

This book is part of a National Interest Research Program (2009-2011) entitled *Nuove forme di governance locale come strumento di sviluppo strategico del territorio. Una ricerca comparata in 6 regioni europee (Andalusia, Brandeburgo, Puglia, Sicilia, Toscana, Veneto)*, in which a depth analysis was carried out on six European regions. Among them was Puglia, in Italy, a region of the Convergence Objective during 2007-2013 programming cycle. This publication, although appropriately inserted in this research framework, is entirely dedicated to the Puglia region, through a multidisciplinary approach. Here, detailed analysis have been conducted by scholars in different disciplines (agricultural economics, geography, sociology, psychology, political science). Looking at the overall experience, it is possible to highlight the main critical issues but also the potentialities of this long and interesting path. This book argues that the regional policy needs to evolve by rethinking some key aspects of the territorial, bottom-up approach

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The Local Action Group and rural development by local actors

**PERSPECTIVES
ON RURAL DEVELOPMENT**
1

The Local Action Group and rural development by local actors

an Apulian case study, and a circumstantial method of assessing failure

Edited by
Angelo Belliggiano, Angelo Salento



UNIVERSITÀ DEL SALENTO

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Preface

Mario Caciagli

In a research programme entitled “New forms of governance for strategic territorial development”, coordinated by me as part of a Research Programme of National Interest (PRIN) in 2009, an analysis was conducted on six European regions. One of these was Apulia, in Italy. And Apulia has figured in a variety of volumes already published, dedicated to the discussion of existing and new intermediate institutions as possible agents for development within the framework of EU policies.

This publication, while placed appropriately within the above noted research framework, is dedicated entirely to the region of Apulia. Accordingly, the discussion continues to focus on the same subjects, called upon to be protagonists, likewise the same strategies, and the same questions (answered only in part). Looking at the overall experience — or at least the substantial part explored here — the picture is disappointing. Perhaps because the expectations were too many or too high. At all events, the judgement of “failure” that recurs repeatedly in certain of the interviews is undoubtedly a worry.

The resonance of this noticeably negative judgement is especially strong in the case of Local Action Groups, leading players in Apulia as in other regions of Italy. Indeed LAGs — the acronym by which they are most widely known — were seen as the new intermediate institutions that would provide governance for the territory and support the economic development of specific areas. The intention of the European Union and the Region is that they should offer assets and public service. The tasks entrusted to LAGs, perhaps over-optimistically in hindsight, were to organize and coordinate the demand originating from the territories and regulate existing interests there. Also, precisely because of their make-up, with both public and private subjects, it was expected that they would favour cohesion and strengthening of local communities.

The hopes placed in LAGs seem — thus far, at least — to have been misplaced in the case of Apulia. And not only Apulia, as we know from studies of the other regions aforementioned.

In a scenario where they ought to promote direct contact and cooperation between subjects not only with business interests, LAGs seem able, rather, to provide only a very limited participation. Ordinary citizens, moreover, have never been able to exercise any real influence on LAGs. Despite their supposed commitment to rural development, in particular, it seems actually that there was little awareness on the part of LAGs as to what “rural” and “rurality” really mean, whereas it is true that their decision-making powers are small. Our case study highlights the critical aspects, which include the opportunist conduct of many actors, the emergence of awkward self-promotional attitudes, and the overlap of political/administrative domains.

*If these are issues arising from the management of LAGs, there may be various causes. Firstly, one can cite the homogenization of a model imposed by the Region, which has stifled the localist vocation, hence the *raison d’être* of single LAGs, impairing their independence and their capacity for initiative. But one could also point, rightly, to the less than transparent relationship between sectoral and rural development policies, the asymmetry between the points at which the “determinants” of change are located and the points at which governance is exercised, also the lack of decision-making capability in the very structures of governance. In short, as discernible in the case study, the expectation of an action rooted in the territory has not materialized, and neither has the expectation that traditional practices driven by patronage and/or familialism would be abandoned. And all this, notwithstanding the actual experience should have fitted into one of the more successful EU initiatives, namely the Leader Approach.*

And yet, the development policies promoted by the European Union could have brought about the switch in approach from top-down to bottom-up. There has however been some movement in this direction, favouring an increase (albeit modest) in the level of actor participation and integration. One has also seen the advent of strategic planning, in some measure, heralding a more innovative

approach that could succeed in overcoming the limits of traditional planning. In these areas, the European stimulus would seem to have been effective.

But strategic plans have ultimately become overlaid and overlapped, the choices made have not always been consistent with the type of plan they claimed to emulate, and there has not been a tangible willingness to innovate. Consequently, the planning adopted by the territories has been derailed by opportunistic or sectoral influences, following an old model of neo-utilitarian inspiration. There is the risk that in the future too, this same acceptance of European models could lead to a watering-down of local potentialities.

The picture emerging from the contributions to this publication is therefore not one of optimism. One can only hope that the institutional and administrative changes introduced — in Apulia as elsewhere — will ultimately encourage and assist territorial cohesion policies.

Introduction

Angelo Belliggiano and Angelo Salento

Over the last twenty years, the methodological principles of European planning have undergone radical changes. The transition from a top-down to a bottom-up approach — albeit something of a mantra — has probably been the key factor in bringing about this transformation. The new approach has promoted and undoubtedly increased the participation of local actors and their integration into the processes of planning territorial development.

The history of Local Action Groups (LAG) is connected closely with the penetration of these dynamics into the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP). Since the 1990s, in effect, faced both with the problem of farm surpluses and with the urgent need to free up markets, prompted by the march of globalization, the European Union has been forced to change the social mandate assigned to rural areas. Rural communities were called on not only to provide food — crop cultivation and livestock production in the strict sense — but to maximize intangible food-related assets as well: protection and utilization of natural resources and of the landscape, promotion of local cultures and identities, guaranteeing the typicality and authenticity of food products.

In this situation, the notion of rural development as being a mere product of territorial rebalancing policies gave way to the prospect of endogenous development, based on the possibilities afforded for local actors to identify territorial resources and take them as a basis on which to build objectives for asset enhancement and shared development strategies. In terms of policies, this potentiality inspired the shift from sectoral actions — that is to say targeted essentially at crop cultivation and livestock production — to actions having a territorial focus, based on new forms of distribution as concerning responsibilities. In an essentially neo-liberal political-cultural scenario, this transformation was interpreted not as a case of territorial contexts winning autonomy and self-determination,

but rather, as the tendency toward construction of the European space as a space for competition between territories, where the task of social actors is to build their competitive advantage against a background of global competition, through the “discovery” and intelligent use of so-called endogenous resources.

It was in this historical-political milieu that the European Leader approach originated, ushering in the “bottom-up” development policies that would be continued thereafter with Leader II and Leader+. With the Leader approach, a new method of overseeing the relationships between social system and institutional system was tried out for the first time, with the creation of Local Action Groups (LAGs), i.e. complex organizational entities given the task of bringing together local actors and institutions to pursue the aims inherent in maximizing the resources of rural territories. It was LAGs, therefore, that would be expected to interpret the new method of overseeing economic and social processes, referred to conventionally as *governance*.

This volume publishes the findings from a cycle of studies on the planning of rural development in Apulia, conducted as part of a nationwide research project in Italy exploring the tools of governance for rural development. The analysis therefore relates to a specific context, but with the objective of finding elements in this same context that can help to understand the scope and the limits presented by such tools of governance, in evolving from conception to implementation.

First and foremost – as explained in the opening chapter – the top-down element of territorial planning has never completely disappeared. The “top-down” and “bottom-up” approaches to planning continue to coexist, overlap and interfere one with another; moreover, as regards the choices effectively made in regional development policies and strategies, their consistency with the idea of planning they claim to emulate has been shown to be fragile and fragmentary. For example, in the more general sections of the two main strategic tools used for territorial planning in Apulia during the period 2007-13 (the Regional Strategic Document for wide area planning and the Rural Development Programme for rural planning), one finds the promise of a procedure based on broad and active

participation, but this promise is then ignored in the operational sections of the programme, where participation is reduced to mere consultation of the actors and/or sectors considered to be most influential.

Whilst the original movement to change the paradigm of territorial development met with broad political consensus, it struggled to bring solid innovation in the practices of regional planning applied to local development. In the absence of any real “culture of participation”, the actors providing governance had to improvise the construction of networks, in an effort to capture European resources. In these circumstances, Local Action Groups — which on paper are defined as mediators of local interests, situated in the middle ground between institutional powers, business interests and social pressures — tend in reality to operate as *a party among parties*. As illustrated in chapter 3 (dedicated to the analysis of action taken by intermediate organisms in community development), while exposed to the assessment of the beneficiaries of the measures and of citizens themselves, LAGs tend to replicate the composition and modus operandi of local power centres.

Similarly, the objective of acknowledging and promoting difference — a keystone of the theories of local development — is pursued, in reality, with less than total assurance. All LAG projects will identify different territorial systems, but in most instances will also apply standardized objectives, rarely shared with the local communities. The situation is aggravated by two apparently opposing trends: on the one hand, the different experiences of integrated programming over the last twenty years have been typified by a high turnover of partners; on the other — as explained in chapter 5 of this book — the objective of preserving the continuity of partnerships, in order to maintain leadership in the territory, encourages phenomena of discontinuity and renders attempts at coordination problematic.

This same lack of coordinative capability is discussed in the findings of chapter 2, which creates a map of the main institutional networks that have operated at local level in the Region and illustrates the discontinuities and inconsistencies that emerge from the combination and the succession of different governance mechanisms (such as ITP and Wide

Area). Conversely, better elements of continuity can be observed when comparing the first experiences of bottom-up planning, like the LAGs, and the more recent experiences recorded in Wide Areas. On the other hand, elements of consistency and continuity between these tools cannot be seen unambiguously as an index of virtuousness, since they are often induced as the result of influence brought to bear by regional government, or they depend on the fact that the acceptability of cooperation projects is evaluated by regional technocratic structures on the basis of purely technical parameters, focusing more on the objective of obtaining approval for projects than on favouring incremental learning on the part of the community. In short, that which appears as continuity is often identifiable substantially as a general move toward isomorphism and homologation of the practices of cooperation, which in reality has the effect of disassociating local communities from the planning activities in which they are involved.

Thus, the process of participation has apparently been reduced to a mere summation of the objectives pursued by single actors, rather than achieving their integration. Instead of being embraced as a social mandate, participation is often perceived by LAGs as being a tiresome obligation, like an item on a check-list. Citizens in local contexts do not see themselves as being able to influence the sphere of decision-making, and neither have businesses genuinely built a network that seeks to promote the well-being of the community and implement an integrated masterplan.

The governance of rural development should be stimulated by a principle of heterarchy, capable of harnessing the positive energy in “dissonances”. From the research presented in this publication, however, what emerges most clearly is an inability to see the complexity of interdependencies as a resource. Chapter 5 looks at the attempt to achieve hierarchical control over the organization and management of the network, observed in the study of the a Local Action Group in Apulia. This is one of the 25 LAGs that were operating in Apulia during the 2007-2013 planning period, which our study explored through a cycle of 19 in-depth interviews with persons having various roles in the processes of

governance, aimed at understanding their interpretation of rural development, the dynamics of “participation”, and the conflicts and agreements between policy objectives and tools of governance.

Charged initially with embodying the “spirit of the networks” and seeking to implement a style of governance based on participation and heterarchy to counter the failures of the market, Local Action Groups showed that they themselves could be the authors of such failures. Chapter 4 offers a reference grid from which these failures can be identified and understood, comparing the actual performance of the LAGs with the objectives they formally pursue.

As in other previous studies (see Jessop 2006), it emerges from this research that in the planning of rural development, the achievement of results is in reality much more laborious and uncertain than might at first be suggested by declarations of intent and abstract institutional engineering. The problems and the responsibilities are many, and their nature and scale markedly varied. Notwithstanding the numerous instances of failure — clearly recognized by the actors most heavily involved — the interest in governance has not declined, perhaps by reason of that sentiment which Bob Jessop (2006) calls *public romantic irony*: the social actors proceed *as if* the success of intermediate institutions were a foregone conclusion, despite the high probability that governance will fail. In this scenario, understanding the limits and failures of intermediate institutions is an act of realism, needed to stimulate the search for remedies and new solutions.

The volume is presented as a collection of autonomous essays, proposed by various authors who sometimes recall, functionally, the same references to the European policies discussed in this work.

1. Territorialization and Europeanization of development. The case of Apulia¹

Stefano De Rubertis and Marilena Labianca

1. Introduction

Over recent years, in the field of social sciences, a general consensus has emerged on the relationship existing between the role of the institutions, government, and economic development, especially at local level. The quality of local governance, more than other factors, affects the outcomes of public investments, hence also the long-term economic picture. The current forms of political intervention in Europe tend to overcome sectorial and hierarchical logics in favor of integrated policies, aimed above all at the production of local public goods where the territory, through its actors, recognizes itself as a whole, within a framework of reference whose central objectives are represented by territorial cohesion and polycentric development (Conti and Salone, 2011; Vázquez Barquero, 2010; Boisier, 1999).

Conventionally, the quality of local governance is fundamental when coordinating actions at all levels of administration, aligning policy objectives, improving the supply of goods and services, guaranteeing that local needs are represented and taken into account when defining policies on different scales (Rodríguez-Pose and Garcilazo, 2015).

As early as the 1980s, development policies adopted by the European Union reflected an increasing focus on territorial specificities and prompted processes of reorganization that were so profound as to impact on local identity trajectories. Indeed the strategies adopted had the effect

¹ In this chapter, the introduction and the conclusions were written jointly by the two authors, heading 2 individually by Stefano De Rubertis, and heading 3 individually by Marilena Labianca.

of reducing the potential for innovation afforded by bottom-up approaches, frustrating the ambitions of next generation strategic planning and, in the final analysis, limiting the variety of possible “futures”.

Faced with a growing crisis in the model of local regulation, the loss of financial and political independence, the difficulties of management in situations that are complex and typified by marked uncertainty, several authors (Archibugi, 2005; Balducci, 1999; Bryson, 1995; Gibelli, 1999a; 1999b; Curti and Gibelli, 1999; Mintzberg, 1994) highlighted the innovative nature of strategic planning and its capacity to overcome the limits of the traditional approach. In this context, since the turn of the millennium, strategic planning practices have also been adopted in the regions of Southern Italy, often in response to EU policy guidelines rather than on the basis of any previous stand-alone experience. So it was that, in 2005, with the European Union calling for innovation and democratic participation (especially in the Convergence Objective regions), the experience of strategic planning was initiated in the Southern Italian region of Apulia.

Previous and current studies conducted on a regional scale show the limits and criticalities of the process and, more generally, of local governance. The effects, not only economic or in terms of the efficiency and effectiveness of investments, impact on regional planning in its entirety (rural and urban).

The purpose of this publication is to reflect on the regional situation, beginning with an analysis of the processes of territorialization and Europeanization, followed by a presentation of the regional case, and finally proposing a retrospective interpretation of the now completed planning experience.

2. Territorialization and Europeanization²

In the 1980s, the inclusion of 'territory' in the conception of development coincided with a clear tendency of governments and large international institutions to pursue neoclassical economic approaches that continued to consider growth as necessary, and to see its spread as a natural consequence of market mechanisms. In short, if on the one hand local specificities counted more and more (territorialization), on the other, the effects of pursuing a goal of universal development (free market growth) would naturally entail a diminishment of diversity. The 'local' card became the instrument of generalized growth that would lead to a homogenization of space (de-territorialization). In line with these trends, at the end of the first decade, European regional policy took on the nature familiar today, using structural funds as its tools and having cohesion as its goal.

