

NEW SCENARIOS FOR LARGE-SCALE TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE IN ITALY

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Abstract

The last twenty years have seen a general erosion of trust in the efficiency of local-scale planning and its continued use alongside new planning tools to coordinate large-scale policies. The solutions developed in the Provincial Territorial Coordination Plans (Italian: Piani Territoriali di Coordinamento Provinciale, PTCP) have seemed able to control the main criticism, which is linked to various aspects, including: land consumption and the compromise of natural resources; the drastic worsening of the energy balance and the changing landscape; infrastructure network congestion; and the aggravation of hydrogeological risks.

The increasing economic crisis and the need to cut governmental costs have accelerated the process that led to Law 56 in 2014 (regulations regarding metropolitan cities on the union and fusion of municipalities). This law redefined the roles and function of the Province, and the importance of the PTCP will therefore possibly be degraded in the future. Cutting back the political heft of the Province has sparked a reflection on how to redesign the map of territorial planning without triggering traumatic solutions to maintain continuity. The strategic plan of the Province of Teramo represents one of the first experiences in this direction in Italy. This tool aims to define a new model of territorial governance that is capable of ensuring a substantial equilibrium between responsibility and self-determination of the subjects most directly involved in territorial transformation.

Keywords: multi-level governance, large-scale planning, strategic planning.

1. Introduction

Since the end of the 1990s, Europe has been home to a generalized restructuring of multi-level governance which has occurred neither by making governance more effective and more capable of responding to the needs of citizens nor, especially, by rationalizing and reducing public costs in an era of general economic recession.

This action has often assumed the form of a consolidation or a reduction in the weight of local governments in favour of the national government (Baccetti, 2011). It is a form of recentralization dictated by the regions that is more economic and financial than administrative and functional. Above all, it reduces the number of variously denominated local intermediate governments that act as mediators between the cities and the regions (Bertrana and Heinelt, 2011).

In most European countries, the reform of intermediate local governments has often been implemented within a greater overall reorganization of the relationships between the centre and periphery in a marked redistribution of powers among the different levels of territorial government. This reform movement was sparked by decision-making processes that kept the central focus on, for example, a search for the best size of territorial government (region, province, or municipality), governmental problems in metropolitan areas, or the need to achieve greater efficiency in administrative activities and the rationalization of policies and services.

The political debate has not overlooked the contribution from numerous research centres, which have compared the policies implemented in different European countries in order to identify possible points of agreement. Among these studies, we point out those regarding the functions attributed to the large scale (Hooghe and Marks, 2001). Also of interest is research on the level of fiscal and

political/administrative autonomy that intermediate entities have when interacting with the central government (Bertrana and Heinelt, 2011).

The combination of these studies has shown that, in relation to the organizational characteristics assumed by the central administration, intermediate entities tend to take on different profiles:

- characterized by ‘self-government’, in virtue of greater federalization in the distribution of powers, as occurs in France, Italy, and Spain;
- inspired by a ‘multi-purpose administration’ in service of higher levels of government, according to a model seen in Poland and Belgium;
- oriented towards a greater influence of actions, as in Germany, where the *Landkreise* (though with a wide variety of cases) carry out coordination, supervision, and even financial tasks compared to the cities, but which are in turn subject to supervision by the central government.

In all the cases examined, the reform of local intermediate government has occurred within a general reorganization of the balance of power between the centre and periphery. In Italy, in contrast, reorganization of the Province is ‘going it alone’. For incidental political reasons (a wave of ‘antipolitics’ and growing public opposition to political costs, etc.), a very sudden reorganization of only the intermediate government has taken place that overturns its historical identity, introducing a new second-level elective mechanism and reigniting the ever-present doubt if in Italy there is effectively a place for large-scale planning (Talia, 2013).

2. Conceptual Framework. Reorganizing the Intermediate Entities in Italy

In recent years, numerous legislative attempts have been made to reorganize intermediate entities in Italy. As a first step, the proposal for constitutional reform (Laws no. 4439 and 4506 in 2011) has revolved around a push for ‘regionalization’ in which the Regions were given the responsibility of revising the provincial precincts. The possible establishment of new provinces was conditioned on exceeding a minimum size threshold and on the absence in the regional territory of a metropolitan city. In both proposals, the legislation reiterated the basic functions of organizing and planning vast areas of the province and the role of coordination and collaboration among the municipalities in managing network services.

