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## ID 1612 | WHEN ACTIVISM MEETS RADICAL POLITICS - LANDSCAPE PLANNING AS A CATALYST FOR TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

Planning for radical change has been conceptualized in different ways. A number of strong manifestos for change have been drawn up – for reconsidering the absolute faith in economic growth (Mishan, 1967; Hamilton, 2004), for living inter-culturally (Landry, 2000; Sandercock, 1998, 2003), for creating a more sustainable society (Sachs and Esteva, 2003), for social mobilization (Friedmann 1987), for an urban political ecology (Heynen et al., 2005), for recapturing democracy (Purcell, 2008) and for a more radical planning (Albrechts, 2013, 2015). In the vast literature that has been produced on approaches, forms and contents of radical planning, to our knowledge, there are no examples that discuss planning experiences developed by regional governments inspired by program guidelines explicitly aimed at countering neoliberalism (see also Purcell, 2009 on resisting neoliberalization).

This paper documents a planning/political process – the Territory-Landscape plan-making process developed in Apulia region<sup>1</sup>, from 2007 to 2015-that counteracts the pervasive penetration of neoliberal thinking in the urban and regional planning practices. The relevance of this plan is that it parallels the coming into office of a new regional government elected in 2005 on the basis of a reaction against the excesses of a harsh neoliberal policy in Apulia a region that is characterized by a persistent social, economic, cultural and political issue of regional inequality.

The current competences of Apulia region essentially stem from the reform of 1999 that introduced the direct election of regional presidents and the constitutional reform of 2001. Both were approved by the centre-left government under pressure from the Northern League. These reforms furnished Italian regions with greater symbolic recognition, legislative autonomy and the scope for future implementation of fiscal autonomy (Masseti and Toubeau, 2013). As an ordinary-statute region, Apulia, gained "concurrent legislative powers" with the state, inter alia, in the issues of territorial government, management and enhancement of cultural and environmental heritage, infrastructures, protection of health<sup>2</sup>. Even though, as

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<sup>1</sup> Apulia, with about 4,1 million inhabitants in an area of 19,347 sq. km., is one of the fifteen ordinary-statute regions that together with five special-statute regions cover all the country and compose the "regional state" of Italy (Groppi and Scatone, 2012). It is located in the southern part of the peninsula, called Mezzogiorno and interested by the social, economic, cultural and political issue of regional inequality that since the late 1800s has been known as "Southern Question".

<sup>2</sup> Thus it is not possible to understand the Italian planning system and territorial transformations without linking it to regionalisation processes (Gelli 2001), and the consequent progressive differentiation of spatial planning models among regions (Lingua and Servillo, 2014). During all its existence as a unified state, Italy has seen a shifting tension between centralism and regionalism, centripetal and centrifugal forces of politics and administration (King 1987, 327), which have often resolved in failed attempts of institutional reforms (Bull and Pasquino 2007). However, in the recent years, similarly to other Western European countries, Italy faced a trend towards regionalism, i.e. the transfer of state power downwards towards the state's regional levels (Newman and Thornley 1996, 40).

Hudson (2005, 621) put it, regional authorities claim that “what has been devolved [to them] is responsibility without authority, power and resources.”<sup>1</sup>

The Territory-Landscape plan-making process can be considered as an “extreme/deviant case” (Flyvbjerg, 2006, 229) from different points of view. The Territory-Landscape planning process is one among the few radical planning/political processes that have been developed by a Spatial Planning Department of an Italian region. It reflected the radical change in Apulia with the coming into office of a new regional government in 2005. Where the neoliberal policies promoted economic investments wherever they were located, ignoring territory-landscape collective values and fragilities the new government focused on counteracting the pervasive penetration of neoliberal thinking in urban and regional planning practices. Both the planning process and content are atypical, at least with respect to well-established ideas of political participation, the regional tradition of land-use and landscape planning and the Italian national landscape planning practices. Despite its radical approach and antagonistic feature, the Ministry responsible for landscape considered the plan-making method and procedure as a good practice, since it was the first regional plan that it had managed to bring to an end after about ten years from the approval of the new Italian “Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code” (2004) and fifteen from the signature of the European Landscape Convention (Council of Europe, 2000). This is certainly unusual for a Southern Italian region that is used to negative records both on economy (eg. GDP, employment) and natural resources conservation (high rates of illegal buildings and wells), and is considered unable to produce innovation and change.

Besides drawing on documents and other research materials, the case study is based on the personal experience of one of the authors who from 2005 to 2015 was deputy president of the regional government with responsibility for Spatial Planning, Social Housing, Urban Policy, Landscape, and Cultural Heritage. The frame to investigate the case study was developed through a continuous interaction among the authors.

After this introduction the paper analyses the triggers for change, illustrates the search for a new substantial and procedural approach and finally reflects on what could be learned from the case.

## 2 TRIGGERS FOR CHANGE

In 2005, the Apulia region was preparing itself to undergo a great political change, which would last for the following ten years. Such a change was the result of a process triggered by two opposite tendencies which had begun few years before.

### 2.1 TOWARDS A NEW IMAGINARY

The first trend concerns a process of constitution of a new local imaginary that, following Castoriadis (1995), we could define as ‘radical’. Therefore, radical, in this paper, expresses the unpredictable social process that took place in the region and was characterised by the capacity of the local population of re-appropriating imaginaries enclosing “the emergence of something new” (ibid., 1995) in history, and “a new definition of reality, of what counts and of what does not count – therefore, of what does not exist (or nearly so: what can be counted and what cannot enter into accounting books)” (Clark, 2002).