European space began to be homogenized through the effect of Community policies, and at the same time differentiated as the result of single market strategies at national level. The search for supranational integration prompted the formulation and adoption of strategies for increasing the attractiveness of territories and of investment locations. Thus, de-territorialization — reflecting the attempt to standardize the European political and economic space — advanced hand in hand with a process of re-territorialization which, on many scales, saw various and variable political coalitions seeking to reposition territories more attractively/advantageously within the changing global scenario. Moves toward integration, differentiation and rescaling had the effect of generating new combinations of rich and powerful cities/regions, strongly interconnected with one another, and areas characterized by marked and persistent economic and social marginalization (Brenner, 2004, p. 258).

The free market turning point gave encouragement to strengthen the growth of cities and territories already strategically important for investments of transnational capital. Curiously, the regional imbalances and spatial differences that it was sought to eliminate became an absolute

² This section is a shortened reworking of: De Rubertis S., 2014b, pp. 13-29.

precondition for the accumulation of capital and no longer presented dangerous barriers that could have destabilized this process (Brenner, 2004).

National plans and strategies focused on strengthening the supranational competitiveness of cities and city-regions. Whilst regulatory power was decentralized, investments in structures and infrastructures also started once again to be concentrated on areas of major strategic and economic interest. Government institutions and policies actively promoted “competition between localities, divergent local development pathways, international socio-spatial polarization” (ibid, p. 259).

The EU drive toward institutional integration, from the 1990s onwards, was so strong that numerous studies show how many countries were induced to shape their regional planning systems to the objectives of the European Union (Moisio et al., 2013, p. 740). Europeanization affects the territory in its entirety, impacting on distinctively subjective and locally varied dimensions (Clark and Jones, 2008). In effect, and more generally, Europeanization seems connected to a global process of reorganization (Radaelli, 2004) involving networks and actors, which redefines the spatial reference framework of economic decision makers, involving political, economic and social aspects. In short, Europeanization is nothing other than a method of globalization. At all events, the process materializes as the affirmation of a scale of governance targeting the realization of the European project, formally, by way of participatory methods that reconfigure the territorial bases of authority, so that the supranational scale becomes dominant (Clark and Jones, 2008).

Europeanization established, among other things, a principle of partnership between public and private actors, shaping a complex system of multilevel governance around the regions. In reality, the process of European integration implies a drive toward the sharing of a system of values that has direct effects on territorial identities and, as might reasonably be expected, could be seriously conditioned by the stronger identities with which it interacts.

Given the effects of integration on development strategies, European competitiveness has come to be viewed as strictly dependent on the

externalities offered by global cities and metropolitan regions, where the majority of decision-making powers and central corporate managements are concentrated, resulting in a strong hierarchization of the European space (Espon, 2010). This seemingly confirms the importance of the ability to compete, depicted as a genuine goal to be pursued by making the most of territorial specificities.

The question of Europeanization raises the more general question as to how development goals of endogenous origin can be made compatible with the objectives of policies formulated on other geographic scales (in this instance, Europe-wide).

As Messina observes (2011), the spread and institutionalization of formal and informal rules impact profoundly on modes of development, through their regulation. Thus, the European Union conditions not only the “formal structures” but also the modalities (and the objectives) of development, albeit in very dissimilar ways from one region to another.

In effect, the problem is particularly evident in cases where the resources to be employed in implementing policies are, entirely or in part, of European origin: how to reconcile the goals of non-local actors/funding providers with local demands and expectations?

Currently, the objective of cohesion represents “the second source of spending by the European Union, after the Common Agricultural Policy. In the last spending round (2007-2013), the Union improved the multilevel management architecture that had from the outset characterized its regional policy, adopting a more explicitly strategic approach” (SGI, 2013). Compared to the deregulatory period of the 1980s, it is possible to see a renewed interest in the overall planning of the future. Compared to the prescriptive hierarchical models of the past, there is the mature awareness that representing the future might not be an operation of ingenuousness, but the fruit of a more or less explicit plan designed to build it, denying alternative albeit possible futures. The selection of desirable alternatives must be made through a process of ‘community visioning’ that targets the sharing and identification of compatible projects (Gibelli, 2005; Labianca, 2014a).

It has already been seen how space, and social and cultural variances, have been included in the reference variables of development policies. It has been noted how the process helped to heighten attention on the search for competitiveness between territories on many, often unexplored scales, and how the EU rode and reinforced it in synergy with the acceleration of integration. Fragmentation and variety prompt the recourse to new methods of governance for coordination and for the management of conflicts. The strategic planning tool appeared to lend itself well to this purpose. Spatial strategic planning places the emphasis on territorial development and allows its definition in terms of specific investment programmes and regulatory practices, integrating different agendas/commitments/themes (economic, environmental, cultural, social and political) (Albrechts, 2006).

Strategic planning is not limited to mobilizing public resources and providing solutions to problems: it is also capable of activating the search for creative solutions — territorially differentiated — by mobilizing a plurality of actors, even with divergent interests, aims and strategies (Albrechts, 2005, p. 271). Since the potential for conflict between individuals and communities arises systematically, multi-scalar governance must be structured in such a way as to ensure that local decisions are coordinated and made compatible with those adopted on other scales. Vision is essential to the creation of a future, envisaged on a given scale and at a given time, but it remains to define the manner in which that future will be built (*ibid.*, p. 274).

Planning is a process of political and social mobilization that introduces new ideas and activates further processes. On this basis, planning could help to enhance local institutional capital, strengthening and expanding relationships and capabilities. Self-evidently, the techniques and procedures of planning are not neutral. On the contrary, being conceived, selected and utilized as a consequence of social processes (Healey, 1997), they will always reflect the meta-project, which should be expressed as explicitly as possible, of those who propose them and those who help to implement them.

Often in Europe, the tendency has been to focus on wide area projects in terms of scale, and long term temporal horizons, making the most of participatory practices (Gibelli, 2005). The process of convergence between wide area strategic approach, cohesion policies and integrated planning underwent a marked acceleration between the previous planning period and the period just concluded (2007-13). European, national and regional development plans have in fact institutionalized the application of a strategic approach to integrated planning.

This obviously is what has also happened in Italy, where experiences of strategic planning (tried out in a number of big and small-medium size cities) have been measured against and become influenced by those of integrated planning (SGI, 2013) based on place-based inter-municipal cooperation (experimented on sub-regional scale) that has its roots in the first Leader experiences and in territorial pacts.

The national strategic plan for rural development and the national strategic framework for the 2007-2013 planning period set the objectives that must be pursued on the sub-national scale. The stronger levels of participation are seen to occur at the stage of transfer to regional and sub-regional communities during the design process. At this level, the objectives are defined (for local actors, representing an exogenous variable), whereas the choice of tools and methods of implementation is left to local negotiation and creativity.

In the regions where the resources to be utilized are mainly external, inclusion/exclusion mechanisms undergo significant distortions. Consequently, policies and projects indicate development goals on a territorial scale that often do not coincide with the social space on which they will take effect.

Also, identity is often associated, both in literature and in planning documents, with the local availability of 'resources' (Labianca, 2014a). The obsessive search for 'vocations' — which through bold though not always realistic product differentiation routes can successfully project territories onto international markets — tends to limit rather than expand the range of possible trajectories open to local systems. Understood in these terms, identity places restrictions on pathways, betrays expectations, reduces

sharing; the constraints imposed by the process of Europeanization on objectives also extend to the tools and the solutions (and the failures) of governance.

The scenario is complicated further by the persistence of substantially sectoral development policies. Policies will reference plans and projects which, although organic to the meta-objective of competitive growth, are not always consistent and/or mutually informed. Overlaps occur between regulatory institutions, often specific to particular spheres of action (urban and rural, for example), and service institutions which, while dedicated to more modest objectives of a 'spending review' nature, nonetheless play their part in generating proximity effects that clash with those generated by other institutions. Likewise in this instance, with the pursuit of development policies based on participation (never fully achieved, in reality), the idea was to overcome the fragmentary implementation of actions and projects, but (as noted by Rizzi and Dallara, 2005) this proved to be complicated, and coordination with other restrictive forms of planning was often impossible, thus multiplying the inevitabilities of confrontation and occasions of conflict.

3. Development, identity and cooperation in regional planning

In the field of urban and territorial policies, a reference framework took shape that would find agreement on a number of key concepts: a bottom-up approach, integrated as concerning development and multisectoral as concerning political action, agreement and negotiation between different actors, formal contractualization of the various interests involved, a strategic approach to planning³, recognition of the strategic and 'pilot' role of the regional level, of local identities and of democratic participation (Labianca, 2014a). In practice, as already noted, all this produced a range

³According to Conti and Salone (2011, p. 34) the trend is toward a strategic planning approach, the aim of which is to arrive, "upstream of the process, at a vision of the future, and downstream, at a concerted and multi-level system of implementation".

of different and not always noteworthy effects in the various Italian regions.

More specifically, in the case of the Apulia region, this approach to development was highlighted especially in the 2007-2013 planning cycle, first and foremost in the sphere of wide area planning. With impetus from the Community, and by virtue in particular of having access to certain resources of the previous planning cycle, continuing with and institutionalizing the experience of the ITPs (Integrated territorial projects)⁴ the region set in motion an ambitious process through the introduction of the strategic planning tool, extending its application to the regional territory (De Rubertis, 2010; 2013a; 2013b; De Rubertis et al., 2013; 2014). In many ways, the Apulian experience is emblematic of the process in question. In 2005, the region embarked on a course designed, on the one hand, to favour territorial self-organization (creating Wide Areas), and on the other to support initiatives having a high degree of experimentation (ibid). Regional organization, adopting an innovative approach based on strategic planning and on democratic participation, confirmed the importance and the full recognition of identity-related values in the different territories. Compared to traditional forms of planning and institutionalized democratic participation, the intention, viewed from a programmatic standpoint, was to launch and consolidate “community visioning” practices at regional level. In effect, these practices can address complex issues and problems of urban development, allowing the construction of alternative scenarios (shared vision of development anchored more firmly in the values of the whole community), through broad consultation and concertation processes. This purposeful approach emerges clearly from the analysis of regional documents, as also does the role attributed to territorial identity (Labianca, 2013; 2014a).

The macro-objectives established under the Regional Strategic Document and recurring in wide area plans, able to guarantee development of the Apulian system, can be correlated substantially to a general increase in the competitiveness of territories, in terms of attracting

⁴ About ITPs, see Bianchi and Casavola, 2008.

tourism and outside capital investments. Nonetheless, recognition of the role played by local actors and resources in favouring regional development requires thought on both the theoretical and the empirical level, or as indicated by Governa (2005), “on the territorial domains in which these processes are applied”. In the case of Apulia, as noted in previous papers (De Rubertis, 2010; 2013a; 2013b; De Rubertis et al., 2013; 2014; Labianca, 2013; 2014a), this raises two kinds of issues: on the one hand, identifying and evaluating forms of proximity of the organizational and strategic orders that have succeeded one another over time; on the other, the methods applied in identifying and interpreting territorial specificities and characteristics. The delimitation of boundaries, albeit left to the discretion of the single municipalities, would seem to have been dictated by custom, by opportunistic choices that have thwarted attempts at innovation in the area of local governance, and moreover, the identification and representation of local specificities appears to have been based on a mere stocktaking of local assets rather than derived “from the collective action of subjects as bringers of experience and builders of knowledge” (Governa, 2005) that would reflect the sharing of territorial values, and active involvement of the local community. Also, studies conducted on regional planning documents (De Rubertis, 2010; 2013a; 2013b; Labianca, 2014a) reveal a systematic alignment of visions proposed by the different territories in response to regional (and on occasion, national and European) guidelines and objectives. Thus, rather than being an expression of representations, of local expectations, these visions end up becoming redundant slogans. Strategic plans offer descriptions and context analyses that are strongly reductionist, and what is more, there are no clear indications on how the local development project should actually be implemented. The plan consequently becomes a mere exercise in rational-determinism, in the hands of subjects operating from outside the context of reference. As already discussed (De Rubertis, 2010; 2013a; 2013b; De Rubertis et al., 2014; Labianca; 2013; 2014a), the territories have been severely hampered in the formulation of development projects, regarding both substance and interpretation, by the restrictive and rigid nature of the Regional Strategic Document. The constraints with which the

territories had to comply — in order to access funding — inevitably influenced the subsequent planning phase, which in turn would be characterized by a pronounced ideological dimension and a general dumbing-down of the visions that had been formulated.

Also, if on the one hand the value and the role of identity in territorial development is recognized, emerging clearly on the other is the use of identity as a mere ‘brand’ or a generic channel for upgrading or enhancing key elements of local historic, naturalistic and architectural heritage, concentrated especially in the bigger or more influential municipalities, above all with the promotion and facilitation of tourism in mind. These are predominantly factors and resources linked to economic growth targets, unquestionably favoured over others (anthropic, social). Consequently, the territory is seen as a passive substrate on which to apply standardized packages of measures, exogenous in origin, irrespective of what might be the actual problems, specificities, local resources, and above all, local expectations (Labianca, 2014a).

In reality, if wide area planning was predicated on an innovative and more wide-ranging approach to development, it would also be shackled by weak integration with other cooperation and planning tools, in particular at rural level. Here too, the effectiveness of building a development project from the bottom up is undermined in practice by the strong sway of regional control. Similarly, the objectives appear hetero-determined and the territory is once again “reduced from a subject to a tool of development” (De Rubertis, 2013b, p. 123). Strategies, diluted and focusing on sectoral and agricultural growth objectives, are coordinated weakly with other plans and tools, consequently enfeebling the approach overall (ibid).

And so, the absence of coordination and integration between policy areas, actors and projects reflects a significant criticality of the region. If in some territories there are good levels of overlap discernible (De Rubertis, 2013b; De Rubertis et al., 2013; 2014; Labianca, 2014a; 2014b), stable partnership does not always lead to greater synergy or better performance.

On the basis of this survey, which recalls the main findings of previous research, it is possible to reiterate and confirm some observations regarding placement of the Apulian experience within a specific scenario.

More exactly, as seen already (De Rubertis, 2013b) from the analysis of experiences in Apulia during the regional policy period – combining the two variables of policy objectives and local organizational/institutional (identity-related) structure – three possible scenarios emerge: adaptation of policy objectives to local institutional qualities; adaptation of local institutional qualities to development policy objectives; adoption of no development policy whatever. In the first scenario “the flexibility of objectives set by local policies is not infinite, indeed one sees a tendency for them to tighten up as Community policies are strengthened” (ibid, p. 142). At local level, in the absence of financial resources, clients/funding providers should be willing to take stock of their expectations and render them more consistent with local practicalities. Even when this willingness is in evidence, the mechanisms of participation should function on all scales and at all stages of planning and implementation. However, as in the case of Apulia, the lack of appropriate participatory mechanisms, the constraints imposed on other (higher) scales and decisions made at local level have limited or precluded the possibility of formulating alternative development scenarios, more consistent with the local reality; in this situation “objectives therefore tend to be a variable exogenous to bottom-up development planning” (ibid., p. 144). In the second scenario, whilst it is possible to recognize attempts at spontaneous adaptation of the organization to policy goals, it is somewhat improbable that this will produce an effective convergence between the two. In this situation, the organization of the project will be based on a predetermined level of sharing/inclusion and on a higher level of exclusion. Since the objectives are hetero-determined, participation will be encouraged mainly among supporters of the project, excluding alternative visions. In this way, the development project will be strongly aligned with the stated objectives, and the identity to which territorial diagnostics are referred is often determined by “taking stock of ‘local assets’”, the emphasis here being placed on themes or aspects strictly consistent with the objectives of the

main programme, as this is a requirement for gaining access to available funding. In the case of the third scenario, adopting no development policy whatever does “not signify taking up an ineffectual position”, but rather, favouring approaches and projects formulated on other scales, without being explicitly involved (ibid., pp. 144-145).