In 2012, the Monti government’s Legislative Decree no. 95 (the so-called ‘spending review’) reopened the discussion. In lieu of the suppression and unification of the provinces set out in the original text of the law, the subsequent Decree no. 188 set out a general reorganization through an announcement that had previously been shared with the local communities and the redefinition of their functions. In addition, the suppression of provincial additions along with the unification of the existing provinces was confirmed. However, the end of the Monti government and the suspension of parliamentary activities in light of the political elections in February 2013 made it impossible to enact Decree no. 188, which was subsequently declared unconstitutional.

Finally, the third phase was the presentation of a bill called the ‘Delrio Reform’ (after the minister for regional affairs who signed the initiative), which, after a parliamentary procedure of some months, was converted into law (Law no. 56/2014). In the text, the transformation of the Provinces into second-degree organs was confirmed, its functions were cut back, and above all, the role of large-scale entities was recognized to serve the municipalities. This reignited the reform initiative to reinforce the community barycentre within local autonomies, with the result of ‘municipalization’, though within a framework of strong connection with the regions.

In fact, this reform aims to reduce the powers and functions of the Provinces, cancelling the elective councils and instituting ten metropolitan cities: Turin, Milan, Venice, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Bari, Rome, Naples, and Reggio Calabria. It proposes an autonomous model based on two territorial levels directly represented by the respective communities and therefore elective in the first degree: the Regions and the Cities. While for the metropolitan cities the institutional aims and responsibilities are defined in detail (for example, the adoption and annual updating of the strategic plan for the metropolitan territory,

general territorial planning, structuring of coordinated management systems for public services), the potential role of the large-scale entities for the portion of territory that does not fall under ‘metropolitan city’ is rather unexplored.

And yet in Italy as in Europe, the so-called intermediate regions¹ provide an important contribution to the economic growth of the country, accounting for at least 50% in Italy. In this situation, forms of governance are often developed that guarantee greater efficiency in terms of economic development, natural resource management, provision of public services, and access to public funds. And it is in these areas—not metropolitan areas—that the logic of development linked to the ‘places’ should be encouraged (Barca, 2009), thus closing the gap between the reform of autonomy, administrative federalism, and development policies. The model of institutional reorganization moving forward in Italy should immediately see and understand the potential precisely of the intermediate, non-metropolitan regions in a perspective of improving and shortening the territorial government chain (regarding decision making, time, and relationships among subjects and among plans), in view of developing coherent innovation of territorial and city planning and design in order to redefine new policies for local development (Barbieri, 2014).

3. Conceptual Framework. Large-Scale Planning in Italy

This debate, already underway for some time, has become even more heated with the latest legislative provisions applicable to reconfiguring the institutional structures in Italy (L. 241/2011, D.L. 95/2012, Art. 17), and it contains interesting elements for rethinking the actions of territorial government. Starting in the 1990s with Law 142/90 and the responsibility given to provincial administrations in directing large-scale plans², it has been agreed that the Provincial Territorial Coordination Plan (Italian: Piani Territoriali di Coordinamento Provinciale, PTCP) should take care of reorganizing territorial complexities and therefore favour the association between physical/environmental factors of a territory, infrastructure needs, and economic pursuits. This is a task that should have necessarily gone beyond the community’s understandable tendency towards parochialism or the inevitable tendency towards regional simplification. Not only due to the dictates of Law 142 was it adapted to the provincial dimension and the original role of programming entity that was entrusted to the Provinces. At the same time, this coordination action implied a hierarchical approach between the Province and the City, and the difficulties that quickly came to light in the connection and integration of actions between the overarching level of government and the municipal realities pertaining to the provincial territory are probably due to this marked asymmetry.

