes the starting point for national policies for the recognition of the importance of historical agricultural systems. These policies are aimed both at implementing actions for their active protection and at increasing the awareness on the importance of their conservation, as well as active protection from the perspective of the UN-SDGs.

The inner areas of many of these countries, as in Latin America, are today affected by phenomena of abandonment, breakdown of traditional agricultural systems, loss of landscape heritage, agrobiodiversity and traditional knowledge. Despite this, in some Latin American countries, the increase in sensitivity (also political) on the importance of the active protection of traditional

agricultural systems is evident. This sensitivity, also related to the need to ensure the food sovereignty of the populations, mainly comes from the recognition of the Latin American GIAHS.

From this premise, the research investigates these policies which, starting from the theme of food sovereignty, have an impact on the active protection of traditional agricultural systems also as historical-cultural heritage, through the dynamic conservation of agrobiodiversity and traditional knowledge related to the daily management of the landscape. The research also aims to identify experiences that can suggest ideas for policies or projects to be launched in Italy, even in the context of the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI). In the reactivation of traditional agricultural systems, the SNAI illustrates a fundamental aspect to reverse phenomena of abandonment of internal areas and revitalise rural landscapes.

BOX 6.2



Agricultural terraces (*Sistema de andeneria*) in Socoroma, Region of Arica y Parinacota, Chile. The enormous Latin American historical agricultural heritage represents a living heritage, still cared for by local populations with traditional methods. However, at the same time, the fragile character of this heritage is evident due to the progressive abandonment of these places, especially by young people. The abandonment has consequences in the breaking down of the ancient links with the past and, therefore, the oral transmission systems of knowledge for the daily care of the landscape (source: Wikidata, Creative Commons-CC BY-SA 4.0)

A bottom-up narrative constructed and shared with local communities, true holders of the intangible heritage linked to traditional agricultural landscapes, is the subject of research by Andrea L'Erario (Box 6.2). Andrea, working on an international case, identifies experiences useful for feeding the policies for the Italian Inner Areas.

The Human Capital of the Rural System

A narrative, like the one described above, stands as an intense and long-lasting work on the human capital of inner areas, a concept considered by many to be one of the central elements in the development of rural areas (INEA, 2013). From the early 1900s to today, there have been different definitions of human capital (Hanifan, 1916; Jacobs, 1961; Bourdieu, 1980; Coleman, 1990). Pierre Bourdieu was perhaps the first who, integrating tangible and intangible aspects, defined it in its entirety as an individual component (skills and competences, Burt, 1998), and a social component (interaction and relationships, Bourdieu, 1980). Therefore, when we talk about social innovation, we will refer to a process of change based on actions that are aimed at both individual and social capital: education, training, improvement of working conditions, sharing economy and much more.

It is clear that cities represent the great places of social innovation par excellence. However, inner areas and their rural systems also have the potential to be laboratories for social innovation. These are mostly territorial development paths connected to community processes that try to fight some typical criticalities of these places, such as economic inequalities or exclusion from basic services. The social innovation paths that include the rural systems of inner areas are activated, in particular, on aspects such as: green communities, the phenomenon of new farmers, food planning, social agriculture, support for short supply chains and local productions and much more.

Amina Bianca Cervellera's research (Box 6.3) focuses precisely on the relationship between typical productions and processes of social self-identification, and how it can become an instrument for regeneration.

Rural areas are normally considered areas where change is more difficult, but it is a partial truth. It is possible that forms of social innovation can take place on the fringes, but not marginally, flanked and supported by dedicated policies (Barbera, Parisi, 2019).

On the one hand, rural areas have the ability to generate profoundly innovative solutions, thanks to the presence of a plurality of actors capable of promoting ideas and practices; on the other hand, is the poor attitude of the governance system to take innovation as the basis for its own behaviour (Di Iacovo, 2011). The risk of this mismatch is being able to generate solutions which do not take root or spread. Governance in rural areas needs to foster a closer link between innovation carriers and institutional subjects, through the organisation of facilitation tools capable of assuming the change's subject as an organised opportunity and priority (even the most devastating one, such as the earthquake, explained in detail in the research of Marco Francucci, 2020, but also in that of Karina Zabrodina, 2020).