Then, by combining an existing classification in literature (see Gibelli, 1999b) that separates strategic plans into three ‘families’, with different sources, it is possible to identify specific modes of integration and of participation on the part of actors and territories, corresponding to the different types of plan. Given this pattern, which sets out to identify and summarize the features of the three types of plan, it should be possible to match one of them to the Apulian experience.

Currently, the ineffectiveness and the reality of democratic participation, the constraints and objectives set on other (higher) scales which have thus limited or rather precluded the possibility of formulating alternative development scenarios more consistent with local circumstances, the identity explored by territorial diagnostics, consisting in an inventory of local assets, the consequent standardization and dumbing-down of planning models formulated by the different territories, the “hetero-determination” of objectives on other scales (regional and European) (substantially identifiable with the economic competitiveness and general attractiveness of territories), would appear to place the entire operation of regional planning, and not only wide area planning, chiefly in the second scenario.

4. Conclusion

As already discussed, strategic plans have shifted away from a top-down style of approach to development and moved toward a bottom-up approach. The gradual transformations in planning methods have brought with them a constant increase in the level of participation and integration of actors. In effect, the mere “consultation” envisaged under the top-down

approach has been replaced by participation and empowerment under the plans of the second and third generation, respectively.

The different essences that have distinguished territorial planning over time did not develop in clear succession one after another; rather, they were characterized by significant overlaps and mutual influences in matters of policy and strategy on regional development. In Apulia, it is clear how the approaches adopted for planning tools (and more especially, the attempts at implementation) take in elements peculiar to one or other family of plans. Indeed when reading and analyzing regional planning documents for the period 2007-2013, one finds in the content that there is a significant inclusion of elements simultaneously representing different families of strategic plans. Moreover, the approaches and practices — also the specific definitions of the concepts of place, identity and territory adopted in the documents — reveal intentions that are not always consistent with the type of plan they claim to follow.

In the more general sections of the framework documents (the Regional Strategic Document for wide area planning and the Rural Development Programme for rural planning), which set out the vision or development project for the territories, the construction of terms tends to suggest those of the third family of plans, namely linked-up and visionary. In the more practical sections of these same documents, the construction is strongly consistent with that of the first family of plans.

This singular contradiction seems to indicate that the original pressure for change was not appropriately supported by genuine awareness, willingness and culture of innovation. Generally considered, the planning proposals are markedly standardized and oriented predominantly toward the creation of infrastructures, land use, and mobility-related works. The real ambition of the plans is discernible from a significant series of elements: the low level of participation by the community indicated as recipient of the integration/coordination actions; the strict observance of formal (and less substantive) aspects of the process, to the detriment of more flexible and informal “learning processes”; the absence of real institutional and organizational change; a reduction of the personality

associated with places to a mere inventory of resources ripe for human exploitation.

These outcomes were probably influenced by context analysis based essentially on simplistic representations of the territory, conducted from the outside rather than from the inside, which consequently ignore or underestimate the qualitative dimension of social phenomena.

Documentary analysis reveals a strong contrast between what was hoped for, from a general standpoint, and what was actually delivered in the single territories and plans. From these, there emerges a strong alignment with the rational-deterministic line of planning. Territories are expected to organize themselves and to “implement” democratic participation in favour of a contractualist approach to planning. Without a genuine culture of participation, territories have often had to improvise the creation of networks, sometimes relatively closed, devoid of any proper shared, visionary project, and set up mainly for the purpose of ‘capturing’ European financial resources.

So, if from a programmatic point of view the hope was to see a linked-up and visionary model of planning that would entail, not least, the growth of empowerment, community visioning, integration and coordination between different policy areas, the reality was that in many instances, and often late in the day, territories adopted a planning approach involving no more than token participation, and digressions often of an opportunistic, standardized and sector-specific nature. These are limitations deriving from the adoption of a model for strategic planning that is neo-utilitarian in character, hence typical of the second family of plans.

In this context, it is no surprise to see a lack of continuity and consistency between goals and strategies, and insufficient coordination and integration of planning tools: not infrequently, the results and experiences of previous projects are either cancelled out by new initiatives, or clearly in conflict with concurrent or competing projects. Each project addresses different territorial systems, attributing standardized identities and goals that are rarely shared with the local community. This is compounded by a high partnership turnover that has characterized

experiences concerned with integrated planning, fuelling situations of discontinuity and rendering each successive attempt at coordination more problematic. Consequently, participation — as already observed elsewhere (Trigilia, 2005) — merely reflects the sum of the goals expressed by single parties, rather than their actual integration.

In short, for the three families of plans, one has three corresponding modes of controlling development, which in the case of Apulia (due not least to the joint effect of inflexibilities imposed by Europeanization, and local institutional specificities) have overlapped and influenced one another, sometimes even within the scope of the same single plan, producing decidedly problematic situations.

To reiterate, combining the acceptable degree of hetero-direction applied in determining policy objectives with the local organizational-institutional structure, it can be expected that three possible scenarios will emerge: adaptation of policy objectives to local institutional qualities; adaptation of local institutional qualities to development policy objectives; adoption of no development policy whatever.

The three scenarios are identifiable with the possible methods of controlling development afforded by the families of plans examined:

- the first scenario is compatible with the third family of plans, based as it is on the assumption that the fundamental participation mechanisms will function on all scales and at all stages in the design and implementation of the plan;

- the second scenario corresponds to the adoption of approaches typical of the second family of plans, predicated on participation; this favours hetero-determined objectives (dictated by the EU) and starts from the assumption that formulation and organization of the project will be based on mechanisms of exclusion that limit participation, disallowing alternative visions (and the attendant negotiating hurdles);

- the third scenario appears to be compatible with the first family of plans: the decision not to adopt any development policy, indicating a passive stance intended to support objectives and projects formulated on other scales, suggests a clear reference to this family (and therefore to a top-down development approach).

Clearly, in the light of the foregoing, any alignment with European guidelines on strategy and models of governance — not least when considering the future — must carry a significant risk that local visions, goals and planning ambitions will be dumbed down.

It seems that a thorough examination of local identity-related specificities, possible territorial futures and the variety/variability of their representations is now urgently required, and should be conducted before undertaking any other action on development. In reality, the search for optimum territorial planning frameworks should be accompanied — or indeed preceded — by the identification of dependable solutions for coordinating strategies, actors and goals brought together on different scales, while allowing all parties to retain their own territorial and sectoral points of reference.

2. Institutional and administrative reorganization: the implementation of territorial cohesion policies in Apulia

Pierfrancesco Fighera

1. Institutional cooperation mechanisms for the implementation of development policies in Apulia⁵

This chapter summarizes the results of a study conducted by the author on the definition and implementation of development policies in Apulia, and aims to provide elements of interest in discussing the institutional and organizational changes that have occurred over the last decade.

Besides reconstructing a map of the main institutional networks operating in Apulia at local level, the analysis highlights the relations between these documented experiences. Taking its lead from wide area strategic planning (see Chapter 1), the analysis sought to verify the capacity of content and of cooperation procedures to take root, through the genesis of further planning activity or the consolidation of territorial coalitions. An attempt was made to demonstrate complementarities, synergies and divergences between past and current experiences, and between institutional networks operating simultaneously in spheres often distinct from one another, topically or territorially. The effect of these was to prompt the adoption of innovative organizational methods and decision-making styles, often foreign to accepted practices, especially in certain areas of Italy (Profeti, 2006; Faraoni, 2004).

⁵ This chapter summarizes and discusses the results of a study by the author on mechanisms for inter-institutional cooperation conducted as part of PRIN 2009 - *Nuove forme di governance per lo sviluppo strategico del territorio. Una ricerca comparata in sette regioni europee (New forms of governance for strategic territorial development. A comparative study of seven European regions)* – Local Unit of University of Salento.

Beyond the current debate on the results obtained in Italy and Europe by the cohesion policy (Bobbio, 2002; Vázquez Barquero, 2010) there is no doubt that this same policy has strongly influenced institutional and organizational changes, helping to redefine the balances between centre and periphery, also to spotlight the role of regional and sub-regional governments and favouring forms of inter-institutional cooperation between levels of government or on the same scale of reference.

Institutional networks operate mainly through forms of cooperation connected with two spheres of public action. The first concerns sectoral planning and the management of services and functions in association; in this case the actors operate on the same scale or in the same sector. The second concerns planning activity in support of territorial development (Meadowcroft, 1999; Bobbio, 2000; Pichierri, 2005; Salone, 2010); this consists in experiences which, in addition to being based on forms of collaboration between organizations operating on the same scale, are placed in contexts of multi-level policy, requiring inter-sectoral approaches and forms of cooperation between public and private entities (Messina, 2005; Donolo, 2005).

In this instance the coalitions are less stable and the procedures, especially in Southern Italy, are applied and managed mainly in the context of European policies for regional and rural development.

Among the mechanisms for implementing the cohesion policy in the regions of Southern Italy, an important part has been played by territorial planning tools which during the 2000-2006 planning period were known as Integrated Territorial Projects (ITP). During the 2007-2013 period, procedures served a different purpose according to the context, with distinct designations attributed according to the regional programme of interest. Apulia has had experience of wide area strategic planning (SP), but also of other territorial planning procedures such as, for example, integrated urban and rural schemes, Environmental and Cultural Systems initiatives or integrated urban and territorial development schemes connected with the procurement of regional development resources (ERDF funding), and similarly, local development plans put in hand by

LAGs connected with the procurement of rural development resources (EAFRD funding).

These are tools that offer a different approach for the implementation of development policies, activating procedures for cooperation between administrations, and between policy sectors and development actors. In certain cases these procedures can generate new planning ideas, helping to redefine the organization of institutional and administrative structures at local and regional level⁶.

As for the outcomes of these experiences — especially in Southern Italy — assessments of their impact naturally differ to a large extent. Procedures have not always given the attention to territories that was hoped for. In certain cases, conversely, they could be seen as creating a rift and an inhibitory effect on the debate surrounding the potential disputes that accompany different policy decisions (Bobbio, 2000; Messina, 2005; Donolo, 2005; Trigilia, 2005; Rossi, 2005; Barca, 2006a, 2006b; Viesti and Prota, 2006; La Spina, 2007; Viesti, 2009).

2. Continuity and discontinuity in forms and methods of inter-institutional cooperation

The process of wide area strategic planning, while representing a distinctive and innovative element in the governance of regional development policies in Apulia, has presented strong elements of

⁶ The current "Delrio" act (n. 56/2014) establishes provisions concerning metropolitan cities, provinces, unions and fusion of municipalities in compliance with the principles of adequacy, subsidiarity and differentiation. The act produces changes in the organization of the territory and in the new articulation of relations between the State and local authorities. In particular, it establishes the reduction of the functions of the provinces, defined territorial entities of wide area, the attribution of administrative functions originally conferred to the provinces, with the law of the State to single municipalities or in associated form and for metropolitan cities, in addition to the functions of Provinces, substituted on the basis of their competence field, new functions are recognized as regards planning, regulation and coordination of wide area (Salvato, 2014).

criticality, in some cases having too many aspects of continuity with the logic approaches adopted previously in decision-making processes.

As discussed elsewhere, the design and implementation possibilities of the actions adopted are often too limited⁷. The power of strategic plans to attract funding has undoubtedly fallen short of expectations, but evaluating to what extent this experience may have generated forms of learning and created functional discontinuities affecting innovation, is no easy matter (De Rubertis et al, 2013; Fighera, Labianca, 2014).

The research conducted has shed light on relationships between the various planning experiences at territorial level over the last ten years. Taking the subject of wide area planning as a unit of analysis, the study set out to verify the ability of content and procedures to become embedded and generate consolidated experiences of inter-institutional cooperation or further territorial planning initiatives. The task attempted – using specific data and other empirical proofs – was to reconstruct the continuities and discontinuities between wide area strategic planning experiences and other local development tools, and to verify the consolidation of these experiences (Vesan, Sparano, 2009).

The research in question revealed elements of continuity/discontinuity between strategic plans and other experiences, previous or contemporaneous, on the basis of the following reference criteria:

- *Strategic continuity* – over time, actions have continued to pursue homogenous development objectives and similar topics of reference; they are built drawing on past experience (mainly ITPs), or alternatively, they follow new trajectories;
- *Territorial continuity* – with the passage from one tool to another, the territorial and institutional sphere of interest has stayed constant, or it has changed;
- *Organizational continuity* – organizations set up to manage certain projects have found space and proved useful in the design and supervision of actions pertinent to other experiences.

⁷ See Fighera in D'Amico and De Rubertis 2014.

Procedures were analyzed adopting a comparative approach and a scale of assessment having three levels (yes/no/weak) and subsequently classified in relation to the logic of the process by which experiences are institutionalized (expansive/reductive)⁸. Continuities and discontinuities were surveyed from the standpoint of strategies, of the territorial situation and of the organizational and institutional system in question.

From the territorial perspective, it is rare that wide area situations will coincide ultimately with past experiences of territorial planning. Likewise with regard to objectives, elements of continuity are rare. And in cases where the strategic intent is more evident, there may even be radical changes from previous experiences. In others, any signs of continuity become of little significance, due to the heterogeneous nature of actions to date. Discontinuity can also be seen on the organizational front. Structures operating at local and regional level have rarely been retained, or involved in new planning schemes.

The picture is different in part when considering the relationship between wide area strategic planning and other territorial development tools such as the development plans of Local Action Groups or the business clusters included in the subject matter of the research. These experiences are similar one to another organizationally, and identifiable as having greater continuity and consistency with past experiences.

LAGs, a product of the Leader Community Approach programme, are seen as being among the first significant examples of contractual policies designed to formalize collaboration between public actors and private entities, with debatably successful results (See Chapter 4). The function of LAGs is to implement rural development policies which, notwithstanding the retention of certain peculiarities deriving from the sector of origin (See Chapter 5), are coming gradually within the sphere of influence generated by the cohesion policy.

In certain contexts, differing in terms of the development model and of political, economic and social dynamics, there has been a move to embrace procedures capable of changing not only policies but also the organization

⁸ See Appendix.

of institutions: this is the case in the area to the north of Bari, in and around Foggia and certain parts of the Salento, where we can discern a progressive institutionalization of different experiences that find confirmation in the proliferation of Unions between municipalities, and in the formation of business clusters.

In this instance, to trace the nature of the relations between experiences, the search needs to focus more on strategic aspects and on the role of actors, rather than on organizational or territorial aspects. Territorial continuity does not appear able to provide a significant variable, except in the case of the two agrifood clusters.

The detection of a certain continuity or discontinuity does not lead to univocal interpretations, especially in a situation such as that of Apulia, where regional government plays a strong and increasingly influential role in driving and coordinating these cooperation procedures. To verify the sustainability of the experiences in question, it must be established whether and to what extent the continuities or discontinuities may be attributable to institutional indolence or to the opportunism of actors in coalition, or conversely to a reappraisal of past experiences, such as to determine a repositioning of territories and institutional networks brought about by a combination of political, social, economic and environmental dynamics.

The history of agrifood clusters, for example, shows that in some cases, not only is the stability of networks far from being an element of innovation, it can even create an obstacle to attempts at introducing reform. In this instance, the inclination at regional level to have only one voice per sector, combining territorial demands and coordinating actors of sub-regional areas around planning topics and ideas, appears to be opposed by solid coalitions of actors at territorial level with appreciable negotiating skills, which impact ultimately to a significant degree on regional policy as well as on institutional organizations.