This was the situation for the so-called ‘first-generation’ provincial plans, which were rather anchored in a traditionally hierarchical vision and trickle-down effect in planning levels, even if the methodological approaches adopted were rather different from plan to plan. While some were characterized as large, more or less systematic frameworks of knowledge, others almost exclusively proposed a system of protection and limits, especially for the landscape, and others still were characterized by their prevalently strategic structure (Pomilio, 2014). These three tendencies in reality are combined differently within each plan, but the general impression is that these plans use only part of the potential inherent in the coordination role assigned by Law 142/1990. In fact, in most cases, provincial planning still seems to struggle to develop adequate methods and tools to guide transformations, manage negotiating tables, and coordinate community and sectorial planning according to an organic, shared vision.

¹ According to the definition by OSCE, intermediate regions are those in which the population living in urban centres varies from 10–50%; it also includes mid-sized cities. These regions make an important contribution to the economic growth of the country (estimated to be about 64% of the aggregate growth of the OSCE area).

² We recall that the concept of large-scale government is well presented in national regulation, at least starting with the urban-planning law 1150/42, which in Arts. 5 and 12 respectively defines the Provincial Territorial Coordination Plan and the inter-municipal General Regulatory Plan.

After these pioneering experiences, a second generation of large-scale plans was then developed thanks to the reform of Title V of the Constitution (constitutional law no. 3 of 18 October 2011), which assigned responsibilities at the regional level in a different way and aimed to complete the course of regulatory innovation that would create the conditions to fully enhance the potential of provincial coordination. In this new phase of applying the PTCP, the keywords became ‘subsidiarity’, ‘governance’, and ‘strategic dimension’.

The balance of this second season of territorial planning is rather complex, and it should keep in mind the relevant peculiarities that characterize the different territorial and regulatory contexts. In any case, however, the most recent PTCPs seem to understand the potential of the vast area, developing the capability to align themselves with the problems expressed by the territories, such as settlement dispersion (sprawl), the discontinuity of the environmental networks and the fragility of landscape resources, and the incompleteness of the infrastructure network, implementing a growing propensity to exercise a multi-level system of plans (Talia, 2013).

All of this, however, has occurred without the appropriate limits, in that the considerable directions and directives (in addition to knowledge) that very often accompany the plans have not been supported either by adequate administrative powers or financial availability enabled by the transfer of national, regional, and municipal funds. In addition, the reduced effectiveness of these planning instruments is enhanced by the lack of representation of *weak* territories, which are also commonly ‘warehouses’ of great environmental and landscape heritage. The consequence is that territorial coordination plans have not always completely understood themselves to be the instrument of a possible, beneficial strategy for development and territorial cohesion, especially in intermediate regions.

Nor does this potential seem to be understood by the recent Delrio Reform. In line with redesigning the institutions and responsibilities, which in the provisions of 2011–2012 were concentrated at the provincial level, only on paper is a role of coordination of large-scale territorial planning on behalf of the province confirmed. While confirming the skills of the province and metropolitan cities in matters of territorial coordination and planning, the bill does not square with the experiences of the last twenty years. In particular, the perspective of a new model of institutional governance does not inspire an authentic impulse to renew the current planning model in terms of goals, methods, tools, and procedures to apply to territorial governance. This is not even so when overcoming the traditional municipal limits obtained thanks to the advent of the Community Union would lead to prefiguring a new way of planning the territory and the city with new plans and programs conceived and designed through co-planning process according to a trans-scalar government approach.

Decision making to promote a structural planning model on the territorial level that is strategic and does not conform to vast areas ought to have served as a not-to-be-missed opportunity, especially due to the timely concurrence of institutional reform with the reform of the National Urban-Planning Law (Lupi Bill/2014, ‘Principles in matters of territorial public policies and urban transformation’), which would have substituted Law 1150/42. But it was not to be, and the Lupi Bill was inexplicably forgotten after the intense participatory phase unexpectedly concluded in September 2014.

At the moment, there is a continuing delay at the central level, which has been interrupted only by some local experiences such as those we present here. While awaiting a new model of institutional reorganization, these experiences represent an attempt to shorten the territorial government chain (regarding decision making, time, and the relationships among subjects and among plans), without the simplification automatically transforming into a power vacuum, but favouring the redefinition of local development policies. As a consequence, they would also allow for better administrative efficiency that can be translated into greater simplicity and efficiency for citizens, economic activities and services, and which is definitively capable of ensuring real competitiveness in sustainable growth processes.