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<sup>1</sup> The Apulia regional budget amounts to about € 13 billion in revenues, of which only € 2 are from autonomous taxation capacity, and € 14 billion in expenditure, of which more than 50% is transferred to the regional healthcare companies. As a “convergence-objective region”, Apulia receives a substantial share of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and European Social Fund (ESF)<sup>3</sup>. After the approval of the Community Support Framework 2000-2006, the National Operational Programmes became a “justified exception” to the priority assigned to the Regional Operational Programmes prepared and implemented by the regions<sup>3</sup>. The proportion of funding directly allocated to and managed by the regions increased from less than 50% in the 1994-1999 cycle to 70%, and this is still the distribution of the 2014-2020 programming cycle. About 65% of the EU cohesion funds managed by the regions are reserved for the five “less developed” southern regions, where a population just under 30% is concentrated.

From a socio-economic point of view, it was produced by a widespread need to dismiss the stigma designating Apulia as a receptor of national funds and exogenous development models and therefore part of a static Mezzogiorno. As such it could be deemed to be unable to become competitive because of its atavistic laziness associated to illegality, the dissipation of public resources and political patronage. As occurred in other Southern Italian regions, the policies of industrial development implemented after WWII had dramatically failed and the local economy had been dominated by the construction sector, agriculture and a labour market based on the very few employment opportunities available in the public administration.

Just like the entire Italian Nation, and despite the surge of neoliberalism, this region of the Italian Mezzogiorno had been living a culturally vital and economically prosperous end of 1900s and beginning of 2000s (QSN, Documento strategico Mezzogiorno: Linee per un nuovo programma Mezzogiorno 2007-2013), determined by the rise of globalisation and the Europeanisation process.

However, in Apulia, such vitality was characterised by unique features. In particular, Europeanisation was perceived and used as the most favourable condition to realise the so many times fought-to and hoped “end of history” of the Mezzogiorno (Viesti, 2003). The rise of the multilevel European governance systems and the new hope for a vital European economy based on small-medium sized enterprises, would eventually terminate the Apulia assimilation to the Italian Mezzogiorno. The myth of creativity and competitiveness were assumed as a powerful picklock to shake the Mezzogiorno. Especially in Apulia, a region that has been often represented (and self-represented) as different from the rest of Mezzogiorno, this myth gives the opportunity to the new small and medium sized entrepreneurial class to lead a novel project of regional development.

The image of the ‘Apulia of districts’ (strengthened by the desire of a local enterprise to be priced in Wall Street) replaced that of a poor agricultural land dominated by several as well as different types of local powerful elites, or mafias. Above all the new wave of entrepreneurialism was trying to build a local network governance based on trust and cooperation rather than political patronage or lobbyism. The emergent multipolar Apulia was looking for something new not necessarily anchored to its past.

On the other hand, if seen from a political and cultural perspective, the radical imaginary was also fuelled by a strong necessity to better understand and valorise the oppressed “local mind” and define a new self-representation of Apulia, to be firmly grounded in the proactive behaviour of its inhabitants and (above all) stakeholders.

In Apulia, just like in the Italian Mezzogiorno, the narrative of crisis and the ghost of being considered an “underdeveloped” local community, or one of the “waste” communities scattered around the world, had not only acted as a social and institutional barrier to radical change, but also as a trigger for local protests against oppression and/or the construction of critical analyses. Mainly based on the intertwinement between the need of survival and ideological belongings, the emergence of such critical analysis had determined a myriad of macro and above all micro political conflicts which in turn had stimulated the construction of social, cultural and political development alternatives, although shared by a relatively small minority if compared to the 4 million inhabitants of the region. The micro-conflicts and the narratives concerning possible alternatives to the idea of a Mezzogiorno as a failed area had shaped a new local storytelling capable of perforating socio-institutional barriers and changing the established collective imaginary.

The pride of being Mediterranean rather than citizens of the Mezzogiorno sketched a sort of third way to be practiced. In effect it stressed that the construction of the Apulian identitarian self was much more necessary than a reference, for example, to sustainability or else. This new consciousness and imaginary were finding a visible place as both a part of a global movement which was fighting to rewrite the history of colonialism and a mere defensive behaviour against the ‘discriminatory’ tendencies of political movements governing the northern regions (and for some time even Italy as a whole). The main goal of such local thinking was to explain the difference between the Mediterranean and Northern thinking and show its potentialities in terms of an alternative world (Cassano, 2005). Around such desire to re-write the local story rather than abolish it altogether with the Mezzogiorno, a cultural alternative (immaterial) movement emerged. It catalysed several different and yet divided components of a nascent but fragmented civil society including catholic movements, the radical left, local environmentalism and others NGOs. Some of

them established more or less close relationships with a group of intellectuals, academicians and professional from different fields, including urban and regional planning.

Although underrepresented, this civil society grew up and its ideas blew in the region inspiring the old as well as the new generations. As happening all over the world, in Apulia too as a result of the crisis of democratic representation, the existing lively local civil society was slowly coming to the light, or taking its first steps. It promoted another democratic political system: one led by the active citizens/society acting in the sake of the common good. However, it lacked leadership and a clear and catalysing alternative developmental model (Cassano, 2004).

## 2.2 A NEW (RADICAL) REGIONAL GOVERNMENT

In 2005, opposed by a great part of the general staff of the Italian centre left, Nichi Vendola, a politician of the so called radical left, i.e. Partito della Rifondazione Comunista (Party of the Communist Re-foundation), surprisingly won the Apulia regional primaries and then became president of the regional government. This was the first direct participation of the Left in the government of this region in the past uninterruptedly governed by centre and right political coalitions. The new government was able to propose a different vision of fulfilment and hope, which offered conviction and steadfast commitment (see also Amin and Thrift, 2013, 184): the president was re-elected in March 2010, and thus his government became the most enduring in the history of the region.

The reasons for this unexpected election are manifold. Their roots are in the social, cultural and economic processes outlined in the previous paragraph combined with the widespread mistrust in the local political leadership in both the well-established right and centre-left wing, equally considered in some way responsible for the effects of more and more aggressive neoliberal public policies and the dismantlement of the welfare state.