Aside from the continuities or discontinuities observed, it is worthwhile exploring the logical steps followed by the process of institutionalization in these procedures. In effect, evidence of a certain continuity between experiences does not automatically allow univocal interpretations. To

verify the institutional sustainability of procedures, an observer needs to study the analyses and try to establish if and to what extent any continuities/discontinuities may be attributable to a critical reappraisal of past experiences, to institutional indolence or to the opportunistic approaches of local coalitions, or conversely to a strategic repositioning of territories brought about by a combination of political and social dynamics. Both in ITPs and in SPs, and in the local development plans of LAGs, assessments are left mostly to regional bodies and to technocratic structures operating principally under a logic of permissibility rather than of institutional and organizational learning. Likewise at regional level, notwithstanding certain notable improvements, these procedures still present elements of criticality, with regard in particular to functions and to questions of accountability. Cognitive resources, information on results achieved, on actions and on targets, and on the chain of responsibility, become a strategic element of the guidance and coordination carried on at regional level, but too often these resources remain in a sphere and in a language that is technical and none too accessible.

In the case of Apulia, even with this same “institutional” identity, the various initiatives undertaken appear to retain a certain independence and a distinctive character, not only with regard to the topics and the players involved, or to the definition of the territorial scale of reference, but above all to the elements of continuity and consistency discernible in past experiences and other planning operations in progress on other scales or in other sectors of action (De Rubertis et al, 2014).

In the cases examined, exogenous factors deriving from dependence on European funding, or endogenous factors deriving from the *modus operandi* of actor alliances, appear in certain instances to trigger ritual attitudes that risk delegitimizing policy-determined action entirely.

The findings of the present survey, summarized in overviews attached as back matter, provide a non-uniform and *chiaroscuro* image of the Apulian experience, in which regional government appears to be playing a role of strong and growing influence — not only of orientation — with regard both to experiences of wide area strategic planning and to local development projects promoted by LAGs.

The study brought to light certain elements of continuity over time, such as the relatively stable partnership situation in the passage from ITPs to wide area projects, and the tendency of wide areas to include one or more LAG areas almost in their entirety. Rather than a spontaneous and autonomous search for consistency in the space or the objectives of policies adopted at territorial level, these dynamics seem to derive from a firm action of guidance and coordination taken by regional government.

From every other standpoint, conversely, analysis confirms that the history of wide areas runs parallel and occasionally in conflict with that of other experiences (integrated planning projects, in particular). As regards the strategic aspect, almost all Wide Area Plans are typified by a range of objectives tending to be much more complex than is the case with ITPs. If ITPs were characterized by the consolidation of business chains in the territory and of tertiary services, then wide areas – whilst taking up certain of the actions initiated under ITPs within the scope of their planning – are focused more on questions of mobility and transport, of the environment and energy, and institutional networks. In the majority of cases, the central themes of the ITP are “embedded” in a strategic framework that tends to be all-embracing and not very selective⁹.

In some cases, moreover, wide areas present notably significant discontinuities: the Murgia area opts to “forget” the interests of the furniture manufacturing cluster and the agrifood sector, focusing instead on tourism, hospitality and wellness; the Capitanata 2020 strategic planning initiative concentrates on the theme of mobility, in total discontinuity with the agrifood theme of the Tavoliere ITP.

As to the aspect of organizational continuity, if one excludes the Valle d’Itria ITP and to a certain extent the Salentino-leccese ITP, wide areas are superintended by implementation structures other than the sole Offices designated to oversee ITPs, which are kept in existence for the purpose of “closing” the planning cycle, but play no role whatever in the process of determining the actual wide area plans. These structures are hardly ever

⁹ Whilst the Strategic Plan adopted by Bari is an interesting case, it is actually the result of 20 strategic programmes and more than 800 actions. The effect of such complexities, at least initially, was to delay its implementation.

confirmed as technical project leaders in wide areas — Bari being a partial exception — and are often involved only to a marginal extent in the preparation of candidacies (including Tavoliere, Murgia, Taranto).

An important linking role must be attributed not so much to organizational continuity as to the persistence of a technical expertise — often advisory in nature — as in the case of ITP 5 Valle d'Itria and ITP 9 Salento; it is more rarely that competencies remain “in-house”, as in the case of the Municipality of Bari. The stable presence within the process of certain technical figures would appear also to allow a degree of topical continuity. This is true, for example, in the case of the Monti Dauni strategic plan, the preparation of which is associated with the ITP, both technically and topically, notwithstanding the subsequent heavy criticism voiced by local partners.

Discontinuities or continuities must also be assessed in relation to the existing political and institutional situation. The new wide area planning period created a window of opportunity for new negotiations and realignments, a consequence not least of new political balances created by the regional and local government elections of 2005 (confirmed in 2010 at regional level). In some cases, negotiations were accompanied by an escalation of discontent that led ultimately to the implosion of previous coalitions such as in the Murge or in the territory of Daunia, and the ensuing shift toward areas with more consolidated leaderships, typically the metropolitan area of Bari, where the number of adherents doubled in the course of the passage from ITP to wide area. In other cases, different territorial planning proposals have been reshaped into a single wide area plan, impacting not only on the make-up of the network of actors, but also on the consistency of the plans themselves. From the standpoint of institutional leadership, only a minority of bodies confirm their role of project leader in the passage from integrated territorial to wide area planning.

In reality, the great majority of wide area projects develop independently of ITPs, in terms of organization and management, also of leadership, and indeed of the territorial development strategies around which the planning process is formulated. There are various reasons for

this discontinuity, attributable not least to a different outlook taken by the new Regional Government, which on the one hand has not explicitly favoured processes for capitalization of the skills and networks built up during previous experiences, yet on the other has allowed the activation of different implementation devices, with the end in view of breaking down over-familiar systems.

On the other hand — even at local level — the launch of wide area plans was seen by business and social actors, and political actors too, as an opportunity to rebuild strategic frameworks, in respect of tools — ITPs — which at that time were intended solely to guarantee efficient expenditure profiles. Consequently, there was a shift of attention toward wide areas and Local Action Groups, almost invariably omitting to factor in the possible synergies with experiences still in progress. Moreover, the problem of temporal overlap between the two tools has added further complexity not only in the evaluation of experiences but also in the confirmation of management figures, creating a substantial parallelism, territory-wide, between the two planning cycles, and added to these, the action taken at the same time by LAGs in implementing the rural development plan.

The clearest exception is provided by Monti Dauni where, at least in the initial stages, one has confirmation of the *Comunità Montana* as the management entity, plus the retrieval of topics that had already been the subject matter of the ITP, and a notable consistency with the actions of the rural development plan, indicating that the networks between actors have worked. In other cases, the density and stability of relations do not appear capable of determining an increase in relational capital, and despite a dominant and consolidated leadership, one does not see the same kind of results. It was not so much a “model” that favoured the processes by which experiences are institutionalized, as the presence at territorial level of cognitive and instrumental resources such as would allow the achievement of these outcomes. These resources were of various kinds: the presence of authoritative leaders that have played a part in the decision-making of the partners involved, the role of managers and management structures capable of complementing technical skills with a precise idea of

development in the territory, the aggregation of entities around an idea for the solution of socio-economic or environmental problems, bringing knowledge and innovation or capable of mediating consolidated interests.

Continuities and discontinuities do not always produce the hoped-for effects, but their identification allows a better understanding of how policies and procedures impact together on the institutional system and on the regional development model. Elements of innovation and tradition appear to coexist in the Apulian system, reflecting, not least, a fragmentation and polarization of the political landscape. At regional level there are certain discontinuities: the regional actor appears gradually to take up a fresh position, in the attempt to play a proactive role of regulating and coordinating development (Messina, 2005; Figuera, 2014).

When considering cooperation procedures matured during the experiences of the last ten years at territorial level in the sphere of development and cohesion policies, it is difficult to say how much these may have contributed to improving regional performance through a process of organizational, social and institutional learning (Donolo, 2002), as it is also difficult to establish whether the continuities and discontinuities observed derive from a critical reassessment of previous experiences, or may more simply be the outcome of other logical and dynamic factors. The discontinuities do not however seem so pervasive as to offer a glimpse of progress beyond the traditional tendency in communities of Southern Italy for “strong localisms and weak regionalisms” (Trigilia, 1989).

3. The role of intermediate institutions in community development. The case of LAGs

Cosimo Talò

1. Introduction: intermediate institutions and LAGs

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the possible benefits provided by intermediate institutions for the development of local communities. These are institutions that function essentially as a hinge coupling between the community (and its organizations) and the State (and its organizations). The first step is to address the question: exactly what are “intermediate institutions”?

Intermediate, or meso-level institutions, are those “peripheral structures of the State, such as local bodies and institutionalized or semi-institutionalized organizations (associations and unions of varying description, local banks), which have provided local systems with specific public assets” (Arrighetti and Seravalli, 1999, p. X). In effect, a distinction can be made between *universal* institutional assets (laws, defence of the territory, national infrastructures) and *selective* institutional assets (regarding categories of subjects or given territorial areas). *Universal* assets are provided by *central* institutions (States and, increasingly in the present day, supranational organizations); *selective* assets are the concern of *intermediate* institutions (sectoral organizations and local interests, local government structures, non-temporary cooperative and associative organizations, peripheral appendages of the State, local agencies, etc.).

Intermediate institutions are set up primarily for governance of the territory and for the economic development of specific territorial areas (e.g. rural areas) or areas of interest (e.g. business clusters) and are entities tasked with offering public assets and services. From this perspective, the *raison d’être* of intermediate institutions depends on their capacity to

organize and coordinate a demand for control and for political mediation of interests, which cannot be provided at local level alone, and which cannot and should not (save in exceptional cases) be handled directly at national level (Sforzi, 1999).

Beyond the taxonomy, however, it is difficult to define exactly what constitutes an intermediate institution, given that the attribute “intermediate” is *relational* in nature, and has meaning only if one identifies the elements that such an entity finds itself “between” (Lanzalaco, 1999). “Intermediate” covers the entire grey area between *peripheral* and *central*, between *micro-level* and *macro-level*. Accordingly, we refer here to a range of “meso governments” that vary depending on their purpose and on hierarchical level. Existing research into the role of intermediate institutions focuses predominantly on the economic and political aspects of local development. Our intention in this paper, by contrast, is to discuss the possible contributions that can be made by intermediate institutions to community development, that is to say, the process whereby members of the community come together to take a common action and generate solutions to shared problems (Heller *et al.*, 1984), and the activation of relational dynamics (interpersonal, intragroup, intergroup) capable of preserving and regenerating the social fabric (Amerio, 2000). It is a process that aims to create conditions for social and economic progress through active participation of the community (Rothman, 1974). Community development seeks to make individuals and groups aware of their responsibilities, giving them the capabilities they need to influence their community. These capabilities are often created through the formation of large groups working to a common agenda.

Local development can be considered not only as economic growth, but also as an investment in social equity and environmental sustainability (Tobasura, 1996). Thus, development becomes a notion centred on the quality of life enjoyed by people (Max-Neef, Elizalde, and Hopenhayn, 1993) and on their ability and freedom to select the kind of life they want to live (Sen, 1990).

In this paper, as intimated, we will look at the possible contributions that can be made by intermediate institutions to community development.

In particular, we will take a specific institution by way of example, namely Local Action Groups (LAGs), which we consider to be a prototype intermediate institution, but one also having characteristics that are entirely original, compared to other meso-level institutions (such as, for example, provincial or wide area entities).

LAGs are cooperative-type associations between public institutions (municipalities, in the main) and private partners (businesses, associations, entrepreneurs, etc.) set up to favour the local development of a rural area. LAGs formulate a local development plan (LDP) and capture funding made available by the European Union. The activity of LAGs is characterized by three factors: (1) a clearly delimited and homogeneous territory; (2) public-private partnership, and (3) local development strategies promoted and implemented adopting a bottom-up approach.

Accordingly, we will endeavour in the course of the next section to delineate the impact made by intermediate institutions in facilitating, directing or inhibiting community development. Thereafter, on the other hand, we will look at the specificities of LAGs in this sphere.

2. Community development and the possible contributions of intermediate institutions

The main avenues of community development, as suggested by Clinard (1970) and by Levine and Perkins (1987), include:

- creating a sense of social cohesion, improving interpersonal relations and developing an awareness of belonging to one's community;
- supporting and stimulating self-help, voluntary service and other types of spontaneous association;
- raising consciousness and informing citizens of important problems in the community and setting common goals for action;
- identifying and promoting the abilities of local leaders;

- developing civic consciousness, mutual respect and dialogue between different cultures and ethnic groups in the community;
- using the expertise of professionals and the *know-how* of researchers to support the mobilization of pressure groups and social change;
- offering instruction in techniques of conflict management, decision-making and problem solving;
- assisting with coordination between the action of the various services and the pressure of social action movements.

Many of these functions can be identified with the ordinary actions of intermediate institutions. However, the benefits of collective action can outdo the advantages of individual action only when a series of constraints inherent in the coordination of individual patterns of conduct are overcome. Before projects are launched, in effect, individual social actors should provide one another with information key to subsequent decision-making, acquire the minimum technical skills needed to process different solutions, and align the various individual plans with the collective plan. Taken overall, these actions require resources, time and intellectual investments that increase exponentially as the number of actors involved becomes greater. Consequently, coordination on this level is seen as excessively burdensome and the collective project tends to be abandoned. Hence, the first task that should fall to intermediate institutions is *ex ante* coordination.

For this to be possible, an intermediate institution should have some form of decision-making power. In practice, control over decision-making is hampered considerably if none of the actors involved wields effective authority. Whoever undertakes these tasks must have access to all the incentives for choosing efficiently (Grossman e Hart, 1986), and the right of exclusion is the function of private governing bodies. In the case of collective actions, the primary condition is exactly the opposite: non-excludability, or expressed in positive terms, inclusiveness.

Inclusiveness has meaning only if seen in a long term perspective. In reality, an intermediate institution influences the production processes of a territory if it is seen as a stable resource, constantly active and capable of

adapting to the changes brought by successive historical and economic events. Social actors (citizens, businesses, municipalities, trade associations, interest groups, etc.) must know that participation in the activities of a given institution is open “to all, and always”.

Speaking of inclusiveness leads inevitably to the subject of *participation* and of *active citizenship* (the second of the possible contributions of intermediate institutions to local development). In literature, a distinction is made between *mobilization* and *participation*. Walgrave and Klandermans (2010) describe mobilization as the process that enables the initiation of a movement. The process of mobilization can occur in circumstances where individuals, groups and communities take measures to protest against an unfavourable event, a decision or an out-group, but also to invoke change or support a new vision of the problem.

Participation, on the other hand, is described as a pool of behaviours, relatively stable over time and in different social contexts (Dalton, 2006; Norris, 2002; Talò et al., 2014). The typification of Teorell et al. (2007) makes mention of “pre-political” participation, different from the formal political participation typical of the political class and the élites of society (Brady, 1999). In effect, a large slice of the citizenry making up contemporary democracies is involved in non-formal political or semi-political activities: i.e. activities not intended to influence administrative decisions directly, but at least to address problems affecting the community in any way. Schudson (1996; 1999) speaks of ‘monitorial citizens’. According to this author, citizens are not as a rule interested in politics and feel that they have limited effectiveness politically, but when involved in decision-making processes, they stay interested, informed and active.