4. Analysis and Discussion. First Experiments in a Non-Metropolitan Area

4.1 Characteristics of the Provincial Territory

Situated on the north-eastern edge of the Abruzzo Region (in south-central Italy), the Province of Teramo has a territory characterized in part by mountains (which extend to within the Gran Sasso-Monti della Laga National Park and include two of the most important peaks in the Apennines: the group of Gran Sasso Laga d'Italia and the Monti della Laga chain), in part by hills (where the main historical settlements are located), and in part by valleys and the coast (occupied by a continuous, dense settlement system).

A population of about 290,000 lives on a total surface area of 1,951 km², distributed in 47 municipalities. With the exclusion of Teramo (provincial capital with about 50,000 inhabitants) and a few other urban centres, the territory is characterized by the presence of a network of tiny towns: about 30 municipalities have fewer than 5000 inhabitants, of which 17 have fewer than 2000, most of which are situated in mountainous areas.

There is, therefore, a stark imbalance between the different settlements in favour of the coastal and mid-hill areas, which are more equipped with services and economies favoured by the presence of production and seaside tourism. This comes at the expense of the different small communities in the high-hill and mountain territories, which, while very rich in natural, historical, and environmental resources, suffer from progressive depopulation due to the poor local economies.

4.2 Draft of the Provincial Territorial Coordination Plan

The Provincial Territorial Plan (PTP), which is still in effect, represents the fruit of a political/administrative season that has now passed. In spite of its relatively recent date of approval (2001), it constitutes the success of a plan-creation process that had already begun in 1991 with the adoption of programming directives that have progressively faded in their incisiveness over the years. Not surprisingly, drafting of the 'Report on the state of activating the provisions of the PTP' made in 2008 therefore revealed the substantial incapacity of the plan to respond to criticism made by the provincial territory, which has been even further accentuated in the last decade.

In particular, the report made clear that the PTP—while correctly inspired by the principles of protecting natural, historical, and cultural resources, and rationalizing the settlement model—did not offer a vision 'of the future', that is, mobilize the main energies available. Nor did it appear able to develop that institutional collaboration (between region and province on the one hand and between the province and local entities on the other) in the absence of which territorial government was destined to lose a large part of its orientation capability.

In this perspective, the decision by the provincial administration (2011) to promote the drafting of the new PTCP aimed to take advantage of the main opportunities offered by a new generation of large-scale planning that could integrate the most traditional limiting approach with the themes of developmental sustainability and with a new planning culture. In confirming a trend that characterized the formation of most new-generation large-scale plans, the preliminary document of Teramo's PTCP subdivided the provincial territory into areas and sub-areas. The objective was two-fold. On the one hand, it wanted to highlight a closer relation between strategic directions to be pursued in the long term and territorial partitions denoted by substantial geographic homogeneity. On the other hand, it wanted to favour the consolidation of planning directives and systems of relations aimed at overcoming the traditional limitations imposed by community borders, pointing at the unitary presence of historical/urban-planning phenomena, dynamics of current development, landscape variety, and definitively, the habit of working together on behalf of public administrations that the current territorial design would seem to show, at least in the most fortunate experiences.

In this perspective, the identification of three main geographical areas certainly aims to favour a closer dialogue between the PTCP and the new Regional Landscape Plan of Abruzzo currently being drafted, but they will also be capable of supporting the official presentation of special territorial projects,

with which the technical/administrative experience acquired in recent years can be developed and investigated.

The division of the provincial territory into sub-areas is identified in the preliminary document of the PTCP using SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats). The analysis considers the positive and negative aspects both within and outside the territorial system and thereby manages to identify a series of actions to enhance the resources present, minimize the causes of slow development, obtain the best advantage possible from external opportunities, and finally, cancel the factors that can threaten achievement of the objectives.

In constructing a support tool to define development strategies for the provincial territory, the preliminary document sets out a strategic vision organized by each of the territorial sub-areas (identified with reference to the different systems: landscape/environmental, settlement, production and tourism, and mobility) and specified in a series of strategic guidelines. These allow tendential scenarios to be developed, which are especially useful in preventively simulating the impact of different intervention policies, and therefore in enabling public debate on the proposals of the plan.