Vendola was deeply rooted in the regional context, ever engaged in the most important local emancipatory struggles, and well known as vice-president of the anti-mafia parliamentary committee. He was able to turn discontent into a new hope in an enlightened political leadership and radically different social, economic, environmental and cultural policies directed not by a clientelistic machine but entrusted to competent members of politics and civil society. He was strongly supported by political, social and cultural movements, more or less organised in "Civic participation committees", and spontaneously born anywhere in Apulia out of already active civil society groups on local political-administrative issues (Romano, 2005).

Merging in unique manner leadership and participationistic rituals (Romano, 2009), he expressed a radical alternative to the centre-right managerial, technocratic, efficiency-oriented style of government of the president that had ruled from 2000 to 2005 and who lost the 2005 elections (Gelli, 2006).

Leaving aside the controversial issue of the actual results of the implemented policies, the new government offered the perspective for a radical change from the historical condition of marginality to a new identity based on its Mediterranean vocation and from the well-rooted practices of clientelism to unconventional grassroots democracy (Duran, 2015, 251-252). It proposed an alternative model of development focused on the enhancement of regional resources: social capital, especially youth, and considered culture and environment as common goods (Damiani, 2011). The "Programmatic statements" specified the initiation of "a new development cycle based on the strengthening of tangible and intangible resources, set up by women, men, youth, and cultural and environmental heritage of the territory (...) ". In a region with a history of exogenous socioeconomic dominations and dependencies, this is a demanding challenge, which requires many and differentiated instruments to be implemented, including new planning tools, as the "Programmatic statements" clarify. For those parts of the Apulia society who had opposed regional spatial planning policies that had used the unemployment blackmail as a weapon to build consensus on their affairs, destroying common goods for the benefit of economic powers and worsening social and environmental injustices, the establishment of a new government that critically challenged such practices, was seen as a sort of achievement of the impossible.

## 2.3 A LANDSCAPE-TERRITORY PLAN AS CATALYST FOR TRANSFORMATIVE PRACTICES

The decision to initiate a new Territory-Landscape Plan (T-LP) must be seen against the background of political and cultural climate sketched above. In Italy, landscape planning has been traditionally confined in a sector and island vision: detached from the complex and conflictive transformations of the territory. The plan, for the first time in Italy, according to the European Landscape Convention (ELC), extends landscape policies to the entire territory, including urban and rural areas, outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes, abandoning the traditional focus on “natural beauty” or extra-urban spaces of landscape protection (Gambino, 2015).

The T-LP is a statutory spatial planning instrument, legally required by the State Legislative Decree No. 42 of 2004 (amended in 2006 and 2008), known as the “Cultural Heritage and Landscape Code” (Code). This combines the principles of ELC with the Italian legal system of landscape protection. The Code provides that all the Italian regions approve a landscape plan that must contain binding rules aiming at preserving the parts of landscape protected by national laws or decrees, to be concerted with the Ministry responsible for landscape.

However, the Apulia regional government did not promote the T-LP because the approval of such instrument became compulsory for Italian regions. Actually the Code does not imply any sanction for the Regions that do not respect this obligation. In this sense, the decision to carry out the plan relies on the voluntary agreement of the regional government’s members, with the support of parts of civil society and intellectuals from different fields. The new Italian landscape legislation and the concept of landscape as defined by the ELC were considered levers to start the construction of a new history in the interpretation and development of regional territory. The plan was looked upon as a unique opportunity to change the local culture and practices of territorial transformation in line with the political vision and programmatic declarations.

The main arguments for the government’s decision to take the landscape plan as a spearhead for its transformative ideas are manifold. They are generally related to the political vision that dissociated itself from the so-called ‘emulative paradigm’ (Bevilacqua, 2000), or rather, from the passive acceptance of an exogenous development model, and searches a foundation for a new development model fuelled by its endogenous cultural and natural resources.

The territory-landscape concept served this purpose. Landscape is not anymore the objective, scenic, spatial framework of a location, but a place constituted through the tangible and intangible social and cultural practices that shape the land (Owig 2007, 581). Perception is an integral part of the concept of landscape, well before the ELC established that “Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors”. The perceptive character of landscape implies a ‘cultural image’ or a way of seeing the world, a subjective observation and experience (Cosgrove and Daniels, 1988; Antrop, 2005). Landscape is a polysemic concept that refers both to the material-physical world and to immaterial values and symbols. It is shaped by values, perceptions, practices, knowledge, wishes and needs, which are met by the physical characteristics of geographical space, modify and are modified during the territorialisation processes (Raffestin, 2012). It is the result of this collectively perceivable change or, in other words, the “empirical manifestation of territoriality” (Turco, 2002, 7) and as such is a result of conflicts and compromises.

Apulia varied landscapes have been largely shaped by human labour in the *longue durée*. The region is characterised by the highest incidence of agricultural land of the Italian regions, the lowest incidence of surface covered by forests, and approximately 900 km of coastline. Thus, in Apulia natural landscapes are rare, while cultural landscapes prevail. These are dynamic social constructions that mirror physical and social change through historical and contextual experience, with important symbolic meanings (Cosgrove, 1984). They are organized at the ‘human scale’, having been ‘built by hand’, and have been historically linked to local society and economy (Selman 2004).

This notion allowed the regional government to intercept the growing social awareness that the post WWII exogenous development models had destroyed in many places the unique intertwining of natural and cultural characters of regional landscapes. Especially in the industrial development poles and in the over-urbanized areas, these development models had produced human and territorial desertification, the

standardization and homogenization of material and immaterial cultures and the consequent loss of local knowledge, experience and skills.