We have noted that the second contribution intermediate institutions can make to community development, after ex-ante coordination, is one of facilitating participation. Indeed it is our belief that one of their tasks should be precisely to create mobilization around a project, and convert this same mobilization into participation. Mobilization can be tied to the initial planning of measures or, subsequently, to direct involvement in specific projects. But for this to happen, participation has to be real. It

must impact on the decision-making process and be organized in such a way that solutions can become achievable. Too often though, participation is reduced to mere attendance at seminars or filling in questionnaires, identifiable with what Arnstein (1969) calls “mock participation”: those forms of involvement, in other words, that may take on a symbolic character (guaranteeing a semblance of equity through some working group or other, etc.) but are structured as a kind of concession (cushioning strategies) where action is effectively improbable (Mannarini, 2004).

Thus far we have spoken of the role that intermediate institutions can have from the ‘top down’ with respect to citizens, associations, municipalities, etc. But intermediate institutions can also have a ‘bottom-up’ role, in influencing the organizational rules of higher institutions (Region and State). This aspect underpins a third contribution that intermediate institutions can make in favouring community development: to create a “dialectic on equal terms” between methodologies, sensibilities and organizational models of communities and macro-level institutions.

In particular, it was Zucker (1988) who developed a sophisticated and complex model to explain the processes of institutional influence. The starting point for Zucker is that not all institutional forms at macro level are transmitted to micro levels, and neither is the reverse always true. In other words, institutional orders are *loosely coupled systems* in which the different levels are interconnected by weak links. The resulting divergences derive precisely from social and institutional differences between the levels. At micro level, relations are direct, or in any event conducted with scant mediation. Macro levels, by contrast, are based on formal elements (rules, laws, articles of association, etc.). A mutual *imperviousness* is created between these two levels. According to Zucker, when cohesion and association are created at the micro level, this erodes legitimacy at the macro level, as the effect is to introduce elements of *variety* and *differentiation* typical of local regulatory orders, at higher levels, thereby increasing the degree of *systemic unpredictability*.

According to this model, there are persistent tensions between national and local institutional processes that have the effect — to borrow the terminology used in systematics — of polarizing *morphogenetic* forces (pro-

change) identifiable with local systems, and *homeostatic* forces (pro-stability) identifiable with national systems. In this sense, the “subversive” role of intermediate institutions stems precisely from that constant need to underscore their independence and specificity.

3. The contribution (and limits) of Local Action Groups

Local Action Groups could be considered, in the terminology of Chavis et al (1986), as “community animators”: intermediate agents operating between citizens and institutions, tasked with building a sense of community through the action of local leaders, who can trigger actions planned *by* the territory accommodating the language and the rules typical of Community culture on the one hand, and of the institutions on the other.

The primary mission of LAGs, in effect, is to create a social support network not only between ordinary members of the public, but above all between production companies, trade associations, stakeholders and administrators. With this purpose in view, network experts speak of “strong links” that are conducive to genuine cohesion and positive resolution of conflicts. However, it has been seen that a strongly cohesive group also risks becoming insular, incapable of engaging the community and likely to experience serious difficulty when faced with changes in the surrounding environment. Moreover, groups of this nature tend to exercise regulatory control in an often oppressive manner, with non-compliance on the part of members considered as deviance. In particular, Granovetter (1973) shows that in reality, it is the “weak links” that provide the true engine for change at mesosystem level. According to this author, micro-level and macro-social interactions are influenced by one another, and weak links allow actors to convey suggestions, open dialogue and experiment with ideas in new situations, far more easily than is the case with strong links. We believe that LAGs provide the ideal setting for the creation of these weak links, the more so since business and institutional actors tend to favour organizational styles that are formal, and little

inclined to set up concertation tables. This potentiality, however, is offset by the bureaucratizing tendency to create “egocentred” networks, where partners in the plan have relationships with the LAG more than with one another. In this situation, the network becomes *isomorphic* to the organization of LAGs and *passive* to the extent that it functions merely as an enquiries desk, a bureaucracy consultant. Consequently, LAGs would no longer have the ability to network any bank, municipal office or provincial government department.

To facilitate the construction of weak links, the LAG can count on the nexus of *familiarity* between management and activities in the territory. The fact of being a proximate institution makes the LAG a kind of ‘guarantor’ in relations between entrepreneurs, municipalities and individual citizens. But if on the one hand the activity of LAGs is under constant scrutiny from the beneficiaries of its actions, and from citizens themselves, then on the other, this direct relationship between the LAG and entrepreneurs and politicians can help to strengthen powers already acquired. In short, the LAG could become yet another *élite* lodge through which power is exercised by the local bourgeoisie. In effect, it is no secret that LAGs have become intermediaries for local interests, lying as they do in the middle ground of a complex system of institutional powers (Regional and Municipal), business interests and social and territorial pressures. Thus, they have become a *party between parties*, a crossroads of interests, possessing none of the regulatory powers available to Municipal, Provincial and Regional authorities. They have only the privileges of the intermediary, the *de facto* coordinator of Municipalities having the power to issue measures. This equilibrium undermines the effective “authority” of LAGs and favours strong interference on the part of political and institutional organizations.

Favouring weak links, therefore. But also developing corporate social responsibility, and with responsibility, participation.

In the previous section, we discussed the fundamental role that intermediate institutions can play in mobilizing citizens through a bottom-up process. In the case of LAGs, this opportunity can take on an original and innovative quality, given its particular public-private configuration.

Firstly, LAGs can/must involve citizens especially in the initial stages of *planning* or in the concluding stages, when *evaluating* actions. The aim is two-fold: designing LDPs to meet the economic and social needs of the particular territory, and creating the foundations of an active and innovative citizenry. But, as we know, LAGs are also set up by industrial concerns, trade associations, entrepreneurs, non-profit organizations, etc. Accordingly, participation can occur not only through ordinary members of the public — i.e. individuals or organized groups having no direct economic interests — but also through the mechanism of *corporate social responsibility* (CSR). In effect, businesses are encouraged to adopt sustainable and socially responsible patterns of behaviour (Bansal, 2005; Engle, 2007; Welford and Frost, 2006), considered to be important strategic levers for furthering their economic progress, and for social and environmental development, that is to say *sustainable development* (Elkington, 1997). Under the banner of corporate social responsibility, moreover, businesses are called upon to rethink their role in society, offering themselves as socio-economic agents, contributing to human, civic and social progress of the community. In essence, CSR consists of “integration on a voluntary basis, by firms, of social and environmental preoccupations in their commercial operations and relations with interested parties” (Commission of the European Communities, 2001, p. 2). This definition implies a “social” and “community” value to doing business and is an aspect that epitomizes phenomena such as social inclusion, belonging, trust, cooperation, equal opportunity and active citizenship: processes that move businesses beyond the role of mere socio-economic agents, making them communities marked by solidaristic relationships (Amerio, 2004), focused on building inclusive social networks and promoting wealth (Hutton, 1995).

If, on the one hand, being the member of a LAG means hoping for a direct — or at least smooth — line of contact with the Regional authority or with managers of economic resources, on the other it signifies being part of an enterprise network with a strong community-oriented vocation, seeking to do business in a sustainable and responsible manner. LAGs can therefore provide the arena for this “social contract” between enterprise

and society, whereby businesses become responsible not only for the effects of their policies and actions, but also in respect of their ability to improve the quality both of social life and of the environment in which they operate (Maignan and Ferrell, 2000; D'Aprile and Talò, 2014).

But in our experience, LAGs are too often limited to a participation that is little more than “window dressing”. Citizens have never truly had the power to influence the chain of decision-making, and neither have businesses genuinely set up a network cooperating to secure the wealth of the community and the relaunch of an integrated *masterplan*. With this in mind, it could well be said that the “constraint of participation” has been thought of more as an item to be ticked off on a check-list, than as a true social mandate. And that LAGs are still perceived as “something between local councils and businesses”, with members of the public seen as background noise, or even as possible sources of disturbance.

How is this failure explained? We referred in the previous section to isomorphic tendencies, or rather the tendency of organizations to assume similar management structures or administrative philosophies. In this light we might suppose that, over the course of time, LAGs would have assumed the same implicit rules as those of superordinate structures.

Di Maggio and Powell (1983) describe three mechanisms by which these isomorphic tendencies are engendered: *coercive*, when a given institutional form is imposed by pressure from above — the case, for example, of a national government imposing certain modes of operation on local governments — *mimetic*, when under the stimulus of competition, certain units imitate the organizational formats of other units seen as being successful, and *normative*, when an organizational system acquires legitimacy of itself and is perceived as being the most suitable for addressing certain situations in the estimation of experts or professionals in the sector, who “rubber stamp” its validity whether actually effective or otherwise (Rogers, 1983). The impact of these three mechanisms — compounded by the institutional weakness of LAGs — has been to determine the progressive convergence of organizational models toward a single model: the regional. As a result, the localist, and consequently heterogeneous vocation of Local Action Groups, has been corrupted. The

tendency toward *entropy* — spontaneous, and typical of the territory — has been countered by that *institutional work* deployed at higher levels (Zucker, 1988). And so, in the virtuous conflict between the morphogenetic forces of the LAGs and the homeostatic forces of the Region, it is the latter that have prevailed, leaving LAGs with little other to do than oversee the implementation of measures and procedures.

Participation is a topic of abiding interest not only for the effects produced on economic and social development of the community, but more generally, for the resilience of democracy. The disinterest in participation shown by the institutions, and by single citizens, raises a number of questions as to the vitality of the future that the territories can expect. The measures of intermediate institutions can become a unique setting for the realization of a narrative originating in cooperation and innovativeness, built jointly by parties who feel bound together by a common political and territorial identity. More exactly, a shared narrative (Mankowski and Rappaport, 1995), a united movement by which a group of individuals is transformed into a community.

4. The impotent governance: a theory of Local Action Groups' failure

Angelo Salento

1. Introduction

The importance of Local Action Groups (LAGs) and of their organizational and operational dynamics as subjects for research undoubtedly transcends the status generally attributed to these bodies in public debate. In reality, they have remained in the background as institutional actors.

If Local Action Groups have taken a back seat hitherto as institutional actors, an analysis of their experience provides valuable material on which to make assessments, for at least two reasons:

a. firstly, in the history of LAGs — as concerning the way they have interpreted the promotion of rural development — it is possible to discern the dynamics (as well as the problems) of the relationship between sectoral actions and essentially territorial actions; in other words between actions conducted in the interests of agricultural development and actions classifiable under the heading of rural development. This is one of the issues most widely discussed by interdisciplinary literature, relating to rural development;

b. secondly, and more especially, the analysis of LAGs and their history sheds light on the perspectives and limits associated with the new modes of overseeing social processes referred to generally as governance: activities that in point of fact have found one of their most profitable areas of experimentation in the sphere of rural development policies.

A sizeable body of literature has been generated on the question of governance over local and rural development. Most of this material is

“regulatory” in character: it establishes, so to speak, a doctrine of governance that tends to formulate the concept of the mechanism under the pretence of describing it. Some of this research material — probably the smaller part, but nonetheless a very important one — gives a picture of governance processes that differs, sometimes not inconsiderably, from what might be regarded as the mainstream notion of governance. Every time one looks, not at the abstract potentialities of governance processes, but at their actual performance, there emerges a disparity between objectives and outcomes.

If interest in the governance of development processes does not decline — but tends rather to persist despite numerous indications of failure — this is due probably to the attitude described by Bob Jessop (2006) as “public romantic irony”, a kind of wishful thinking that persuades actors to carry on as if success were possible, even while being forced to acknowledge the probabilities that the attempt at governance would ultimately fail.

We feel that this is the right spirit in which to approach a study of Local Action Groups: to construct a realistic and detached assessment, although on the philosophically and politically constructive supposition that through an analysis of the limits presented by the tools of governance, one can find the power to overcome them.

In this paper we will endeavour, on the theoretical plane, to construct a reference grid for the analysis of experiences in the governance of rural development (an empirical analysis using this same grid is presented, in this publication, by Angelo Belliggiano).

In the next section, following a brief look at the history of the LAG as an instrument of governance, we identify certain theoretical indicators useful in defining the “ideal” placement of the LAG in a perspective of governance applied to rural development. In section 3, we suggest a theoretical grid for the analysis of failure — or failures — discernible in the experience of LAGs when their actual performance is compared with the objectives officially assigned to them.

2. Elements for a theory on Local Action Groups

The history of LAGs is connected by two strands with changes in European agricultural policies. It was at the end of the 1980s that the European Commission decided on a gradual move away from existing agricultural policy based on a “top down” approach, driven by projects and sectors, in favour — at least nominally — of a “bottom up” approach, definable as endogenous and integrated. With the *Future of Rural Society* (1988), then later, the *Cork Declaration* (1996) and the working document *Rural Developments* (1997), attention turned progressively toward the territorial dimension and the adoption of an approach focusing on the promotion of an endogenous, sustainable and participatory form of development.

The general view in existing literature (Sotte, 2006) is that the second half of the 20th century witnessed an evolutionary transition from a model of “agrarian rurality” to a model of “industrial rurality”, and ultimately to a model (incomplete, or indeed incipient, as yet) of “post-industrial rurality”. The third model would emerge, from the 1990s onward, following a change in the “social mandate” of rural areas, which were required — not least on the basis of the possibilities inherent in physical and virtual movement afforded by new transport and communications technologies — to provide a setting for residential settlements as well as for leisure activities, characterized by the demand for intangible assets such as sustainability, quality of life, typicality, authenticity, originality, peculiarity; in short, by the bond with rural territory. This confirmed the idea of a multifunctional role for agriculture (Basile and Cecchi, 2001), likewise the ideas of a short value chain and the offer of intangible utilities.

The notion of rural development understood as a product of “territorial rebalancing” was replaced gradually by the perspective of endogenous development, based on the creation of value prompted and managed by local actors. On the policy level, this perspective prefigures the shift from sectoral actions to promotion of the territory. And in response to this demand for diversity and difference, one has the search for a new way of

distributing responsibilities, hence a reorganization of the dynamics of governance and decision-making as regards the choice of strategies for planning and investment, or in practice, valorization.

This process of transformation — definable in essence as the transition to a “post-industrial”, or more accurately, a “post-productivist” model of rurality (Marsden et al, 1993; Ploeg and Renting, 2000) — cannot be interpreted simply, as is often the case, in terms of a “natural” outcome produced by evolutionary changes in the ideas and practices of development. It is not simply the fruit of a process whereby previous approaches found to be unsatisfactory are “superseded”. Conversely, it is a transformation that responds seemingly to a threefold set of requirements and interests.

Firstly, it represents a picture of “post-materialist” needs (Inglehart, 1977) formulated first by the “aesthetic criticism” (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999) of capitalist modernization, and thereafter through the spread of an environmentalist culture and awareness.

Secondly, it configures as a process of readjustment in the area of capitalist exploitation strategies, the tendency of which is to shift the centre point of profit generation from the inside to the outside of the enterprise, placing value on the actual objects of that renewed picture of needs. With the decline in the strictly industrial dimension of enterprises, it is the territory that is now being interpreted — as acknowledged by business economists — in terms of “a deposit of vitality for enterprise”¹⁰. If the search for positive externalities — based on the local development approach — is the key to the success of enterprises with their roots in the territorial dimension, then so-called promotion of the territory appears to be the extreme consequence of this search.

Thirdly, but no less importantly, it reflects the trend toward a construction of Europe as a space for competition between territories: it is the social actors who operate in the (rural) milieu who must keep themselves in a state of continual mobilization with a view to self-maintenance of their economic well-being; and it is each territory that

¹⁰ Number 90/2013 of the journal “Sinergie” is dedicated to this topic.

must identify and maximize the value of its “own” resources in a scenario of global competition.

Against this backdrop, one can discern the genesis of the institutes of governance applied to rural development: a genesis straddling the stage of “industrial rurality” and that of “post-productivist rurality”.