In this sense, the research by Davide Bazzana and Silvia Baralla (Box 6.4) describes a virtuous attempt to implement an integrated development model for Inner Areas, starting with new skills development and knowledge sharing. The goal is to put the inhabitants and their knowledge back to the centre.

Creating value through food. The social construction of future in the territory of the Four Provinces

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My ethnographic research concerns the territory of the Four Provinces (a set of valleys of the Ligurian Apennine between the provinces of Pavia, Alessandria, Genova and Piacenza).

Despite the administrative fragmentation, the Four Provinces show several common features connected with forms of peasant mountain economy and due to the fact that these valleys represented for centuries an important crossing point for the convoys transporting goods between Genova and Pianura Padana.

After the Second World War, this area (like many other territories along the Apennines) underwent a process of depopulation and economic decline. The aim of my research is

to explore the typical agri-food products as a possible flywheel for the empowerment of this territory and as a vehicle of new forms of social self-identification.

Food, as a catalyst for multiple practices and meanings in different social and environmental contexts, is a lens through which light can be shed on processes of economic and symbolic value-creation. To analyse how projects aimed at the empowerment of the agri-food supply chains elaborated by policy makers and experts intersect with endogenous dynamics of change involving farms and cooperatives located in the territory becomes crucial in order to understand the developmental trajectories that are currently taking shape around this area.

In the rural territories of inner areas, it is possible to identify the “levers to which a proactive and intentional action can be successfully applied, aimed at enhancing underutilised resources or those left on the sidelines by development processes” (Borghi, 2017). By the latter, we mean “human resources, of fixed social capital and also of natural capital” (Borghi, 2017), which should be made operational and enhanced.

The Natural Capital of the Rural System

In the context of the vast natural capital that the inner areas can own (see chapter by Giusy Pappalardo in this volume), while referring to the studies on the term by Daly and Costanza (Costanza and Daly, 1992; Costanza, 2020), we recall one

Ricegrowing for the implementation of sustainable development and the empowerment in inner areas

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The RISE project, developed at the Summer School for Sustainable Development (Siena, 2019), aims to relaunch and promote two areas with a rice-growing vocation in the Vercelli and Oristano districts, both characterised by similar productive features, potentials and marginality conditions which are typical of the inner areas, such as a lack of services, youth emigration and social fragmentation.

The aim of the project is to relaunch the inner areas through a sustainable and integrated development capable of enhancing the territory thanks to a multidimensional approach to sustainability by creating new skills, increasing national/international attractiveness and improving quality of life and the employment rate. Particular attention is devoted to the agri-food and tourism sectors, which are among the most privileged in sustaining the role

of local stakeholders guaranteeing new development opportunities.

Acting locally is necessary to strengthen the socio-economic and cultural structure and to make resident communities aware of the potentiality of their territory with the common aim of redeveloping and promoting touristic and cultural resources, through a transition towards sustainable rice growing, which is both a typical agri-food product and potential driver for public and private investments. Supporting virtuous actions for the sustainable management of rice growing by sharing experiences and good practices that can enhance the natural heritage of the area and promote eco-tourism is essential to create the sharing of knowledge necessary to start a virtuous process of transition, placing the inhabitants at the centre, thus avoiding the gentrification of the rural system.

of the most recent definitions (Natural Capital Committee, 2017), which includes “natural assets in their role of providing natural resource inputs and environmental services for economic production”. With reference to the inner areas, if we consider all the municipalities classified as inner by the SNAI, they contain more than 70% of the forest area and more than 77% of the area protected by parks, SPAs and SICs of the total area protected at national level (Carrosio, 2021). Furthermore,

an important point is that 2/3 of the value of ecosystem services at national level is produced in inner areas, against a local demand of only 1/5 of the total (Saragosa, 2019). This evaluation represents a fundamental point because ecosystem services are produced but still not paid. A national government that has a clear understanding of the problem of inner areas should work to start addressing the issue of paying for these services, territorially equalising those who produce these services and those who use them (Saragosa, 2019).

