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**Added value in the metropolitan agricultural areas of the Campania Region**

*Simonetta Volpe*

Safeguarding and reclaiming the environment are among the central issues underlying the urban policies promoted by the Campania Region in recent years.

This strategy is pursued along a single, organic design pathway, that covers an ample system of actions and tools. Great importance is attributed to choices giving added value to unclaimed areas of the Region, regardless of whether they are agricultural, fallow or wooded.

**Defining the issue**

Urban agricultural spaces are areas that link the true rural world to the urban world, preserving the fundamental characteristics of the former but undergoing attraction by the latter. It is nevertheless possible to identify some common aspects present in all urban agricultural spaces, i.e. territorial, environmental and social precariousness.

Although the economic function is essential to maintain agricultural spaces and their future, it is limited by the urban pressure they undergo, and the minor productive importance they are attributed in the overall economic framework of urban zones.

Instead, in metropolitan zones, the environmental, social and cultural functions exerted by agricultural spaces take on a greater relevance than in the rest of the territory. In these zones, agricultural land acts as a green lung for large cities; they are a fundamental asset in the territorial set-up, because they act as a barrier against uncontrolled growth of the city, meanwhile creating landscape and making the

urban environment a more human habitat.

**The genesis of an 'integrated harmonic' project**

In Campania, a system of actions has been set in motion, that aims at transforming urban agricultural spaces from waste areas emarginated by urban development into prime movers of strategic planning. This system uses their need for safeguarding, added value and development as a lever, regarding the environment as an absolute value not a relative parameter, and guaranteeing a dynamic, sustainable development of peri-urban agriculture and the spaces where it is practiced.

Basically, there are three leaders of this 'harmonic' project: the Naples Municipality, the Campania Region, the Hills of Naples Metropolitan Park.

The priority goal of the project is to prevent the urban agricultural spaces from being subjected to an urbanization process, by introducing the social concept of a 'culture of the land', seen as a limited natural resource, and by recognizing the existence of these areas on the social, political and administrative planes.

The project was launched by the Naples Municipality when the urban manoeuvre of the 'Variante al Prg' was introduced in 1994, and approved on the 11th June 2004. This stipulates that the 'safeguarding and reclaiming of the physical integrity and cultural identity of the territory' is one of the main goals of the project, that considers the agricultural landscape and the hills to be a structuring component of the natural conformation of the Neapolitan territory, and an integral part of the history and urban set-up of the city of Naples.

The innovation produced by the Variant consists, on one

hand, of the attribution of a central role in the plan to areas that would otherwise have been fated to be res nullius, 'unclaimed' areas awaiting building plans. On the other hand, the issue of nature in the city and the preservation of green areas is not dealt with in a restrictive spirit but on the contrary, has the overall objective of guaranteeing active safeguarding of the environment and attributing added value. Safeguarding the environment is the prerequisite in any decision relating to territorial transformation, and at the same time the underlying assumption in all definitive decisions, respecting the main goals of the urban planning strategies and the resulting choices, i.e. setting a limit to urban sprawl, containing land

consumption, preserving and reclaiming the old town and the environmental dimension of the landscape. These reclaiming actions are extended, by means of urban restructuring plans, also to the ex-industrial areas to the west and south of the city.

The actions of the Campania Region have focused on several fronts. In the framework of the Piano territoriale regionale (Ptr), a strategic territorial plan that awards a central role in the sustainable development policies of the Campania Region to building an ecological network, the Aldermanship for territorial governance has worked to support the role of natural ecosystems and habitats on the basis of the 'rural' policy measures and models established at European level. The importance of involving the municipal administration level in planning the building of the ecological network and pursuing the landscape quality objectives is stressed.

While the Ptr was being drawn up, and coherently with its aims, an important step in accomplishing the

proposed strategies was taken with the approval of the Lr 17 of 7 October 2003 when, in line with the most advanced national and European experiences, the Campania Region identified the system of urban parks of regional interest as: a) urban parks; b) metropolitan park. The system of urban parks of regional interest consists of the entire set of green areas endowed with an environmental and landscape value, or having a strategic importance for ecological restoration of urbanized areas, located in urban contexts.

Moreover, the Campania Region also decided to take decisive action as regards stipulating the permanence of agricultural use, in the sense of requalifying the newly appreciated city-countryside relationship.

The Aldermanship for agriculture, with the Settore Sirca, has created a new tool that enables the preservation of the agricultural zones and their environmental value thanks to boosting development, because an efficacious safeguarding of these zones cannot be divorced from the economic viability of the agricultural firms. The main lines of intervention are:

- structural intervention to adapt agricultural and built-up zones to the new need for revitalization, harmonizing this with the primary need to rebuild the landscape and actively maintain the territory;
  - multifunctional development, reinserting agricultural firms-enterprises in the urban context, and thus creating new income, even as the prevalent sources, from teaching activities, agro-museums, tourist and cultural activities, etc.;
  - promoting self-supporting activities, in the sense of management models able to produce satisfactory, stable earnings over time by means of the above-described activities.
- In the Hills of Naples

metropolitan park the above policies have been applied by means of the pilot project 'Hortus Conclusus', that can be replicated in other urban agricultural ambits in Campania.

The Hills of Naples metropolitan Park, in collaboration with the Municipality, is carrying out territorial governance and management activities by means of a significant involvement of the citizenship in the territorial transformation and reclaiming choices.

In fact, by instituting the 'Sportello comunicazione e partecipazione' (Communication and participation desk) the Park Body is acting in conformity with the Agenda 21 Local pathway activated in 2002 for the city of Naples, by promoting responsible action directed mainly by the inhabitants of the area. The intention is to operate on a dual level of agreement (one open to so-called bottom-up instances and the other to particular associations, public bodies, the entrepreneurial and the cultural worlds), setting up a systematic combination of the input from the different social actors and different types of beneficiaries taken into account by the management.

The outcome of these actions will be a new guidelines package (action plan) that will help to achieve a correct definition and application of the Park management plan.

Finally, within the context of the Progetto Interreg III B 'Extramet', the Region, the Naples Municipality and the Hills of Naples metropolitan Park, intend to share their experience with other European nations and to deal with the various problems on a trans-national scale, building up an experience that can then be transferred to institutional activities. The project aims to pave the way for experimentation of a common innovative

methodology, focusing on 'urban-rural' space. Through extramet, the partners (the Liguria Region, Piedmont Region, Sardinia Region, Campania Region, Ministry of Macedonia and Thrace, Thessaly Region, General Council of Hérault, Murcia Region and Alentejo Region) propose to introduce a new approach to analysis of the metropolisation phenomena.

### **The features of a heritage asset and the values to be defended**

In the metropolitan area of Naples, we are surprised to note that the 'survivors' are, even in the capital city, much more than just residues and that there are still extensive agricultural areas with an interesting agricultural set-up, that express a value system that is both different and complementary to the economic value, being linked to the ecological and ethical-cultural dimensions. For example, in these areas, progressive isolation has resulted in the conservation of a high degree of traditional crops, in terms of the ecotypes grown (ancient varieties of bushes and trees supplanted elsewhere by new, more productive cultivars) and cultivation techniques, with a limited use of chemical ingredients, as well as a strong spread of consociations that have contributed strongly to the definition of the landscape. The urban companies, featuring subsistence agriculture of the family nucleus on a tiny strip, unaffected by so-called improvement processes, can be regarded as true biodiversity tanks having a high ecological value. Moreover, the traditional cultivation methods and/or typical crops, albeit no longer competitive, have led to a persistence of cultural values connected to the historical use of natural resources, our human ability to use them and the history

of creation of the landscape.