From the early 1990s, the European Leader Approach provided the centre of gravity for the experimentation of a new approach to the governance of relations between social processes and institutional system: an experimentation, that is to say, of devices able in abstract terms to generate a “possible coming together of institutional policies and social practices” (Magnaghi, 2000, p. 114). Local Action Groups — entrusted with the management of this Community Approach at territorial (sub-provincial) level — were intended to be a linch pin for governance processes radically renewed from the standpoint of bottom-up development pathways, on the assumption that there was no existing standard development model, applicable to any given rural situation.

Like the LAGs, the Local Action Plans (LAPs) — i.e. the planning tools drawn up by the action groups (and vetted at Community level) in defining the development programme to be implemented — respond principally to requirements for integration and intersectorality. The essential characteristic of these tools is that they bring together local actors with the end in view of pursuing a common goal, namely to maximize value for the benefit of the rural territory they represent.

Naturally, to the same extent that cases can be made in general for doctrines and approaches of local development, the notion of rural development does not in any sense offer a radical alternative to the imperatives inherent in capitalist exploitation of resources. Rather, it expresses a conception of development as competition on a global scale, a continuous process of “competing with everyone from everywhere for everything” (Sirkin et al, 2008). In other words, this not a change in the basic rules of the free market game, but a transformation of the ways that competition is viewed and enacted: the idea of rural development begins with the premise that competition cannot be played out on the basis of an absolute, univocal and predetermined rationality, i.e. assuming there is

“one best way” for development. In reality, the broadest possible cognitive awareness must be encouraged, to promote constant learning of new resources and new modes of valorization. Consequently, the interdependencies between non-business social actors, business actors and institutional actors must not be managed by way of tools, such as hierarchy, that reduce their complexity, but employing devices that allow this same complexity to be interpreted as a resource.

An enormous body of literature on governance has highlighted several different, and not necessarily alternative aspects. At all events, it seems hard to dispute that governance should be considered a “post-modern” (and probably post-democratic) method of controlling the economy, which calls on local structures to perform tasks of “lubricating” business dynamics in a scenario characterized by the reduction of direct action in the economy on the part of the State (Jessop, 2006).

Leaving aside the political and economic principles on which the tools of governance are based, our purpose here will be to understand the operating logic of these tools when applied to rural development, drawing a comparison between their “reference models” and the ways in which they meet typically with total or partial failure.

The dynamics and failures of governance devices are best understood, in our estimation, through concepts and topicalizations offered by the domain of organizational theory and sociology. The reconstruction of modalities typifying the failure of governance will be looked at in the next section; here we consider the elements that are attributed “positively” to the tools of governance. Beyond all the possible definitions of governance — a term at once signifying “theoretical concept, political paradigm, and regulatory requirement” (ibid. p. 190) — we can reasonably affirm that:

- 1) to define the mechanism of coordinating the interdependencies that governance expresses, or presumes to express, reference can be made to the concept of *heterarchy*;

- 2) the organizational model that best expresses the forms of coordination applicable to the mutual interdependencies that governance enables, or presumes to enable, is that of the *network*. Accordingly, we feel

that a theory of LAGs should focus primarily on these two fundamental aspects.

1. *Heterarchy*. The clear expression of a regulatory approach founded on governance, Local Action Groups are based in principle on an interaction of heterarchical nature, or, on reflexive self-organization. This is a model for the coordination of interdependencies (Stark, 2009) which, likewise in principle, differs distinctly both from market-related coordination, and from government-related coordination. Whereas these two mechanisms are based on exercising a certain type of rationality (economic rationality in the former instance, political in the latter), heterarchical coordination assumes that the field will be open to bearers of different rationalities and demands which, whether under a market regime or a government regime, would appear to be incompatible and incommensurable.

Heterarchy, in short, represents a form of control over complexity that is based on rejecting any unilateral reduction of complexity: a method of coordination that leverages the possibility of continuous learning and consequently trusts in the willingness of actors to exercise reflexivity.

Self-evidently, this is a principle of regulation definable as procedural in nature, abstractly qualified to build a negotiated consensus for concerted action, with the involvement of actors bringing different perspectives.

It is precisely on the basis of these suppositions that the institution of LAGs was intended initially to come about. In effect, the process presents itself as the institutionalization of negotiations, or the dynamics of learning and of mediation, designed to generate consensus around acquisitions pooled in common or indeed developed in common. In this light, clearly, LAGs provide a tool with the capacity to identify the optimum level of governance for local development, and to do so flexibly, since they can be “modelled” to complement each specific territorial configuration. On paper, then, LAGs would appear to be highly effective in overcoming the constraints imposed by political and administrative systems. In addition, and likewise in principle, LAGs would be able both to leverage private sector resources, and to integrate territorial strategies with sectoral strategies.

2. *Network*. As observed by Stark (2009), there are, at one and the same time, two fundamental aspects to heterarchical organization: the first concerns a substantive and procedural principle — referred to above — namely the absence of a system whereby standards of evaluation are ordered hierarchically. The second concerns a principle of strictly organizational character: the “natural” form of organization for heterarchy is that of the network.

In the last twenty years, sociological literature has reflected a growing awareness that there are mechanisms of coordination other than the market-driven model, and other than the hierarchical, vertical model. Powell (1990) was, and continues to be, an essential work of reference from this standpoint. In the years since, it has been argued with increasing clarity that “tertiary” approaches to coordination are not simply hybrid forms of the first two — which tends to be the argument of economic neo-institutionalism (Williamson, 1985) — but rather, forms of networked coordination that are patently different both from market-driven relationships, given their “occasional” nature, and from hierarchical relationships, in which there is necessarily a legitimate authority at work (Podolny and Page, 1998).

Even if studies on local development have given plenty of space to notions formulated “at the boundaries” between economic theory and sociological analysis — first and foremost that of social capital (with reference in particular to rural development: see Pagan, 2009) — the organizational dimension has long “...all things considered, been little understood by commentators on local development” (Pichierri, 2002).

Recently, there have been various attempts at organic reconstruction of the possible uses for concepts of organizational sociology in the analysis of development processes. In a paper by Piras and Salivotti (2012), for example, the concept of networking — as explored in organizational sociology — is discussed in the study of governance applied to development.

From the standpoint of abstraction, at least, the configuration of LAGs is correlated to an idea of networked coordination, in other words to the creation and management of symmetrical, not hierarchical relationships.

From a “de facto” status — a network of knowledge, skills, bodies and levels of decision-making that operates, at all events, in the dynamics of socio-economic change — one has a transition, in essence, to a “de jure” status, and the institutionalization of networked coordination.

3. Elements for a theory on the failure of Local Action Groups

If, as intimated, the last twenty years have seen the emergence and refinement of the idea that there are forms of governance over interdependencies qualifying as *neither market-related nor hierarchical*, the most recent decade of sociological literature has also raised awareness that the dynamics of governance and the networked organizational systems to which they relate, far from being conceived as the solution to failures of the State and of the market, are themselves subject to frequent and manifest failures.

As Bob Jessop warns, “the growing attractiveness of such governance mechanisms should not lead us to overlook the risks involved in substituting it for exchange and command and to ignore the likelihood of governance failure. [...] For it is not just markets and imperative coordination that fail; governance is also prone to failure, albeit for different reasons, in different ways, and with different effects” (Jessop, 2006, pp. 198-199).

In effect, there are countless reports and analyses in literature of cases where forms of networked, and primarily heterarchical coordination, have failed either totally or in part. A paper by Andrew Schrank and Josh Whitford (2011) suggests the idea of constructing what might be termed a “general theory” for the failure of networks, such as would explain the reasons why networks perish (or fail to materialize), and in other cases, why networks continue to be kept in place despite their poor performance. The taxonomy of failures proposed by the two U.S. sociologists distinguishes between absolute failures and relative failures (*ibid.* p. 153). The former are occasioned by (i) the collapse of already existing relationships, definable as dissolution of the network, or (ii) potentially

productive or profitable networks failing to materialize, which are definable as being stillborn. In the case of relative failures, the authors distinguish between (iii) involution of the network, where permanent failure is caused by lack of competencies, and (iv) contested collaboration, resulting from excessive opportunism.

Whilst the cases cited by Schrank and Whitford are many and varied — and perhaps fully appropriate in explaining the fortunes of networks populated by private sector actors, operating in an organizational milieu seen as the sphere of competition between businesses — they appear nonetheless to ignore other impediments to the performance of networks, produced when the nature of the actors involved, and therefore the nature of the negotiations, is wider in scope. The governance of development processes has connotations, at least in principle, decidedly more complex than those of the network configurations scrutinized by Schrank and Whitford.

Other studies, such as that of Jessop (2006), offer additional scope for analysis precisely because they relate expressly to processes of governance in which business actors are involved together with non-business social actors and political/institutional actors. According to Jessop, there are at least four large categories of problems that can prove to be insurmountable even for a well-designed governance structure:

1. First and foremost, governance is impotent in the face of radically complex administrative needs. In other words, the Lancaster University sociologist suggests that too much is expected of governance; and that governance is accused of inadequacies which, in reality, reflect the weight of contradictions that governance can never resolve.

2. Secondly, there may be problems connected with the possibility of actual learning, when faced with elements that are especially subject to change, or placed within an overly turbulent environment.

3. Thirdly, there may be problems related to representation. Those who are involved in processes of communication and negotiation — the very substance of governance — are not stakeholders with a direct interest in the actions and decisions undertaken, but simply representatives.

Consequently, deficiencies of representation become deficiencies of governance.

4. Finally, there is an area of problems connected with formation of the subjects of governance and the subjective conditions of coordination. This highlights the “struggle to define positions of dominance or hegemony within specific spheres of politics or of governance, as well as wider social formations” (ibid. p. 201).

Taken overall, the broad categorizations of Schrank and Whitford, and in particular those suggested by Jessop, appear to provide sufficient data for what could qualify as a “theory of governance failure”. They afford a picture of potential problem areas in which it is possible to place the majority of critical elements that have been identified in literature, over time, with reference specifically to the governance of rural development. Among these, mention can be made, for example, of problems relating to conditions dictated by the “context” in which processes of governance are required to operate (and, *in abstracto*, expected to influence); also to the “internal” dynamics of the circuit of governance.

With regard to context, points of interest are:

- a. the conflicting relationship between sectoral policies and rural development policies;
- b. more generally, a limited awareness as to the nature of what meets the definition ‘rural’ and ‘rurality’ (see Sivini, 2003, pp. 35-39), hence the persistence of serious doubts concerning who may or may not be the actors in transformation processes;
- c. the asymmetry between places in which the “determining factors” of change are located, and the places where governance is exercised;
- d. a lack of decision-making competencies in governance structures, which on occasion find themselves restricted to the task of merely managing action plans that have already been delineated for the most part. The “bottleneck” of competencies has the effect of helping to ensure that new forms of mixed public-private sector organization tend to operate as tools for gaining access to EU funding for community programmes, without managing to put forward any appreciably innovative planning ideas.

As concerning causes of failure originating from within the structure of governance, one can look at:

- e. the emergence, or persistence, of self-promotional attitudes that lead to significant asymmetries in the make-up of the network (Timpano, 2005), ensuring the prominent involvement of actors most strongly associated with local power bases (Murdoch, 2000);
- f. the convergence of parties on decisions that do not meet criteria of efficiency and effectiveness, but tend to satisfy a lowest common denominator of actors' demands, thereby allowing consensus to gel (Piras and Salivotti, 2012);
- g. an insufficient level of participation in decision-making processes. In the EU White Paper on governance, participation is a key word, if not the vital concept. And yet, the poor level of actual participation is an extremely widespread reality.

The article by Angelo Belliggiano reconstructs a number of critical profiles reflecting the experience of one of the LAGs operating in the Apulia region. What emerges from the research is a collection of problems that vary in nature, but can probably be better understood when applying the theoretical framework delineated in the foregoing pages.

5. Rural development and network failures: insights from an Apulian LAG

Angelo Belliggiano

1. Introduction

The Leader programme was one of the most effective community initiatives promoted under the Structural Funds reform of 1988 (Ray 2000, p. 164). Given the success that characterized the three previous editions of the programme (Leader I, II and plus) and the emphasis placed on rural development in the “new” Common Agricultural Policy, it was appropriate, with effect from the 2007-13 planning period, that Leader should be integrated with the CAP. The declared aim was to expand the outreach of the planning from the bottom up by increasing the financial resources dedicated to it (mainstreaming), mandatorily allocating a share of the EAFRD not less than 5%.

With greater availability of resources, an increase in regional Local Action Groups (LAGs) became sustainable, albeit the importance generally attributed to these bodies in the area of public debate remained limited. Indeed these groups continued to be secondary institutional actors, even if an analysis of their experience offers highly significant evaluational elements, with regard both to the interpretation of rural development (lived out erroneously as a localistic variant of agricultural development), and to the verification of limits and of the new political mechanisms for controlling social processes, referred to commonly as governance. An exploration of the origins and the operation of LAGs could therefore provide an opportunity to go beyond the optimistic rhetoric they have attracted, by measuring the distance that separates the goals from the outcomes on the basis of actual performance. In this spirit,

accordingly, the present chapter offers an empirical study that would appear to confirm the improbable heterarchy in LAGs, as reflected by numerous clues pointing to the failure of the networks observed in the study. Implicit in the approach taken, however, is the conviction that only by starting from an analysis of the limits on the tools of governance will it be possible to organize a force for change capable of overcoming them.

Hence, starting from the theoretical template for the analysis of failure – or failures – of LAGs suggested in chapter 4, a brief methodological note will be followed by the analysis of an Apulian LAG, which in many ways provides a typical example of the point at issue. This LAG, in effect – as we will see – lends itself well to analyses and considerations regarding both the relationship between sectoral actions and rural development, and the difficulties in structuring a governance of rural development under political and institutional conditions in some ways less than favourable for an integrated, bottom-up management of decision-making processes.

2. Case-studying a LAG. Methodological clarifications

With the promotion and strengthening of the Leader approach in the context of the second pillar of the CAP (Leader mainstreaming), the experimental status of the three preceding editions was definitively superseded (Margarian, 2013, p. 8), and whilst this development is of interest (Mantino, 2008, pp. 168-173), much more important, it would seem, is the methodological and organizational dimension of the actions taken. In effect, any analysis requires knowledge of the methods by which the model is interpreted locally, and therefore a study of the natural parameters in the broad cultural sense, such as for example the real level of involvement and participation of the actors, the organization of governance and the meaning attributed to what is rural, from the perspective of bottom-up local development policies.

The idea of working on a case study was not a random notion. Indeed the aim of this contribution is to give “empirical importance” to that

picture of criticality identified by literature only in a too fragmentary and idealized manner.

From the 25 LAGs in Apulia, the selection fell on one specific group by virtue of three elements that make it particularly interesting. First, the participant municipalities express a strong identity-driven vocation, declaring their wish to be included in the same province in the event of the region undergoing an institutional reorganization. Second, the marked sensitivity of local administrations to forms of inter-municipal coordination, as witnessed by the establishment of an inter-municipal association in place of the LAG during a period when the group was left without public funding. Third, because it offers the possibility of exploring relations between LAG and Wide Area (see chapters 1 and 2), given that the territory of interest lies entirely within one single Wide Area.

The study focused primarily on the methods of organizing governance, and on the internal tensions generated by the opposing forces of (post-) modern drives toward rural development, and the sectoral resistances that are a legacy of the old CAP.

Nineteen figures were selected, each with different roles within and outside the LAG, but of equal importance with regard to the governance of the group¹¹, who took part in a corresponding number of in-depth interviews¹²; the transcriptions of these allowed a detailed analysis of the answers given by the interviewees, so that each passage could be correlated to one of the four significant themes identified in chapter 4 as indicators for the failure of LAGs, (governance, redundancy of tools and policy objectives, limits of participation, interpretation of rural development). The patterns identified in each case were duly coded and summarized in thematic structures, which in combination would enable the processing of superordinate arguments, presented in the following section as interconnected narrations.