Looking into the specifics of the natural capital of rural systems, we could also say that it is divided into tangible and intangible, where by tangible we mean the agro-ecosystems as a whole and by intangible the services and benefits generated by them (MEA, 2005; Costanza et al, 2017). Certainly, the most important services provided by agriculture are the supply of food, fuel and fibre, that is, the supply services. But there are also support services, the most important of these being the maintenance of soil fertility, which is essential for sustaining agricultural productivity. There is also the provision of habitats for biodiversity, nutrient cycling and pollination, which allow ecosystems to continue providing services such as food supply, food regulation and water purification (Swinton et al., 2007). The regulation services are among the most varied. Agrarian landscapes have the ability to regulate population dynamics of pollinators, pests, pathogens and wildlife, as well as soil conservation (especially erosion regulation and protection from instability), quality and water supply, climate regulation and carbon sequestration. The additional services provided by agricultural landscapes, therefore, include cultural benefits (recreational and aesthetic), for which the evaluation is still complex today (Swinton et al., 2007).

There is no doubt that agriculture still manages most of the environmental resources and is in a central position in the relationship between man and resources, representing one of the main tools for transforming and organising the natural landscape and for constituting the first food producer. Furthermore, from ISPRA studies, it emerges that 21% of the Italian UAA (2010) has characteristics of high naturalistic value in terms of genetic biodiversity, diversity of species and landscape image. An example of how the high naturalistic value can meet agricultural production is the research by Luca Giupponi et al. (2020; Box 6.5). It has set itself the goal of taking a census of the traditional local herbaceous cultivars³ of Lombardy (to date 1,615), characterising them from an agronomic and nutritional point of view and enhancing them so that unique and quality agri-food chains are triggered. The work of Giupponi et al. becomes exemplary, not only for the characterisation and enhancement of endangered species, but above all with a view to promoting the sustainable development of mountain areas and their small and medium-sized farms through environmental protection.

3. "Traditional local herbaceous cultivars" means a local variety of a crop that reproduces by seed or by vegetative propagation with a variable population, however easily identifiable and which usually has a local name.

Study and enhancement of landraces of Italian mountains: the experience of UNIMONT

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The University Centre of Excellence "UNIMONT" (<https://www.unimontagna.it/en/>) is an innovative training and research centre of the University of Milan, specialising in the study and analysis of issues regarding mountain areas. UNIMONT, thanks to the specific skills dealing with mountain topics, intends to promote the conservation and sustainable development of mountain areas by preserving the socio-cultural and biological diversity, the production of peculiar and high-quality local products and the preservation of landscapes' quality for a sustainable tourism. Landraces are an agri-food and historical-cultural heritage, but they are undergoing losses worldwide; Italy is taking action to counteract this problem. In this sense, an important action was to investigate the

state of the Italian landraces preserved on farms - in situ by merging and analysing the data contained in the main databases on Italian agrobiodiversity. The total number of herbaceous landraces found was 1,615 wherein Poaceae, Fabaceae and Solanaceae together comprise 70% of total herbaceous landraces. In particular, three cultivars were nutritionally, genomically and agronomically characterised by the UNIMONT research team: "Nero Spinoso" maize (landrace from Camonica Valley), Copafam beans (typical legume of the Alps) and "Grano Siberiano Valtellinese" buckwheat (very ancient variety). Finally, UNIMONT provides a quality analysis service for saffron, a suitable crop for marginal and mountain Italian areas.

The Economic Capital of the Rural System

It is not possible to talk about natural capital within rural systems without also addressing the economic dimension. The research by Marco Marino and Jacopo Galli (2020) is just one of the possible demonstrations of this. It hypothesises scenarios of drastic transformation based on climate change in the productive landscape of the Po Delta.

But let's proceed in order. For David Ricardo, historical classical economist, economic capital is one of the three factors of production, together with land and labour (1817). In the case of rural areas, reference is made to agricultural produc-

tion, which can be defined as the activity through which some goods (production factors that Serpieri identifies as “work performance, tools and raw or auxiliary materials”) are transformed into new goods (products). Land is the physical basis of production, to which is added the capital of investments. Work is the third factor of production, which differs from the others in socio-psychological constraints and in the historical dimension.