Landscape planning offered arguments in favour of the need of a social reconnection (Selman 2012) of what, in the past decades of intense “modernisation without development” (Sapelli 2005), had been compromised by progressive disconnection and disruption: people’s sensory and social experience of places, attachment to and pride in their living places.

Landscape planning offered the possibility to envision different development perspectives based on the ability to produce, inhabit and transform their own territories by individual subjects acting for the benefit of his/her own well-being, but so contributing also to the good life, without overriding other kinds of goods (Arler, 2011, 497-98). Individual subjects can so be as beneficial in the landscape as those specifically acting in the common good and can contribute to increase the collective well-being and to protect and pass on to future generations a common good such as landscape (Pedroli et al., 2013).

Both the Code and ELC required approving a plan for the entire regional territory, with the selective purpose of improving landscape quality. For the ELC, meeting the “landscape quality objective” involves, for a specific landscape, “the formulation, by the competent public authorities, of the aspirations of the public with regard to the landscape features of their surroundings” (Council of Europe 2000, chap. 1, art. 1, c). This implies that not primarily the experts are to plan and develop landscape, but rather, the people whose daily practices and perceptions shape it (Olwig 2007, 581). This is in tune with the programmatic statement of the regional government, which emphasised the will to “meet the extraordinary demand for public participation” which allowed the election of a 'off-team' president, by raising the skills of citizens in the solution of political and social problems, and citizens’ desire and ability of self-organization and self-narration (Gelli, 2006). It also strengthens this programmatic option, as it places this in an international cultural framework of great political potential, thus preventing that it was caught as tied to a closed, narrow perspective, or worse, as a rhetoric.

### **3 IN SEARCH FOR A NEW APPROACH: CONTENT AND PROCESS**

The challenges mentioned above required a great effort to innovate regional, provincial and municipal planning, which cannot be illustrated in this paper. The T-LP is just one of the many new instruments that were approved in the form of laws, guidelines, projects, and documents throughout the administration cycle 2005-2015. The existing fragmented and varied local planning system is still centred on more or less old statutory land use municipal plans. The new regional T-LP could help municipalities (to at least start) to get out of the ditches of an abstract and bureaucratized land use planning and share different ways of interpreting their territory-landscape as a precious common good rather than as a white sheet on which to draw any function or object in return for the promise of some economic investment.

The challenges could not even be met by amending the regional landscape plan which was approved in 2001 in compliance with National Law no. 431/1985. In Puglia it has never been in force a regional territorial plan like those documented in Fabbro (2003). The landscape plan in force lacked any underlying political vision of the landscape role in future regional development. The regional centre-right government had largely entrusted the plan-making process to the technical consultants and regional planning department. They had considered the plan as a mere obligatory fulfilment of the national law.

The plan was reluctantly and hastily approved in 2001, under the threat of the appointment of a state commissioner by the Ministry for Cultural Heritage and Landscape. The plan was based uniquely on the imposition of binding constraints for physical transformation of landscape-protected areas ‘cut out’ according to the national law or the plan itself. These areas were ‘administered’ under the authorities of the Ministry or the Region through landscape authorizations partly devolved to municipalities. How could this plan be used to foster reconnection between territory-landscape and local communities (Selman, 2012)? Moreover, the plan had been progressively socially delegitimized during the implementation by municipal governments, street level bureaucrats, citizens, and entrepreneurs. This was due above all to the out-of-date cartographic base maps and wrongly drawn perimeters of landscape-protected areas. Both gave rise, on the one hand, to blatant injustices and huge legal disputes, on the other hand, to widespread infringement of plan’s rules as combined with insufficient controls, corrupt/collusive practices, and the slowness of justice.

### 3.1 A STRATEGIC PLAN EMBEDDED IN A STATUTORY SETTING

A new plan based on the inspirations and motivations outlined in the previous paragraphs required a strategic approach, intended as a “self-conscious collective effort to re-imagine a (...) territory and to translate the result into priorities for area investment, conservation measures, strategic infrastructure investments and principles of land use regulation” (Healey, 2004, 46). It comprised the building blocks of an ‘alternative’ strategic (spatial) planning process, since it was conceived as “a democratic, open, selective, and dynamic process” (...), which would have produced “a vision to frame problems, challenges, and short-term actions (...)” (Albrechts, 2004). Landscape intended as an evolution whose collective construction does not cease requires a planning approach that is able to incorporate the before and after that prepare a future which is itself difficult to describe (Raffestin, 2012). The planning process needs to generate collective becomings, with a specific focus on people becoming attached to their living territory-landscape and interested in taking care of it (Metzger, 2013).

Notwithstanding its emphasis on being an instrument (just one of the many) to enable change (Albrechts and Balducci, 2013), the T-LP embodies a regulatory framework designed to prevent the cultural / natural heritage, on whose values the new development vision is based, may be further compromised by the business as usual practices and the neoliberal agenda (Legacy and Leshinsky, 2016). Long-term vision, selective range of objectives and issues, project and action orientation, openness of the plan-making and implementation process, are combined with legal certainty about the boundaries of protected landscapes and clear rules for the authorisation that the Code states for any transformation of them. Both the strategic approach and certainty of rules were emphasised in order to point out the substantial differences from the old landscape plan. So, the tension between the statutory and the strategic characterises the Apulia Territory-Landscape Plan.

As a result, the plan’s form, content and process are innovative in comparison not only with the Apulia planning tradition but also with other regional planning experiences in Italy. The T-LP is clearly detached from the still prevailing “urbanism tradition” emphasising the regulative role of plans (CEC, 1997; Espon, 2007). It is different from the late 1990s-early 2000s regional territorial plans that, at least in their intentions, redefined their aims and nature among principles difficult to harmonise such as sustainability, competitiveness, and territorial cohesion (Fabbro, 2003, 58). It is also distant from the first generation landscape plans, which focused on individual landscapes and were designed separately from regional territorial planning (Cinà, 2000; Gambino, 1988). Its innovative characters is noticeable also in comparison with the only other plan approved so far in accordance with the Code by the Tuscany region (Marson, 2016) and with those still in preparation (Magnaghi, 2016; Gambino, 2011; Quaini, 2011; Garau and Pavan, 2010).