¹¹ The interviewees represent the management of the LAG, the LAG's partners (both public and private), the stakeholders, the designers, the regional administration, and the Wide Area administration.

¹² The interviews were collected between 22 November 2012 and 14 November 2013.

The procedure followed was that of Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) which, conventionally, envisages an inductive approach “[...] suitable for the development of complex and interrelated themes” (Convery et al., 2010) and able to provide an interpretation based on the perspective of local actors. In practice, IPA sets out to explore personal experience within the sphere of the phenomenon investigated, based on the perceptions of respondents rather than on their exact declarations (Smith and Osborne, 2008, p. 53). Whilst there is no presumption of validating the hypotheses associated with the theoretical picture presented in Chapter 4, the analysis allows interpretation of certain questions that it raises, and which effectively were encountered in the case study.

3. Empirical findings

As discernible from Chapter 4, the vocation of LAGs is to produce interactions of a heterarchical nature. Accordingly, the action of LAGs should focus exclusively on the search for governance solutions aimed at the sharing of local resources, defining the strategies and the tools best able to hold together the complexity of interests and ideas that are shared, or at any rate apparently represented, by public and private parties, within the scope of the partnership (Lizzi, 2009, p. 1). This conception of governance has certain implications for social actors, which include refraining from any attempt to engage in a unilateral reduction of complexity, a complete willingness and ability to keep learning, and a continuous exercise of thoughtfulness. On the organizational level, this approach to coordination calls for a network type of configuration. Drawing thus on references from certain contributions of broad political scope, such as those of Jessop (2006) and Schrank and Whitford (2011), Chapter 4 identifies various instances (hypothetical) of failure in the networked management of action plans, suggesting that among these cases there might be distinct exogenous factors (or factors of context) and factors within the actual governance, of which the topicalization emerging from the empirical study is summarized in table 1.

Table 1. Reasons of network failures: connection between theoretical factors (see chapter 4) and thematization of the case study.

Theoretical factors	Mode	Thematization of empirical analysis
Network asymmetry	Internal	Coalition balance/imbalance of composition
Deliberative skills	External	Overlapping of instruments and aims (LAG, inter-municipal association, and Wide Area)
Programming constraints	External	
Lack of participation	Internal	Participation limits
Design inefficiency	Internal	
Conflicting policies	External	Rural development interpretation
Low awareness of rurality	External	

3.1. Composition of balances/imbalance in the coalition

The empirical analysis shows with extreme clarity how problematic it can be to arrive at a composition of the LAG that will generate dynamics of interaction in which there are no asymmetries. Analysis of the interviews revealed five topical elements of significance:

a) presence of strong leadership in the public component. The leadership of one specific municipal administration would seem to derive from the elemental “entrenchment” of the LAG (Leader II) in the municipality. It is to this, in fact, that one can trace the original nucleus of the founders, who remained the absolute protagonists by virtue of their stubborn determination to keep the LAG alive during the period when it had been unable to benefit from European community funding (Leader+).

b) diffidence of the private component. From its very beginnings, the experience of the LAG was accompanied by indifference — often generated by a flawed understanding of rural development — or worse, by diffidence, on the part of the potential private component of the partnership. Consequently, the involvement of the private side was not spontaneous, but encouraged directly and informally by the LAG management, which above all targeted those parties most interested in the restricted grid of measures envisaged under the plan (tourism) and having the resources to cover the private cost of funding, to the extent that one of

the local administrators made this assertion on the subject: “[...] it is easier to contact the bigger entrepreneurs, because anyone prepared to invest will already be involved in significant business activity or property ownership. One thinks of farms, for example, or agricultural concerns of a certain size”.

An approach of this kind, while open to various interpretations, would seem apparently to be determined by the planning constraints imposed on the Apulian LAGs, which have prevented them from responding to the needs considered by the territory as being most urgent, hence limiting the participation of a potentially wider range of players: “this is a territory that has a wealth of typical local products – says a representative of one of the private partners – and I think it would have been right to prioritize investment in the area of agrifood processing”.

c) presence of vertical asymmetries. This refers in particular to relations with the Regional Authority. The LAG complains of a lop-sided and subordinate relationship with the central administration (“objectives are set by the Regional government”, states the Chairman of the LAG, “which means we have only been able to consider planning proposals in line with those objectives”), a fact indeed acknowledged by the powers that be, who admit that policy is imposed on a top-down basis:

“[...] the process of development has not been left to free local initiative” confirms an official of the Apulia Region, “the role of LAGs has been scaled down to the simple management of predetermined goals, so that the less energetic of these groups can claim the excuse of being nothing more than local outlets for community funding.”

d) hierarchization of decision-making procedures (horizontal asymmetries). According to various accounts, many LAG resolutions do nothing more, de facto, than ratify decisions taken previously by the Intermunicipal association (from which the LAG municipality of greatest importance in terms of population and land area is excluded). This dynamic configures a method of control over the process that is partial, frequently justified on the basis that it offers the more efficient option: “once all of the single questions within the Association have been sorted out”, says the Technical and Administrative manager of the LAG, “the

agreement [concluded] can be presented to the LAG without any problem. Not that I mean this is [like] being one step ahead, but the process [of decision-making] is very fast". The Chairman sees it in the same way: "clearly, there is a certain amount of preparation. The Council simply takes stock of the situations. And it is this preparatory work that helps to smooth the path".

e) need for specific skills. The contribution of the various interviewees indicated a widespread awareness of the fact that specialist skills are needed for management of the LAG. Indeed several of them felt that the performance of the group could be improved through the organization of specialist sectors within the local administrations of the partnership. A higher level of skills could probably lead to increased participation in the activities of the LAG.

3.2. Limits of participation

Another aspect that appears just as dissatisfying is the quality of participatory processes, which typically are the essential element of organizations like the LAG.

From this standpoint, the interviews revealed three areas of criticality: i) the uncertain promotion of the participation; ii) the weak potential of the participatory process, and opportunistic patterns of conduct related to it iii) the widespread need for participation.

The first area of criticality comes from the lack of homogeneity in the judgement expressed by respondents on the participatory process stimulated by the LAG. Both the private component and local actors outside the LAG were somewhat severe on this topic, and their opinion was accompanied by the suspicion of a lack of impartiality when considering proposals received from circles extraneous to the world of agriculture: "I have never heard any discussion of topics concerned with craft trades", remarked an official of the Chamber of Commerce of the province; whilst the manager of a local cultural foundation noted that "[...] limiting the action of the LAG to agriculture-related sectors is restrictive. These sectors must certainly not be excluded, but neither must they be seen as the only ones [eligible]".

The management and the public component of the LAG on the other hand expressed satisfaction at the broad participation recorded during the preliminary stage of the LDP: “[...] when we held our meetings”, says the LAG technical and administrative manager, “we never expected such a high level of participation. Everyone came!” And the mayor of one of the LAG municipalities adds: “[...] it was a job really well done, thanks especially to the commitment of the trade associations who know the territory best”.

However, participation is regarded as a contingent process and, above all, something that can be delegated to an outside agent such as a planner. It is therefore no surprise that certain actors should have noted with interest the timid launch of nascent local networks, considered seemingly as anything but an obvious development. This is reflected in remarks by the chairman of an association promoting a local crop, which is among the private members of the LAG: “I think that the next step for the LAG [...] must be to network production activities in the territory. The process is under way, but still at the embryonic stage”.

However, one private partner of the LAG involved in the catering sector points to instances of spontaneous cooperation between local operators:

[...] if I have a buffet to organize, for example, I go to farms in the area for my supplies. That way we get to know each other, and I can hope that sooner or later they will return the favour. [...]. The LAG should organize meetings and themed events with companies in the territory, rather than concentrate its promotional activity purely on the presentation of contract announcements or procedures for filling in funding applications.

The second area of criticality emerges from the general awareness that the potential benefits of participation are few. This perception derives from the externally-driven definition of the strategic goals, even if in the local context, groups may have been given the freedom of identifying the measures best suited to their own development plan. It would appear that participation, encouraged only in the initial stages of the planning process, is determined exclusively by the quid pro quo benefits foreseen in the evaluation of plans, pushing for the implementation of consultation

processes, which the promoters themselves see as being of little effect and essentially opportunistic. The thoughts of a consultancy project manager who oversaw the preparation of the LDP:

[...] the structuring of the questionnaire [designed to facilitate the participatory process and the identification of needs in the territory] was especially complex, given the constraints on measures, actions and beneficiaries imposed by the RDP. [...] We had to collect the requests of the participants, while also persuading them to define their expectations within the scope of the measures already established under the RDP.

As for the opportunistic motives of participation, the same interviewee recalls that

[...] this great effort at local promotion was planned together with the organizing committee since it would supposedly bring advantages in terms of evaluating the candidacy of the LAG, considering that additional points could be gained by implementing participatory actions.

In reality — as cautioned by the administrator of one of the LAG partner municipalities — “this is not participation, it is simulated participation. Tying participation to the contract announcement is not right [...] and LAGs should always promote initiatives referable to participation, irrespective of contracts”. In an organized context like the LAG, explicitly oriented toward the participatory management of development actions, the “culture of participation” therefore appears to present significant shortcomings.

It should be added that, according to various accounts, the promotion of participatory decision-making has been reduced to the minimum necessary, not only because it is considered superfluous, but also because it is seen as politically “dangerous”, given its capacity to undermine existing positions of consensus. On the basis of this interpretation, it was above all the political component of the partnership that supposedly produced “defensive reactions” against participation, intended to scale down its importance.

“For many [politicians], it [participation] is seen as a waste of time”, says an administrator of LAG municipalities who has had previous experience of participatory planning, “whereas others consider it an

original way of interacting with the local electorate, but only as long as there is consensus. When contestations begin, in effect, participation becomes much less interesting, especially for the participants.”

Participation however, even without decision-making capacity equal to the challenges, has been seen as a very important tool in rural development processes. The lack of codified procedures for participatory decision-making, on the other hand, is considered to be the most critical factor affecting the LAG under scrutiny. The need for engagement has often been addressed by adopting impromptu — and above all horizontal — forms of integration, independent of the LAG. “If there is some form of network”, states the owner of an LAG partner company, “I do not know about it. If we participate in networks, they are networks outside the LAG. Or networks created by someone personally”.

Failure to recognize the participatory process as the lifeblood of the LAG means that the professional skills one would expect to aid the process have been prevented from developing within the partnership. This state of affairs, however, has led to the cultivation of a tendentially passive attitude, limited to the demand for training services from the administration. As the Technical and administrative manager of the LAG acknowledges, “there are a few manuals by the private body that prepared the LDP to be found, that is to say, put out by them. But really, this manual ought to come from the Regional Authority, which should also monitor its effective implementation”.

3.3. Redundancy of inter-municipal coordination bodies and tools

As noted in chapter 3, the redundancy of coordination devices is one of the most obvious — if barely acknowledged — problems with the governance of development. In effect, the study recorded certain critical profiles that were traceable precisely to this chaotic proliferation of bodies. The findings revealed, in particular, three criticality profiles:

The substantially interchangeable nature of LAG and Inter-municipal Association.

As mentioned previously, the Association was set up to consolidate the partnership of seven municipalities, formed during a previous Leader

experience. Once the possibility of funding for the LAG had been restored, the Association should logically have ceased to be necessary, whereas in reality it was kept in place.

Competitive conflict between LAG and Wide Area.

The issue of overlap between LAG and Wide Area appears even more problematic. Elements of friction between the two bodies emerged when the LAG was marginalized during implementation of the Wide Area Strategic Plan. The accounts given by the interviewees suggest that this exclusion was connected with three circumstances: the power of the larger municipalities; the inability of administrators to draw on their experiences of association within the LAG; and finally, a latent competitiveness between urban and rural territory, deriving from the possibility open to rural parties of satisfying their demands through RDPs. Nonetheless, there were those who suggested that the exclusion was also self-inflicted, citing the low level of participation by the LAG during preparation of the Wide Area Strategy.

Influence of the scale of planning on process outcomes.

In a number of cases, the interviewees expressed their belief that the scale of the development actions represented a factor as decisive as it was problematic. In this instance, at all events, the criticalities do not refer to the LAG, since the scale of its actions is considered appropriate. According to some interviewees, the aspect seen as most problematic was the parcelling of actions under the Wide Area Strategy, which related almost exclusively to municipal infrastructures rather than local production activities.

3.4. Interpretation of rural development

One undeniably evident problem is the “cultural” picture that emerges abundantly from the accounts given by interviewees, of a latent and widespread uncertainty as to the object and the nature of rural development. This ranges between more or less explicit reference to the world of agriculture — seen mainly as the domain of land tenure, rather

than of agricultural concerns — and references to the world of economic and social interests tied to agriculture, in other words principally food production and tourism services.

Whilst the conception of ruralism underpinned by rural development actions has long been thoroughly disconnected from any direct reference to agriculture as such, the interviewees nevertheless hold on to the idea — whether out of interested and conscious perseverance, or due to a lack of understanding — that rural development remains a question concerning agriculture and its economic and social milieu. The study consequently revealed a significant level of impatience and frustration due to the fact that in the sphere of Leader measures, it was impossible to implement actions explicitly concerned with agricultural development:

“This territory is known for highly prized food products and I think it is on these that investment should have been focused”, says an official of the Association of artisans, “but on many occasions we have been confronted with initiatives that have actually excluded agrifood processing, because these would have attracted specific funding, which however would not meet the needs of local enterprises at all.

4. Conclusions

The case study presented shows clearly that there is a gap between the two theoretical “pillars” of LAGs — heterarchy and networkability — and the relational configuration observed on the basis of intrinsically historic and contextual conditions.

The main criticalities shown up by the study can be represented thematically, albeit purely by way of example, as an expression of questions having wider significance. Opportunistic modes of conduct, the creation of self-promotional mind-sets, and the multiplication and partial overlap of political-and-administrative domains with competence on widely assimilable questions, in effect, express not only a peculiarity of the specific experience analyzed, but a picture of criticality that is significantly widespread in Southern Italy.

Also discernible on this level, therefore, are tensions typical of the dialectic between territorialization and deterritorialization (see chapter 1). We are faced with a double bind. On the one hand, the expectation of an action rooted in the so-called territory, and on the other, the expectation that control of the action responds to criteria of governance alien to the political and administrative practices (based on patronage, family ties and in any event incapable of effectiveness and efficiency) that are in reality part and parcel of local history in these parts.

In any event, it is not possible to draw any conclusion, as such, from the findings of the study. What would seem to emerge, however, is that the history of community initiatives on rural development is still largely unfinished. Indeed it appears evident that the LEADER initiative, with its insistence on the centrality of governance, produced only a modest palliative, set against the “systemic” contradictions intrinsic to the development model actually pursued; contradictions of which an abiding North-South dualism could have been an aspect of by no means secondary importance.