Finally, the preliminary document identifies a repertoire of strategic projects that necessarily correlate multiple areas, and which aim to promote a course for reinforcing the role that the territory derives from its geographical location, its history, and the important environmental and landscape heritage it possesses.

4.2 Provincial Reform and Drafting the Regulatory Modification of the Existing PTCP and the Strategic Plan

After the decision in 2011 to begin drafting the new PTCP, and following the reform of intermediate levels of territorial government in Italy carried forward by Law no. 56/2014, the provincial administration of Teramo decided to adjust its aim. While awaiting a definitive settlement regarding the institutional and regulatory framework of reference, the Province decided to define partial acts, documents, and ‘interlocutors’, such as, for example, a regulatory modification to the existing PTP, which aims to ensure greater concreteness in the new design of the plan on some decisive questions, such as:

- counteracting land use;
- modifying the zoning rules for new urban settlements;
- an innovative discipline to regenerate the anthropized territory and the landscape;
- the predisposition of a strategic plan, in which this new act of territorial governance would be situated.

In the wake of a law emanating from the Abruzzo Region in the spring of 2014³, the Province then launched the regulatory modification of the PTCP/2001 and the ‘Strategic Plan for Environmental Sustainability and Land Use’. The intention was to ‘play in advance’ and therefore not to submit passively to the effects of the inevitable resizing of intermediate entities on super-municipal (but also local) policies in matters crucial for planning large areas. Rather, the aim was to turn such institutional reorganization into an opportunity to plan large areas, protect and enhance the landscape, contain land use, and mobilize all available energies (Sargolini and Talia, 2011) to overcome the profound economic and social stagnation.

4.2.1 The Regulatory Modification of the Existing PTP

Drafting the regulatory modification of the strategic plan relied on synthetically assessing the state of the provincial territory made when drafting of the preliminary document and evaluating the resources, opportunities, and critical factors that characterize the different territorial areas and sub-areas and which

³ Regional law 24/2014 ‘Framework law in matters of enhancing agricultural areas and containing land use’.

have allowed a useful screening to be made in order to establish development scenarios in the strategic plan.

The questions addressed looked at containing land use and the quality of the settlement system, the opportunities offered by the territorial project, the establishment of a new discipline for environmental networks and ecological compensation, the ‘rediscovery’ of the primary sector, and the enhancement of the agricultural territory.

Quality of Settlement Systems

As for the first of these themes, the search for new city borders and counteracting sprawl refer to the loss of the city edges and its unlimited growth in an overall framework in which the explosion of urban forms makes it ever more difficult to recognize local communities.

In the area of Teramo, the theme of the border and urban edge assumes particular importance, especially due to the tendency of the coastal territory and main river valleys to present accentuated sprawl especially in the first chain of coastal hills and the intermediate hill systems, and due to the threat of urban centres of different sizes merging together, thus losing their identity and recognisability.

The reconstruction of a system of interpretive relations of design and rules for these territories also pertains to large-scale planning, where a profitable link is developed with other local urban-planning instruments. As a consequence, the regulatory modification of the PTCP lists a series of actions aimed at delimiting the settlement systems and conferring environmental and landscape quality on the existing settlements, which in the peri-urban agricultural area and the passages of discontinuity of the settled areas are proposed as obstacles to merging together the built areas and favouring the adoption of interventions to reconstruct the environment and landscape. New settlements would be authorized only if they were replaceable with interventions of functional reconversion or to make the existing fabrics denser.

Opportunities for the Territorial Project

A new level of aggregating local entities into complex territorial systems has been hypothesized. These may constitute a permanent ‘laboratory’ for the preparation of territorial projects, which, thanks to co-planning procedures to be developed within planning conferences, can act as important activating agents of new territorial quality and new proposals for improvement.

In the regulatory framework proposed, the area plan orchestrated within the planning conference is the ‘tool to specify the discipline established by the PTCP, which is entrusted with coordination of the planning and programs of institutional subjects’. Through the area plan, planning large areas can rely on a strategic, flexible, and adaptable framework of reference, and long-term scenarios can be defined and projects developed to be realized in the short to medium term.