The T-L P does not just seek merely for a better integration with other sectoral plans but gives landscape a central role for the envisioning of future regional development and considers territory-landscape heritage as a foundation of a different model of local development and related territorial transformations. This approach seems to be still rare in Europe, where landscape planning generally remains something of a ‘Cinderella’ activity (Kidd 2013, 378), and is looking for ways to better integrate with statutory planning and go beyond its prevalent interest in distinguished landscapes of special quality and attractiveness (Jorgensen et al. 2015). On the other hand, sectoral integration is not enough, since landscape planning seems anyway to be penalized in favour of other more politically prominent policy areas and to be relegated to single experiences of land owners associations or designated – mainly rural -protected areas. Comparative studies converge in pointing out a few exceptions to this picture, such as Germany and the Netherlands (Kidd, 2012; Voghera, 2011).

The plan is divided into two main parts: the Atlas of Territory-Landscape Heritage and the Strategic Scenario. They can be synthesized as follows.

The Atlas includes the identitarian representations of the regional territory-landscape. These do not reflect a classification of landscapes based on (quantitative and/or qualitative) attributes and scale of values, as in the assessment approach used in most planning experiences in Italy and Europe (Brunetta and Voghera, 2008). The plan represents (with an emphasis on their identitarian characters) the varied of cultural-natural relationships of regional landscape through a systemic ‘structural’ approach which uses diachronic analyses (in geographical, ecological, anthropological, ethnographical, historical and archeological, and territorial terms) to identify the ‘genetic codes’ and identities of places which have been refined over time through the development of co-evolutionary relationships between nature and culture (Magnaghi, 2011).

The Strategic Scenario suggests the future organization of landscapes and serves as a point of reference for specific activities, projects and plans which aim to bring Apulian territory closer to the proposed vision through time.

### 3.2 MULTIPLE ROLES BETWEEN POLITICIANS, PLANNERS, AND ACTIVISTS

The production of the plan lays is closely linked to the profiles and roles of leading actors.

The deputy president, who promoted the plan, before being appointed in this position, was an activist planner. Since the 1980s, together with a small group of planners and some environmentalist associations, she had been challenging regional planning policies, as opposed to most of the professionals who formed, alongside building contractors and politicians, a very powerful lobby determining urban development, usually without any kind of opposition from local populations. For a long time, these saw the land and rural areas as a punishment and working in the building industry as the only opportunity to aspire to enter into the social lift.

The deputy president entrusted the scientific coordination of the plan to an activist planner, founder of an association called “territorialist school”. The territorialist approach, in line with the political vision, is based on a critical analysis of the contemporary ‘metropolis form’ and its impacts on de-territorialisation, social mobility, the fragmentation of modern urban living, the degradation of public space, the standardisation of landscapes and a functionalist approach to urban development, as the material expressions of Western imperialist rationale, capitalist industrial society and its post-industrial development (Magnaghi, 2005, 7). As a radical alternative, it proposes to promote “self-sustainable local development”. This concept emphasises the balance between three objectives: directing development towards human requirements which cannot be reduced to the material needs, self-reliance and the development of self-government by local society, and enhancing environmental quality (Magnaghi, 2005, IX-X). With reference to the T-LP, the concept implies the ability of local society (and institutions) to rediscover and enhance the local territorial heritage as foundations for an alternative development model, which finds in the reproductive rules of its local resources the self-generating capacity of being durable for the benefit of present and future generations. Being founded on the recognition and appreciation of local territorial identity by local dwellers/producers, and on their ability to (continuously) shape and take care of their living environment, local self-sustainable development requires new forms of participation and learning of local society aiming at increasing their “place consciousness”.

For the first time in the Apulia region the preparation of the plan was assigned to a group of 15 young professionals specialized in different fields, who then became an in-house planning team fully integrated in the organization of the regional planning department.

Planners, in accordance with the political narrative built up by the deputy president, played an important role in the storytelling. Also their storytelling was selective and purposeful; that is, necessarily political (Throgmorton, 2003, 128), i.e. partisan, based on choices that involve values and are contestable. It was not simply persuasive but also constitutive (Throgmorton, 2003, 130). It includes parts that tell the past and parts that are future-oriented: the representation of the criticalities left by the prevailing urban development models in the form of images, maps, diagrams, strengthened the political narrative aiming to demonstrate the urgent need for change such models. Planning knowledge added technical expertise and arguments that helped understand what and why to change. It also provided future-oriented figures/forms/images that enriched the social imaginary and the real and rational works produced by this imaginary. In such a way, the plan documents written or drawn by the scientific coordinator and his young collaborators, and the numerous presentations and discussions of the plan with the public influenced people and culture.

### 3.3 THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF THE PLAN

Both the Atlas and the Scenario were supported by the so called “social production” of the plan, or more specifically the activation and mobilisation of citizens, stakeholders, local administrations, associations since the very beginning of the planning process, in order to bring to the fore patrimonial descriptions, matters, critical situations and to jointly – the regional department together with local institutions and associations -produce “integrated experimental projects” (see below) out of their usual settings.



The engagement of stakeholders and public at large has evolved steadily if sporadically in landscape planning, pushed by the ELC (Selman, 2010) and seems to be limited to experiences at the local scale (Roe, 2013). The plan was participatory in a very unusual way. Besides the promotion of a wide public involvement through hundreds of forum and assemblies, the government and social groups activity interweaved in a peculiar way. Radical change in planning policies (not only in regional landscape planning) was a political perspective that the regional government shared with counter-hegemonic groups that, mostly in isolation, had raised and continued to raise, many local contentious issues and conflicts with/against governmental (state, regional and municipal) decisions that had negative environmental, cultural and socio-economic impacts on their territory. The involvement of these groups was important for the regional government not only in order to enlarge cultural awareness about landscape values or to ensure the social support necessary for the plan to be approved, but also to stir social practices able to defend and promote landscapes as a public good.