APPENDIX

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**ANNEX – INSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE
REORGANIZATION: THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
TERRITORIAL COHESION POLICIES IN APULIA**

District	Establishment	% private actors	% public actors	Total	Liaison with integrated projects
Aerospaziale Pugliese	2010	79,3	20,7	58	
Informatica	2010	89,8	10,2	108	
Meccanica	2009	87,8	12,2	115	
Legno e arredo	2010	92,8	7,2	125	
Comunicazione, editoria	2010	100,0	0,0	127	
Nautica da diporto	2010	79,4	20,6	136	
Ambiente e riutilizzo	2010	91,5	8,5	177	
Moda	2010	80,6	19,4	180	
Logistico	2010	80,6	19,4	196	
Edilizia sostenibile	2010	85,0	15,0	213	
Florovivaistico	2011	100,0	0,0	227	
Lapideo	2010	85,5	14,5	256	
Agroalimentare Jonico-Salentino	2011	69,9	27,6	272	
Nuova energia	2010	90,1	9,9	392	
Agroalimentare Terre Federiciane	2010	88,7	10,2	865	

Continuity or discontinuity issues, strategic and management between the SPs 2007-2013 and ITPs 2000-2006 experience

Strategic Plans (SPs)	Lead institutions	Aims of the strategic plans of large area	Continuity			ITPs	ITP's issues	Assessments
			Strategic	Territorial	Organizational			
Capitanata 2020	Foggia	Networks and mobility services, environment and rural areas, cities and governance	No	weakness (expansive)	weakness	Tavoliere	Agrifood District	The ITP had an agri-food connotation while the vast area focuses on logistical operations. There is also a territorial discontinuity, with the inclusion of the towns of Gargano and organizational changes (weak involvement of ITP's Management office).
Vision 2020	Barletta	Food, fashion, cultural and rural tourism, social inclusion, qualification of labor, ecological network, mobility, e-government	No (reductive)	No (reductive)	No	Nord Barese	Logistic system	The ITP was rather selective and built around the logistics system for the manufacturing sector (textiles, clothing and footwear) and the SP is more heterogeneous. Change the lead institution (from Andria to Barletta) and decrease the participating agencies. The only office PIT was not involved in the PS AV design.
Metropoli Terra di Bari	Bari	Mobility and the public transport system, upgrading historic centers, the coast and urban green areas, protection of the rural landscape and water resources, energy technologies and services, research and innovation, citizenship for immigrants and social inclusion, service demand and supply work, cultural tourism, governance	Yes (expansive)	weakness (expansive)	Yes	Bari	Logistic system	Ordinary members have doubled and also extends the strategic focus of the project. There have been some elements of continuity, both through the PIT projects to be extended to new members, either through a maintenance of some strategic issues
Città Murgiana	Gravina	Community membership and inter-municipal cooperation, habitability, internal and external accessibility, protection and enhancement of landscape heritage, natural, archaeological and architectural heritage, development of old and new supply chains in the environment	weakness	No (reductive)	No	Murgia	Agriculture and processing enterprises Furniture industry	Reduces the municipalities participating, from 14 to 4. The topics are varied, with some projects that maintain a continuity with the PIT. In general a high level of discontinuity is detected.

Strategic Plans (SPs)	Lead institutions	Aims of the strategic plans of large area	Continuity			ITPs	ITP's issues	Assessments
			Strategic	Territorial	Organizational			
Valle d'Itria	Monopoli	Environmental improvements, integrated infrastructure for the internal mobility and for the territorial economic system mobility, strengthening of the tourism sector to link the excellence of traditional food, support for companies in the fashion industry and mechanics, construction of a new identity Area and a unified image of the region through the promotion of institutional cooperation	Yes (expansive)	Yes	weakness	Valle d'Itria	Logistic system Productive system Public service	The coalition of municipalities remains the same even if you change the leader. There are elements of continuity at the level of themes, although the strategic plan widens the scope of action than that of the ITP
Area Vasta Tarantina	Taranto	Enhancement of the logistics system, ports and airports, development of innovation networks, of scientific and technological research networks, environmental protection systems, remediation of contaminated sites, qualification of the productive sectors (tourism and agri-food), social inclusion, waste management and water management, alternative energy sources, safeguarding and development of identity landscapes, enhancement of strategic urban areas	Yes	weakness (expansive)	No	Taranto; Jonico-Salentino	Logistic system Agrifood District	There is a strategic continuity with the theme of logistics, a priority in the area of Taranto. However, the ITP's Management office was not involved, and the partnership has been extended to include the entire territory of the province of Taranto (with the exclusion of Martina Franca)
Area Vasta Brindisina	Brindisi	Strengthen the function of hub and connection Local production systems (tourism, culture, research and education)	Yes (expansive)	Yes	No	Brindisi; Jonico-Salentino	Integrated logistics and distribution services Agrifood District	There is territorial coincidence, but with a greater spread of the interventions. At strategic level, some projects are coherent with those of the ITP, but with a lower weight and within a heterogeneous programming. The ITP'S Management office was not involved in the wide-area plan and partnership is substantially expanded.
Lecce 2005-2015	Lecce	Natural and landscape resources, renewable energy, public transport services, productive clusters, support for local products, entrepreneurial exchanges and research, protecting cultural heritage, artistic and environmental, tourism promotion, enhancement of social services	No	No	No	Jonico-Salentino	Agrifood District	It was a ITP between three provinces, and this area has not been confirmed, with a large area PS returning largely to trace interior areas to provincial ones. Even coalitions of actors are very different and there is no organizational continuity.

Strategic Plans (SPs)	Lead institutions	Aims of the strategic plans of large area	Continuity			ITPs	ITP's issues	Assessments
			Strategic	Territorial	Organizational			
Salento 2020	Casarano	Local production systems, Information Society, Knowledge economy Competitiveness and attractiveness of urban systems and suburban areas from a tourist,	Yes (expansive)	Yes	weakness	Salentino-Leccese	Local manufacturing system (footwear district)	There is a substantial territorial coherence with a lower concentration of strategic interventions. If, initially, there was a continuity of the actors, with the designer of the area wide that was the PIT manager, political alternations have substantially altered the landscape of those involved.
Area Vasta Monti Dauni	CM Monti Dauni	Road, telematic, electrical, water and energy networks , protection and promotion of natural capital, tourism development and strengthening of the role of tourism in the local economy, social inclusion, promotion and marketing of local products, promote the integration of the production supply chain	Yes	Yes	Yes	Monti Dauni	Homeland security, environmental protection and natural resources, enhancing local products Tourism	Despite the conflict, there was a strong continuity of both the participating institutions of fund manager. Even at the strategic level, the objectives in the PIT are largely confirmed.

Continuity or discontinuity issues, strategic and management between the SPs 2007-2013 and SLPs of Local Action Groups 2007-2013

Strategic Plans (SPs)	Lead institutions	Aims of the strategic plans of large area	Territorial coverage	LAGs	Consistency assesment	Synergies or conflicts		
						Strategic	Policies and management	Territorial
Capitanata 2020	Foggia	Networks and mobility services, environment and rural areas, cities and governance	Foggia (60%)	Daunia Rurale	The strategy is based on the combination of "innovation-connection. The protection of the agriculture system is entrusted to the development and support of the ecological network and the tourism, to promote understanding of the relationship between agricultural production, agro-environmental and agro-craft. The logic of integration and diversification in tourism and environment key accepts a multi-functional model as a conscious choice of land development.	synergies	synergies	synergies
				Gargano				
				Dauno Ofantino				
				Piana del Tavoliere				
Vision 2020	Barletta	Food, fashion, cultural and rural tourism, social inclusion, qualification of labor, ecological network, mobility, e-government	BAT (100%)	Ponte Lama	Rural Development is certainly a priority for the vast area. The declination however denotes a dichotomous vision of rural development, due, on the one hand, to practices of agricultural development and in others contest, protection and of natural heritage. A strategic role is attributed to agricultural and food district.	synergies	conflicts	weakness
				Murgia PIU				
				Dauno Ofantino				
				La città di Castel del Monte				
Metropoli Terra di Bari	Bari	Mobility and the public transport system, upgrading historic centers, the coast and urban green areas, protection of the rural landscape and water resources, energy technologies and services, research and innovation, citizenship for immigrants and social inclusion, service demand and supply work , cultural tourism, governance	Bari (65%)	Murgia PIU (PS Città Murgiana)	The SP has a specific rural development program. Recognition of multifunctionality of agriculture and the central role for the protection of the environment and landscape, mean adopting integrated models of development in rural areas: the goals expressed in the plan appear compatible with a rural development project, capable to drive a conscious process of transformation of agriculture according to the notes of the deepening directions, enlargement ("broadening") and repositioning ("regrounding").	synergies	synergies	weakness
				Fior d'Olivi				
				Conca Barese				
				Sud est Barese				
				Terre dei Trulli e di Barsento				

Strategic Plans (SPs)	Lead institutions	Aims of the strategic plans of large area	Territorial coverage	LAGs	Consistency assesment	Synergies or conflicts		
						Strategic	Policies and management	Territorial
Città Murgiana	Gravina	Community membership and inter-municipal cooperation, habitability, internal and external accessibility, protection and enhancement of landscape heritage, natural, archaeological and architectural heritage, development of old and new supply chains in the environment	Bari (25%)	Terre di Murgia	The promotion of sustainable development and the qualification of "old and new chains" is one of the objectives of the plan, through training and the management of rural districts, however, they seem to result in the mere modernization of agricultural enterprises and the internationalization of the agri-food markets .	weakness	conflicts	weakness
				Murgia PIU (PS Metropoli Terra di Bari)				
Valle d'Itria	Monopoli	Environmental improvements, integrated infrastructure for the internal mobility and for the territorial economic system mobility, strengthening of the tourism sector to link the excellence of traditional food, support for companies in the fashion industry and mechanics, construction of a new identity Area and a unified image of the region through the promotion of institutional cooperation	Bari (10%); Taranto (5%); Brindisi (2,5%)	Terre dei Trulli e di Barsento (PS Metropoli Terra di Bari)	The rural specificity of the territory constituted by the PS point around which cotruire a strategy centered on strengthening tourism and agro-industrial sector. The declination reveals a sectoral approach focused on primary sector.	synergies	weakness	conflicts
				Valle d'Itria (PS AV Tarantina; PS AV Brindisina)				
Area Vasta Tarantina	Taranto	Enhancement of the logistics system, ports and airports, development of innovation networks, of scientific and technological research networks, environmental protection systems, remediation of contaminated sites, qualification of the productive sectors (tourism and agri-food), social inclusion, waste management and water management, alternative energy sources, safeguarding and development of identity landscapes, enhancement of strategic urban areas	Taranto (95%)	Luoghi del Mito	Recognition of differences among local contexts with its vocation including agricultural, especially on the eastern side (LAG Terre del primitivo). A strategic role is attributed to agricultural and food district.	conflicts	synergies	weakness
				Valle d'Itria (PS Valle d'Itria; PS AV Brindisina)				
				Terre del primitivo (PS AV Brindisina)				
				Colline Ioniche				
Area Vasta Brindisina	Brindisi	Strengthen the function of hub and connection Local production systems (tourism, culture, research and education)	Brindisi (97,5%)	Valle d'Itria (PS Valle d'Itria; PS AV Tarantina)	Explicit attention is given to food system, to improve the competitiveness and modernization of the sector focusing an approach to agricultural development rather than rural.	conflicts	synergies	weakness
				Alto Salento				
				Terre dei Messapi				
				Terre del primitivo				

Strategic Plans (SPs)	Lead institutions	Aims of the strategic plans of large area	Territorial coverage	LAGs	Consistency assesment	Synergies or conflicts		
						Strategic	Policies and management	Territorial
Città Murgiana	Gravina	Community membership and inter-municipal cooperation, habitability, internal and external accessibility, protection and enhancement of landscape heritage, natural, archaeological and architectural heritage, development of old and new supply chains in the environment	Bari (25%)	Terre di Murgia	The promotion of sustainable development and the qualification of "old and new chains" is one of the objectives of the plan, through training and the management of rural districts, however, they seem to result in the mere modernization of agricultural enterprises and the internationalization of the agri-food markets .	weakness	conflicts	weakness
				Murgia PIU (PS Metropoli Terra di Bari)				
Valle d'Itria	Monopoli	Environmental improvements, integrated infrastructure for the internal mobility and for the territorial economic system mobility, strengthening of the tourism sector to link the excellence of traditional food, support for companies in the fashion industry and mechanics, construction of a new identity Area and a unified image of the region through the promotion of institutional cooperation	Bari (10%); Taranto (5%); Brindisi (2,5%)	Terre dei Trulli e di Barento (PS Metropoli Terra di Bari)	The rural specificity of the territory constituted by the PS point around which cotruire a strategy centered on strengthening tourism and agro-industrial sector. The declination reveals a sectoral approach focused on primary sector.	synergies	weakness	conflicts
				Valle d'Itria (PS AV Tarantina; PS AV Brindisina)				
Area Vasta Tarantina	Taranto	Enhancement of the logistics system, ports and airports, development of innovation networks, of scientific and technological research networks, environmental protection systems, remediation of contaminated sites, qualification of the productive sectors (tourism and agri-food), social inclusion, waste management and water management, alternative energy sources, safeguarding and development of identity landscapes, enhancement of strategic urban areas	Taranto (95%)	Luoghi del Mito	Recognition of differences among local contexts with its vocation including agricultural, especially on the eastern side (LAG Terre del primitivo). A strategic role is attributed to agricultural and food district.	conflicts	synergies	weakness
				Valle d'Itria (PS Valle d'Itria; PS AV Brindisina)				
				Terre del primitivo (PS AV Brindisina)				
				Colline Ioniche				
Area Vasta Brindisina	Brindisi	Strengthen the function of hub and connection Local production systems (tourism, culture, research and education)	Brindisi (97,5%)	Valle d'Itria (PS Valle d'Itria; PS AV Tarantina)	Explicit attention is given to food system, to improve the competitiveness and modernization of the sector focusing an approach to agricultural development rather than rural.	conflicts	synergies	weakness
				Alto Salento				
				Terre dei Messapi				
				Terre del primitivo				

Strategic Plans (SPs)	Lead institutions	Aims of the strategic plans of large area	Territorial coverage	LAGs	Consistency assesment	Synergies or conflicts		
						Strategic	Policies and management	Territorial
Lecce 2005-2015	Lecce	Natural and landscape resources, renewable energy, public transport services, productive clusters, support for local products, entrepreneurial exchanges and research, protecting cultural heritage, artistic and environmental, tourism promotion, enhancement of social services	Lecce (50%)	Terre d'Otranto	Tourism-environment-culture link is one of the objectives of the PS and includes in fact so many elements related to the concept of rurality, as to the issues of rural development. However, in its interpretation it prevails a sectoral approach. A strategic role is attributed to agricultural and food district.	synergies	weakness	synergies
				Isola Salento				
				Valle della Cupa				
				Terre d'Arneo				
Salento 2020	Casarano	Local production systems, Information Society, Knowledge economy Competitiveness and attractiveness of urban systems and suburban areas from a tourist	Lecce (50%)	Terre d'Otranto (PS Lecce 2005-2015)	Items related to rural development are present in at least two of the three general objectives. The line of action, however, disregard the stated objectives by pursuing a sectoral approach on the one hand to the modernization of agriculture, food and the other to the protection of natural and cultural heritage.	synergies	conflicts	conflicts
				Capo Santa Maria di Leuca				
				Serre salentine (PS Lecce 2005-2015)				
				Isola Salento (PS Lecce 2005-2015)				
Area Vasta Monti Dauni	CM Monti Dauni	Road, telematic, electrical, water and energy networks , protection and promotion of natural capital, tourism development and strengthening of the role of tourism in the local economy, social inclusion, promotion and marketing of local products, promote the integration of the production supply chain	Foggia (40%)	Meridaunia	Agriculture is recognized as a strong point of the territory. This priority has declined in all development paths: diversification processes consistent with the multifunctional approach in the enlargement direction ("broadening") and repositioning ("regrounding") and productive specialization of typicality ("deepening"). The use of the concept of multifunctionality is more concrete than elsewhere. There has been a conscious adherence to an integrated rural development model.	synergies	synergies	synergies

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