Today, farming is changing towards new forms of business, through the development of activities that add value to products (ISMEA, 2016): this means talking about the agricultural multifunctionality of farming (OECD, 2001). The multifunctional practices activated by farms can be divided into three categories (Henke, Salvioni, 2010): (i) *deepening*, in which there are practices of in-depth analysis and enhancement of production (short chain and direct sales); (ii) *broadening*, which provides the opportunity to combine traditional activities with other functions performed by agricultural enterprise, such as rural tourism (see chapter by Stefano D’Armento in this volume), landscape management and biodiversity conservation; (iii) *regrounding*, on the other hand, involves the reallocation of production factors outside the farm.

In this panorama of different activities, it is worthwhile to deepen one of them: the short supply chain. The short chain is defined as “a production chain characterised by a limited and circumscribed number of production steps, which can lead to direct contact between producer and consumer” (ISMEA, 2016).

To understand the economic impacts and repercussions of some types of agri-food supply chains and the relationship with the territories of inner areas, Chiara Spadaro and Luca Martinelli (2020) undertook a comparative study of three different practices: the Forno Brisa between Loreto Aprutino (PE), Nocchiano (PE) and Bologna, where flours, grown in the Pescara hills, are transformed into the Emilian capital; the Tularù di Ponzano farm in Cittaducale (RI), where nine companies, a fresh pasta laboratory and a bakery share the production regulations; the Valmarecchia Bionatura cooperative, based in Pennabilli (RN), which markets flours of a mill under the “Terre Biologiche Valmarecchia” brand, controlling the entire supply chain. Beyond the specific results, what emerges from their survey is the strong urgency to imagine inner areas no longer as appendages in a subordinate relationship with the cities, but as systems capable of conducting a development path only with a one-to-one relationship of interdependence (Bock, 2020). This need arises from the local communities themselves interviewed, who underline the need to dispel the recurring myths of these territories, romantic or decadent visions of little use to a concrete medium- or long-term design approach.

THE POSSIBLE UTOPIA

In this illustrative roundup of resources and strategies, distinguished by territorial capital’s dimensions, we can clearly see the ability of agriculture to become a multifaceted platform, on which multiple systems and as many intentions can be inserted.

A resource-based project of rural systems of inner areas, traditional and innovative at the same time, can be regenerative if it takes into account the great multidimensional potential of their capital: it can be a keeper, improve and protect the quality of places, build social networks between producers and citizens and much more (Dezio, 2020a).

This is done by applying a systemic perspective that re-centres agriculture and its capital, with: more and more European agricultural policies that know how to decline locally on typicality and criticality; win-win formulas for the producer’s income, for healthy food for the citizen, for an authentic landscape beauty for tourists, for leisure places for the inhabitants, for ecosystem services for the community; policies for the reuse of buildings, soil protection, landscape protection, local markets and proximity economies, in a perspective that can be traced back to a bioregionalist vision (Berg, 1978; Iacononi, 2001; Magnaghi and Fanfani, 2010; Magnaghi, 2019; Poli, 2019; Dezio, Longo, 2020; Dezio, 2020b). It is a return to an awareness of the place value, or rather of “place consciousness” (Magnaghi, 2010), which can lead to protection and care.

“Back to the land” arises as a necessary reconstruction of the material bases and social relations, in order to renew the co-evolutionary relations between human settlement and environment (Norgaard, 1984a).

Andrea Ambroso (Box 6.6) takes up the concept of “back to the land” by re-proposing it as a phenomenon capable of expressing the profound change of territoriality, an essential transformation of the co-evolutionary relationships between individual and environment. In this sense, he investigates the phenomena of rurbanisation, and with them also: the new modes of production and distribution, the increase of an alternative economy, the forms of settlement that this demographic return has taken over the centuries and which strategies to adopt so that this neo-rurality can generate virtuous territorial transformations.