The “social production” of the plan was carried out using various tools to involve public and private organizations, institutions, associations, communities and individual inhabitants. Aside from hundreds of informal meetings, thirteen formal conferences were held in several cities to share with local communities landscape knowledge frameworks and planning strategies. In the initial stage of the processes politicians and planners emphasized the negative consequences on the regional territory-landscape of “things” that the myths of economic growth and globalising modernisation have produced: marginal ghetto neighbourhoods lacking primary services and connection with the historical city, low quality, homologated settlements, redundant volumetrically, which have impeded the public use of coastal streams, consumed fertile agricultural land, fragmented open spaces, interrupted ecological continuity and created visual barriers to landscape perception. They projected images and photographs, and set up exhibitions in order to make it evident what many people cannot perceive due to habit, indifference or even insensitivity. In this way, they built a sort of wire that starts from negative situations produced during the recent post WWII decades, and connects them to the future vision and the “integrated experimental projects” mentioned above.

To enlarge public involvement an interactive Internet site made continuously information available on plan-making progress and an on-line “landscape observatory” allowed everybody to point out on interactive maps what they perceived as landscape values to be protected or that have been injured, and what they considered as best and worst practices of landscape transformation to be promoted and replicated. Both tools have been helpful in capturing social meanings and perceptions of landscape. Eco-museums and community mapping were promoted or supported to use the narratives of people who live and work in different areas as a primary information source, and to actively involve people in landscape interpretation, conservation and improvement. A prize was launched for the promotion of best practices in landscape protection and design, and “manifestos” were written for signing agreements with main “landscape producers”: farmers, building contractors and renewable energy companies.

The local knowledge provided by the participants in the initial meetings or collected through the on-line “landscape observatory” offered politicians and planners arguments for a radical critique of the bequest that the dominant regional development model had left in specific places. This narrative was essential to rise social awareness of the consequences on the living environment of a development model that, especially in a “less developed” Southern Italian region, has frantically pursued economic growth and globalising modernisation, which has been freed of territorial constraints and even the territory itself, treating it as a mere support for economic processes, as the source of resources to be exploited to produce goods for the market: wasteful use-abandonment, lack of maintenance, consumption of non-renewable resources such as groundwater and soils, land degradation and desertification, biodiversity reduction. Technical planning knowledge had an important role in order to highlight detrimental effects of “business as usual” to place making and so to nurture the collective aspiration for a practice of transformative planning geared to the protection and improvement of territory-landscape understood as a common good to be safeguarded and used to support a development model able to create greater socio-spatial justice and well-being.

On the other hand, “integrated experimental projects” were developed as co-designing experiences aiming at testing the innovative regulatory corpus of the T-LP, which results in the evolution from a restrictive-regulatory tradition to a complex dynamic planning process. Regional planners/politicians did not use a top-down approach in promoting these projects. They grasped stories of innovative experiences, experimentation niches, not yet known to institutions and the general public, which showed new ways to

protect and enhance territory and landscape heritage. They used them purposively as examples of “concrete utopias” and transformed them into “integrated experimental projects” to show how changes consistent with the normative vision were possible. Then these experimental projects were extended in other less vital regional areas through agreements between the region and local public and private actors. European Structural Funds and Agricultural Fund for Rural Development were used to finance experimental projects design and implementation. Thus, Community programming, instead of requiring ‘special’ procedures to allow the approval of single private projects that do not conform to municipal plans, became to be seen as a support for the regional plan’s implementation. This contributed to re-legitimizing planning (and the plan) as a process (instrument) useful to improve people well-being and trigger local development.

Each of these experimental projects adopted a coproductive type of approach. Thus, they had also the effect of spreading public involvement on the issues of territory-landscape preservation, improvement and rehabilitation in a number of local contexts, and enabling the region to overcome the difficulty of interacting with citizens which typically concerns the regional planning scale.

Examples of experimental projects carried out during the planning process include the multifunctional agricultural park of Paduli in the lower Salento, the multifunctional park of towers and farmhouses in the area north of Bari, requalification projects for a number of peri-urban, coastal and abandoned areas, the construction of soft mobility and pedestrian paths in parks and tourist areas, ecomuseums and community maps. In some cases the region supported projects already started by local communities, in other cases it promoted new projects in areas without public and private proactive actors, using the formers as concrete practices from which the latter could draw inspiration. For example, the construction of community maps and eco-museums in several municipalities in Valle d’Itria and Capitanata was based on the experience that had been developed in Salento since the beginning of 2000s. The agricultural park of Paduli was founded on the experience that had been involving since 2003 a group of youths in the recovery of an abandoned piece of countryside, and later ten municipalities and local (and external) population, in a process of awareness building. This allowed to transform a forest of centuries-old olive trees from an abandoned and degraded area to a propulsive centre of rural local development where to promote new activities related to place identity, such as specialised crafts, foods, cultural artefacts, recreation and tourism.