Despite being unbinding, the area plan contributes to identifying means and times to activate the strategic guidelines, with the effect of drawing attention to some primary objectives:

- land conservation and the protection of unbuilt areas and the landscape, with measures that subject new building to the recovery of decommissioned areas;
- enhancement of the agricultural territory, even with respect to a possible use of cultivation for energy production;
- the activation of policies aimed at economic improvement, with provisions in defence of sustainability and local identities, acting to check activities that consume a lot of land or have great repercussions on mobility;
- actions to contain speculative anthropic transformations, selecting those activities that are capable of ensuring the quality of settlements or reinforcing the economic structure of the area.

In subjecting the mobile border between city and country to monitoring, the new regulatory layout offers a very useful input for local administrations that intend to base their idea of the city on understanding the processes that lead to metropolitan growth. In particular, the regulatory modification indicates the most appropriate forms of institutional collaboration designed to allow effective

application of equal territorial distribution, the active protection of the environment and the landscape, and the search for a close connection between equal distribution and environmental compensation. For this, experimentation of ‘green warehouses’ is established, along with the formulation of a chart of the works for compensation.

Centrality of the Open Territory

The regulatory modification asks the municipal plans to deal with arguments that have never been dealt with before, but which contribute to a capillary improvement of the territory and the opening of new perspectives for local development. This is the case for hydraulic and seismic safety, promoting alternative energies and bioarchitecture, searching for new ways of using the territory and the landscape, integrating the tourism resources of the coast with those inland, and adopting measures to adapt to climate change (energetic efficiency of buildings, making urban lands more permeable, increasing green roofs to counteract the heat island, etc.). There is a wide range of objectives destined to create a sizeable impact as much on disciplinary innovation as on the confirmation of a new cycle of development under the banner of sustainability, with important effects in the confirmation of a new culture of governing the open territory.

Beyond dedication to reorganizing unbuilt urban areas and the relevance of buildings within the peri-urban agricultural areas and passages of discontinuity, the City, when forming and/or updating its own urban-planning tools, should produce a ‘Charter for Agricultural Land Use’ defining the potential, actual uses, and worth. All of this also lies within the scope of verifying how the possible removal of peri-urban agricultural terrains destined for new settlements can slow sprawl through actions to mend the urban network, facilities, green areas, and the residential and productive functions surrounding the existing centre.

Among the measures more generally aimed at the open territory, some devices dedicated to the river system echo experiences made in recent years in Europe and beyond. Such is the case of the Landscape Contracts and River Contracts. These are proposed as tools for voluntary, negotiated strategic planning. They do not bind urban-planning choices, but this does not limit their potential in becoming an opportunity for building consensus related to a strategy of territorial development implemented by more prescriptive tools.

Due to their negotiable nature, the contracts favour a change from sector policies—such as securing the territory or river requalification—to integrated policies of landscape improvement. They contribute to transforming the strategic scenarios of the PTCP into shared views to enhance the river and basin systems, agricultural landscapes, settlement systems, and the mobility and tourism networks, which, by defining local development models, can lead to ‘added territorial value’.

Enhancement of the Agricultural Territory

With the aim of enhancing and protecting this complex reality, the regulatory modification identifies ‘agricultural areas of significant economic worth as an invariant of the provincial territory’, whose quality is verified with the aid of a ‘Charter for Agricultural Land Use’ prepared by the communities when drafting or updating their own urban-planning instruments. This step is fundamental in strategically identifying the definitive limits for building, but also to promote the adoption of measures for preventive environmental compensation according to values and parameters that the community urban-planning tool is required to fix.

These measures are also particularly important in favouring the integration of agriculture within the urban circuit, coherent with the approach called *agri-urbanism*, which is proposed to unite what was traditionally separated.

4.2.2 The Strategic Plan

The guiding idea that inspired the ‘Provincial Strategic Plan for Environmental Sustainability and Containment of Land Use’ is characterized by a significant break with the dynamics that have denoted

the phase of the most intense transformation of the Teramo area. It prefigures a new paradigm that brings up for discussion the myth of virtually unlimited quantitative growth that has been pursued up to now.