“Back to the land” is an increasingly transversal need to address the growing agricultural problems. It does not pretend to go back in time or to clear the history of mechanisation or genetic engineering, which has radically changed what was once the traditional agriculture, but it requires effort for a new challenge. Young minds and innovative thoughts are required for ancient crafts. The intertwining of new technologies with traditional knowledge can change the connotations of agriculture, which can remain real while feeding on utopian provocations (Dezio, 2020a).

All this leads us to reflect on the forms of local governance, understood as a system of actors, tools and processes. First of all, it reflects on the role of the farmer, who is always a producer but, compared to the past, today can generate change by proposing themselves as a “builder of common goods useful for the whole commu-

BOX 6.6

Neoruralism - New territorialising of agricultural systems

Andrea Ambroso

Università IUAV di Venezia

The phenomenon of neo-ruralism can be considered as one of the most important cultural trends of our time. This attitude comes from the current crisis of the concept of 'Western city': a crisis which impacts both environment and society.

The phenomenon manifests itself as a new awareness of the concept of 'work', a new identity of the 'land', the valorisation of the short supply chain and of organic products.

The aforementioned processes convey a deep change in the concept of territoriality, together with an essential transformation of the relationship between man and environment.

The RDP (Rural Development Programmes) are critical as the engine of transformation of the rural areas, impacting the development of the new farmers' youth policies, and the modernisation of the farming productive system to improve performance and environmental sustainability.

The new production models aim to innovate the rural landscape as a system that is always changing and never stable, able to supply diverse food products, to adapt itself to reversible programming, frail, seasonal and sustainable. Within this context, the concepts of archaism and superfluosity, the stigmas usually associated with rurality, become meaningless.

Archaic and modern blend together so that the agricultural enterprise no longer represents the arena of chemical-industrial technologies. On the contrary, it becomes a new model of production, management and online sales.

The new agricultural enterprise doesn't grow anymore in terms of size (rural space), but in terms of technological development, constant improvement of the operations, financial and environmental impact.

Therefore, for a resource-based regeneration that invests in the rural capital of inner areas, a public intentionality that invests in the human and relational dimension becomes indispensable, also with a view to enhancing economic capital: strengthening networks; research activity; education projects; training for local knowledge; exchange of common experiences. At the base of such a project there is a conception of territory that is a common good, a heritage of natural and cultural resources, individual and collective at the same time, and where agriculture is capable of evoking past values and soliciting future innovative abilities. From here, it is necessary to start again: from the here and now of all those involved at the local level in agriculture (Poli, 2013), and from a possible utopia that leads to real actions oriented towards the real problems.

city" (Poli, 2013). On the other hand, planners are asked to urge change, identifying flexible, inclusive, integrated objectives, policies and tools. Local institutions are asked to encourage change, with co-planning and cooperation actions. Finally, citizens are asked to spread the change in everyday life, also remembering that "eating is an agricultural act" (Berry, 2015). Therefore, we too, with our choices, affect agriculture every day.

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INNER AREAS IN ITALY

A testbed for interpreting and designing marginal territories

Edited by

Italian National Network of Young Researchers
for Inner Areas Committee
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The book “Inner Areas in Italy. A testbed for interpreting and designing marginal territories” is a timely contribution to the international academic and policy debate on ‘Inner Peripheries’ and on the possible measures to reduce inequalities among different regions in Europe. The National Strategies for the Inner Areas (SNAI), a groundbreaking experience of place-sensitive interventions addressing marginal areas, was promoted in Italy in the framework of the EU Cohesion Policies 2014-2020.

Inner Areas were identified by SNAI, starting from 2012, due to their remoteness, environmental and architectural fragility, relative poverty, marginality and shrinking trends. The authors of the proposed book elaborate on the outcomes of the first funding cycle of SNAI (2014-2020) and look towards the coming cycle, thanks to the contribution of more than 150 young researchers, gathered under the umbrella of the recently born National Network of Young Researchers for Inner Areas in Italy. Through the different chapters this collective text returns the richness of the multidisciplinary discussions that took place in June and July 2020 during the workshop organized by the Network of Young Researchers for Inner Areas committee and contributes to the international debate on how to analyze, manage and design marginal territories, characterized by high degrees of fragility and exposed at various risks.

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