### 3.4 OUTPUT OF THE PLAN

As a result of the “social production” of the plan, the Strategic Scenario includes twelve general aims and specific objectives, and five territorial projects for regional landscape which aim at increasing the value of the territory and landscape heritage which was identified through the above-mentioned identitarian representations. They can be summarised as follows:

- the regional ecological network aims to improve the overall connectivity of the regional ecosystem by a multifunctional reinterpretation of existing biodiversity, historic infrastructures, river systems, marshlands, karst pits and the environmental value of rural landscapes;
- the city-countryside pact aims to improve the quality of life both in rural and urban areas by combining urban and agro-silvo-pastoral policies through the regeneration of urban peripheries and the functional strengthening of periurban agricultural areas and the deep countryside by encouraging an alimentary, recreational, hygienic and enjoyable exchange between the city and the countryside;
- the infrastructural system for soft mobility is structured around the (re)discover and improvement of alternative ways of enjoying the regional territory-landscape through networks of ancient roads, cycle lanes, pedestrian footpaths and greenways, scenic railway with lines which go through or brush areas of outstanding landscape value, multifunctional corridors connecting coastal with inland areas, a multimodal coastal transports including a regional ferry service, interchange nodes near railway stations and docks;
- the integrated protection and improvement of coastal landscapes includes sixteen coastal landscapes of high naturalistic value which are to undergo improvement policies assuring the general public to enjoy coastal areas or regeneration policies if on states of decay and deterioration. These policies follow a system of actions and projects which specify and territorialise the general objectives of the strategic scenario in coastal areas: for example, to

ecologically improve recently developed tourist settlements with particular regard to beach tourism, to give the coast more depth by creating synergy with inland areas, to safeguard the long-standing alternation of developed areas and open spaces in order to limit the consumption of land and contrast the formation of a continuous linear front all along the coast, to decompress the coast through building and infrastructure delocalisation;

- the territorial systems of cultural heritage management aims to overcome the logic of cultural heritage protection entrusted with the tracing of a safeguard perimeter, and proposes a project for the fruition of “stratified topographical contexts”, which embraces inter alia points of access to the area from major road networks and soft mobility systems, points of visual perception and of points of access to individual examples of heritage within the area, museums and eco-museums.

The plan entrusts projects’ implementation to public and private subjects by privileging forms of co-design and agreement, and specifically singles out actions, actors and policies to be involved and activated at the regional and local level.

#### 4 WHAT COULD BE LEARNED?

Designing the future by means of the construction of visions and the devise of strategies is a political task, implying societal conversation and political debate (Mazza, 2010). Planning is profoundly intertwined with politics and “the political” since it involves decisions that unavoidably implicate some re-distributive effect, and different costs and benefits for diverse social groups. In the Apulia experience the boundary between politics and planning expertise is fuzzy due to the background in planning of the deputy president responsible for the L-T P. It also illustrates that roles should be not considered fixed in planning annex political processes. But also the boundary between politics and “the political” is blurry, because an activist planner, with a long background of joint commitment with antagonistic groups, became a government member. Thus, she acted as a sort of interface between these groups and the politicians, and thus was an important part of the storytelling.

When seen from the vantage point of practice, the difference between the political and politics which equates to a conflict between a collective and a liberal (individualistic) view of society seems to be reductionist. The co-presence and interplay between the political and politics are almost unavoidable (Castoriadis, 1995; Deleuze and Guattari, 2006).

Seen from the “inside” of movements, dissent is not always aimed at initiating a conscious radical change of society (Zizek, 2013). Moreover, when the emancipatory corresponds to a radical change, the absence of politics and power to materialise it leaves the dissidents without any possibility to see their hopes realized. Therefore dissidents want/need politics. In Apulia some dissidents had the opportunity to find themselves in an authoritarian/leading position and others had the possibility to look at the government not as an antagonist but as an ally. Together they had the opportunity to change the situation they had criticised. Most of them grasped this unique chance for emancipation/change. However, even when working for emancipation/change, hegemonic control is always present, at least until new institutions are created according to the dissidents’ vision.

Activist planners, in their (new) roles of governmental politician and planners, become interceptors of social practices seeking to build citizenship rights in the territory-landscape, stimulators of new social practices, and creators of conditions that favour joint action between activists and regional/local governments, so as to make the exercise of citizenship rights also an opportunity for greater responsibility for people and organizations towards the future of territory-landscape.

The strategic approach to territory-landscape planning did not seek to replace the antagonistic, more open and transparent role and purpose of planning in mediating between conflicting and often irreconcilable interests by highlighting the strategies, mechanisms, actors and networks that mitigate conflict and undermine critical discourse (Oosterlynck and Swyngedouw, 2010, 1580). Its formation was the product of a specific institutional setting which shaped what was imagined as strategic and yet which may come to have the capacity to challenge and transform that setting (Hajer, 2005).

The Apulia T-L planning process can suggest directions for (radical) transformative planning practices, since it was possible to trigger some in a regional context where spatial planning is traditionally weak,

regulations governing land-use and transformation are often infringed, and the market sirens are likely to exert a strong attraction due to the high unemployment and low average income levels.

Carrying out “experimental integrated projects” during the plan-making process anticipated the implementation, at least for some significant examples, at the elaboration phase to show “live” the ways in which the T-LP could have been implemented after approval. As mentioned, some projects were already in progress, and the region supported and made them known to a wider audience; others were co-designed by the region together with municipalities or local associations; others are being developed around Apulia after the plan approval, due to the voluntary initiative of municipalities or local groups, for example the ecomuseum of the sail swamp in Taranto promoted by a group of associations and funded by the Foundation with the South, the implementation of city-countryside pact in municipality of San Severo in the Province of Foggia, the integrated project for creating a linear inter-municipal park linking Martina Franca, Noci and Alberobello in Valle d’Itria.

Furthermore, the aim of sustaining on-going experiences and promoting new ones contributed to bring to the fore the milieu, or rather the foundation of a specific collective identity, with its endogenous development potentials related to protection and enhancement of local heritage. This was an important change of perspective after decades of top-down development policies, including the growth-pole policy, which had been dominated by purely functional concerns relating to economic efficiency and modernity. This revealed the potential of social innovation based on culture and identity building (Moulaert et al., 2005) to break self-reinforcing processes at the basis of path-dependence in many distressed areas of Apulia, thereby initiating a process of change that could amount to an unlock-in path (Greco and Di Fabbio, 2014).