The perspective indicated does not necessarily imply the choice of a future of degrowth, but rather marks the possibility of adhering to a model of stationary development that is dynamic at the same time. According to Giorgio Ruffolo's metaphor of the open lake compared to the pond (Ruffolo, 1994), it offers the opportunity to follow a path that leads to important objectives under the profile of innovation and quality.

Such a scenario assumes a notable change with respect to the most consolidated behaviour in past years, but it can nevertheless take hold of some elements already present in the local context. For example, low demographic density leads to less settlement pressure and therefore a substantial balance between the factors that contribute to the consumption of scarce resources and the agents that contribute to their reproduction. But the notable size of the protected areas and the existence of a dense multi-centre network of small and medium cities, which have not impeded the spread of building sprawl can contribute to a valuable reference in view of policies to contain urban growth and the greater synergies between inland areas and the coastal strip.

Prefiguring a virtuous course that makes the local development model of the mountain and hill areas compatible with the integrated territorial project of the more urbanized areas, it is necessary to hypothesize a learned combination of settlement and production formulas that support the search for new values and orient a change in lifestyle, consumption, and production.

In this framework, the strategic plan proposes to creatively reinterpret the role assigned to each territorial system, ensuring that the productive fabric can rediscover new opportunities in the economic framework of local development, with applications that range from quality agriculture to cultural and natural tourism, and from handicrafts with greater added value to the advanced service sector.

With a desire to give new impulse to the potential expressed by the different territorial areas, the strategic plan therefore suggests moving in different directions, which are clearly recognizable even if they are closely related:

- acquisition of a more favourable positioning in terms of competitiveness and innovation on behalf of all the components of the Province of Teramo;
- the claim of new centrality in territorial care, to be interpreted not only as an ethical imperative to be assumed for the safety of citizens, the settlement structure, and the landscape, but as an extraordinary opportunity for a change in lifestyle and consumption;
- the promotion of initiatives appropriate for counteracting de-industrialization and defending the most qualified and innovative production;
- the launch of initiatives for territorial recapitalization that still view the city as an important engine for development.

Under the procedural profile, organization of the provincial territory into six complex territorial systems represents the best size for promoting these objectives and experimenting with processes tending towards constituting new Community Unions. Such activities should customarily be entrusted to the planning conferences, which ought to favour participation by the cities and the management bodies of the regional protected areas in the planning process. Therefore, a model plan and dialogue is activated that can more concretely be translated in the drafting of Planning Agreements or Programme Agreements to initiate works and interventions.

As for the implementation of the plan design that was delineated with this strategic plan, recourse to a series of instruments is set out that entail overcoming the narrowest administrative limits (by definition municipal) that have up to now constituted significant dead weight for the traditional plan. Beyond the Landscape and River Contracts already mentioned above, the strategic plan foresees the formation of area plans (which the PTC already considered) and especially the strategic projects, which instead are introduced for the first time by the strategic plan and the regulatory modification.

While the area plans are destined to recreate the possible conflicts deriving from the main settlement choices made by the Cities (zoning of the buildable areas, localization of the urban facilities,

development of the infrastructure network, etc.), the strategic projects instead allow greater complexity. This is demonstrated by the fact that large-scale planning is not proposed simply to correct ‘errors’ and the dysfunction to which the urban-planning discipline can succumb when it cannot overcome the more reductive or sectorial approach. The strategic projects that were developed for this strategic plan, in fact, are proposed to implement some medium- and long-term views with a transverse approach that should develop the capability of orienting the choices and investments of public and private subjects.

In the formulation introduced by the regulatory modification to the PTCP, six strategic projects were identified that implement the fundamental refinements of the long-term vision at the base of the strategic plan:

1. *Coastal city*, where improvement of accessibility and sustainable mobility will serve as an opportunity to modernize the infrastructure networks, requalify the landscape, and improve urban competitiveness;
2. *Production and development*, in which the specialization of economic activities can be pursued thanks to the strengthening of territorial provisions and the rationalization of the settlement choices;
3. *Ecological and landscape network*, with interventions aimed at strengthening the ecological networks, securing the territory, and realizing projects for landscape improvement and environmental compensation;
4. *Tourism*, with initiatives aimed at strengthening the sector by diversifying the accommodation offered, integrating different circuits (sea, mountain, art city), and making tourist fluxes less seasonal;
5. *A new agriculture*, with measures that associate the reinforcement of the agricultural and food system with the implementation of modern agricultural business and infrastructure development;
6. *Territorial equipment and service management*, aimed at developing the secondary transverse infrastructure network (connection between the coast and inland areas) and consolidating the structure of territorial accessibility.

5. Conclusions

The particular planning experience presented here and the character of eternal transition that our country and the Abruzzo Region have now been experiencing for many years could justify suspending judgement related to the possible successes of a strategic document and a regulatory modification whose efficacy ultimately depends on the survival of the Province. And yet the first tests made by the Province of Teramo upon presenting these new devices to public opinion and the principle stakeholders have demonstrated that in daily practice the territorial disciplines are still forced to rely on the autonomous urban-planning that now for some years has constituted the only and most concrete alternative to an opposition to progress (Talia, 2009).

It can be agreed that the validity of each new procedure should very probably not be measured by singling out its capability to harmonize with the golden principles of coherence and appropriateness inspired by the system of existing planning; rather it should be measured by its ability to provide quick responses, analysis tools, and decision-making assistance that can be used in that ‘visible navigation’ that increasingly characterizes the concrete exercise of territorial governance.

Along these lines, one cannot help but underline the fact that the basic inspiration guiding the drafting of new tools by the Province of Teramo significantly evolved amid the administrative, political/cultural, and planning context in which new proposals for territorial and socio-economic protection, requalification, and enhancement should be matured and not discounted. In contrast, this resolute change in step requires a marked debureaucratization of the routines used to implement the plan and the adoption of behaviours characterized by a preventive evaluation of the effects of each decision, and, as a consequence, also a rigorous verification of the results to be expected.

In favouring this point of view, correct management of the planning conference will be a determining factor, not only regarding the formulation of functional rules that should guarantee the balance and protection of the interests legitimately represented by these new organisms, but also regarding the assumption of a role of promotion and oversight by the Province. It is the Province under whose jurisdiction lies the care for that area of collective use and values coinciding with the super-municipal scale and which, in the opposite case, would risk not being adequately protected.

As can be seen, the slow transition towards a planning system that is more polarized on the regional and local scales assigns the Province with the responsibility of witnessing and safeguarding the relevant needs, but under weak control. To be completely fulfilled, it requires supporting institutional discussion and collaboration with collective learning and cultural growth in order to be successful in mobilizing different interests and growing sensitivities, even in the absence of authoritative or coercive mechanisms.

The course described can naturally become too long and complex for the effective leadership abilities expressed by the Province's political and technical/administrative frameworks. For this reason, it is convenient already in the initial phases to aim for other qualifying content in the Teramo initiative, as in the case, for example, of some strategic projects that seem capable of appealing to sensitivity that is already present in many local communities regarding questions about the vast area (calling to mind the coastal cities or the ecological and landscape network).

But even before initiating planning processes that are complex and connected to wide, effective sharing between the institutions operating in the provincial territory, it may be worthwhile to trust a new regulatory and operational framework that was established to ensure that the 'construction' of new large-scale governance would assist the timely application of several very innovative devices. At the same time, however, these devices need to ensure positive results already in the short to medium term.

The numerous provisions range from the introduction of new zoning rules to environmental compensation (green warehouses) and the provision of passages and elements of discontinuity in the settlement fabric. As well, particular emphasis is placed on the obligation for communities dedicated to forming a new urban-planning tool to make available a 'Charter for Agricultural Land Use' aimed at, among other aspects, establishing a careful perimeter of the existing settlements and consequently at favouring the systematic containment of land use.

In the perspective described, the changes brought to the planning system are not limited to promoting greater awareness in governance actions on behalf of the local administrations, but rather introduce some corrective actions in the new urban order that have been confirmed in the last decade even in the Teramo area, laying the basis for more ambitious public policies with which to re-establish that constant dialogue between agrarian and urban landscape that sprawl tends to cancel out.

6. References

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