The strategic approach was essential for not considering the plan’s intentions, visions and rules just limitations to the individual freedom. Intentions, visions and rules were consistent with a narrative that at least a part of the economic, social, cultural, political groups shared as a support for a new form of self-sustainable development that assigns great protagonism to local communities. Allocating resources to municipalities and local socio-economic actors for projects and actions in line with the plan helped these groups understand that the vision can result in concrete actions, and this further strengthened the legitimacy of the planning process and the reliability of the politicians that had promoted it.

The institutionalization of the new landscape planning narrative, stated in the most sensitive social groups, i.e. its penetration in the norms, attitudes and practices, thus providing a basis for structural change, requires great efforts and much time (Albrechts and Balducci, 2013). The long process of “social production” of the plan was essential to create a common base of storytelling, language, and awareness through interactions. It helped to resolve conflicts triggered mainly by regional opposition councillors and municipalities, landowners, and energy companies in the approval phase.

But, probably more importantly, it is crucial that politics is willing to take risks of proposing a radical change. This requires the ability to demonstrate, through robust arguments and concrete examples, the social, environmental and economic damages caused by the dominant development model in their everyday living places. At the same time it requires building a new imaginary and joining the unthinkable to the experience, that is giving concreteness to this imaginary by means of a series of present actions that show that what seemed to be impossible is possible. This repopulates the political with new visions, hopes, and modes of organisation, taking them out of the cage that makes them consider the present as closed to any kind of change. Of course planning and the political are only a part of this story. Building a coalition of interests around the territory-landscape imaginary is an important (and difficult) task. The political vision underlying government policies has to be -at least in part -consistent with the planning objectives. In the Apulia government experience, tourism, culture, agro-food, and youth policy programmes were considered drivers of a new local development model based on the improvement of cultural and environmental heritage of the territory. These policies and programs produced short-term actions and Community financial resources that contributed to bolster the strategic scenario designed by the Territory-Landscape Plan.

## 5 EPILOGUE

Strategic planning is usually thought of as producing new images. But these are often “images of” rather than a social imaginary, as conceived by Castoriadis. How can the vision in strategic planning be seen as instituting a radical imaginary? What kind of relationships should be envisioned in strategic planning between instituting and instituted imaginary in order to make planning the beginning of a new history? What happens when strategic planning is used in a context in which the old social imaginary has been challenged and there is already a movement to institute a social imaginary embedding specific emancipatory ideas of social justice? How can the collective and community play a role? How can this problem be faced in order to find new urgent support to the transformative potential of planning? This case study can suggest directions for (radical) transformative planning practices, since it was possible to trigger some deep change in a regional context where spatial planning is traditionally weak, regulations governing the use and transformation of land are often infringed, and the market sirens are likely to exert a strong attraction due to the high unemployment and low average income levels.

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# ID 1613 | SUBVERTING THE PRESENT, PLANNING THE FUTURE: PROPOSING A COUNTER-PLANNING

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Our discussion references are the realities of contemporary, capitalist societies under the (more or less) domain of a neoliberal market ideology and economy. In this context of political and institutional changes and mobilizations of different orders and scales in streets and squares, there is an increased academic production regarding processes of insurrection and subversion in the most different spheres of politics and society. (Pierce and Williams, 2016, Olson, 2016 and others).

Also in the discussion of different modes of planning, insurgent and subversive practices of planners can be identified under certain circumstances. Sager (2011, pp. 8ff), in a broad systematization of forms of planning, describes a range of situations and activities that characterize planning as "radical" and planners as insurgents and subversives. As he states, in a reference to Friedman, "state engagement in radical planning seems close to contradiction in terms". For this reason, he understands that radical planning is "an oppositional but overt activity performed by planners with their professional base in civil society and with a strong commitment to a cause" (Sager, 2011, p. 9).

Stimulated by experiences of alternative forms of planning, we try to discuss, in this essay, their possibilities and potentialities to contribute to such a "radical" society's transformation as it is put in their proposals. Without referring to a specific country and its society, the adopted approach seeks to show, generically, existing structural conditions for the necessity of "another" planning and its characteristics.

This seems nearly a paradox in the face of discussions about reformulations between State's and society's relations in the sense of transferring public (state) responsibilities and tasks to private agents or to the anonymity of market forces' performances - even in the form of public-private partnerships or new forms of governance with the participation of stakeholders.

Nevertheless, encouraged by the above-mentioned approaches of "radical planning", it is the aim of this text to show why and how, especially in these (neoliberal) societies, planning could gain an even increased potentiality and necessity than in the past.

Our argument will be that it is necessary to abandon planning's main features to anticipate or forecast situations and events in the future; and give up that it has to prepare decisions rationally or even to increase problem solving capacities. Obviously, such conditions would be unconceivable for the traditional planning modes and methods, even of those like communicational and collaborative forms; a discussion about the different modes and their characteristics see in Limonad (Limonad, 2015).

Instead of this, like presented in the title of this essay, planning's main incumbency should be to subvert the relation between present and future: shrink the future and increase the present. This will demand a shift in the "temporal dimension" of planning which has its consequences for the understanding of planning as a social process how will be shown afterwards.

But, there is a second dimension, a "spatial dimension", linked to the understanding of planning practice as an element of producing (social) space. Besides the "subversion" of time, there will be discussed a "subversion" of space (and its representation) as the second constituent element of our argumentation.

Both of them, together, will signify an "epistemological shift" in planning understanding. What we intend to show in this essay is: that planning's future depends on an "epistemological shift" on behalf of time and space in planning. That, dialectically, even a planning, which not wants to be a "planning" in the former sense, remains planning within a shift to a new episteme and a different comprehension of the "world".