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*Università*

GIUSEPPE BERTONI (ed.)

# WORLD FOOD PRODUCTION

FACING GROWING NEEDS  
AND LIMITED RESOURCES



VITA E PENSIERO | RICERCHE

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UNIVERSITÀ  
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PRODUCTION OF APPROPRIATE FOOD: sufficient, safe, sustainable

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ALFONSO PASCALE

## The territory and the interaction between agricultural and environmental, socio-economical and cultural changes

### *The various meanings of the word territory*

The word *territory* derives from *terrae torus*, literally ‘bed made of land’, and it originally indicated the land that ancient peoples took possession and delimited.

The Romans were the first to apply a legal framework to a community of people taking possession of areas of land with ‘regere fines’ or ‘drawing the borders’ (Maddalena, 2014). Throughout the ages technical and experimental knowledge was passed down the generations and slowly agriculture was born.

That knowledge gave the same importance to and combined together the experiences of field crop work, animal breeding, the relationship between man and primary resources and any related duty, with the use of symbols, measurements, calculations and writings. It is a practical and experimental knowledge that, thanks to the values of equality and mutual help belonging to the rural world, gave life to the first settled human communities. Territory, agriculture and community are undeniably intermingled with one another. This connection can be found in the various meanings of the word *land*: area to be safeguarded from hydraulic instability and swamp and to be restored, in order to make it suitable for farming, building and inhabiting; agricultural resource surrounding a human settlement; village or district where farmers – especially in the Central-Southern Italy – exchange their products, the place they left in the morning and to which they came back in the evening; a place which resources and metaphysical potential must be promoted, employed and preserved by being supportive and safeguarding the goods of everyone, in order to meet people’s needs.

For a long time, the word *territory* has been used quite exclusively to indicate a delimited area coming under the jurisdiction of a certain form of political authority. The word defined not only territorial lands, but also territorial waters. According to the *Dictionnaire de la langue française* (1863-72) by Émile Littré, the territory “is the extension of land at the disposal of an empire, a province, a city, a government”. In other words, an area of jurisdiction, defined by surface, shape and borders only.

### Territory as landscape

Research in the field of Ethology has recently improved the concept of *territory* with a further meaning. The behavior of some animal species has showed more basic elements of localization, division and defense of the land. Afterwards, the focus moved from animal society to human phenomena, from biology and psychophysiology to the study of space perception, representations and images. The definition of *territory* is now more complete. Edward William Soja (1971) defined the word *territory* as “a behavioral phenomenon associated with the organization of space into spheres of influence or clearly demarcated territories which are made distinctive, or considered at least partially exclusive by people occupying or defining them”. Some functions are connected to the territory, including the identity of an individual or a group, the sense of belonging and the relationships within a community. Therefore, their meaning, which ethological studies make more understandable, has a social origin. Territory is thus not a mere framework, a physical covering separated from its social components. Lucien Febvre (1922) had already expressed this concept when he wrote that the territory is not “that wide fixed space on which the States have marked out their limits”.

However, with Emilio Sereni (1961), the concept of territory acquired the meaning of space in which “men, during and for the sake of their agricultural production activities, consciously and systematically, give to the natural landscape” a particular “shape” called “agricultural landscape”. “This new technical relationship (between man and nature) – stated the scientist – develops new kinds of relationships between men that gather in associations, new forms of property, new types of society, politics and religion that are all conveyed by and expressed in the variety of agricultural landscapes”.

### Territory as a rural-urban ‘continuum’

Therefore, the interaction between city and countryside develops the territory. “It is not the city that arises from the countryside: it is the countryside that develops from the city, which is barely sufficient to supply it”, wrote Maurice Aymard (1987). He added: “A new model of social organization flourishes in the city and spreads on the territory. All voluntary or involuntary emigrants try to recreate the same model wherever they have settled”. However, we must distinguish the concept of countryside or rural area (from Latin *rus*, farmland) from agriculture (from Latin *agri-cultura*, land cultivation). The interchange of the terms in the past was due to the lack of employment other than farming in the rural areas. Today, agriculture is only one of the various activities performed in



the countryside, even though it is still the driving force of agricultural economy (Barberis, 2009b). New forms of rural identity are developing in those rural areas that are getting industrialized, as well as in the cities that expand into the countryside.

During the 1970s, the rural exodus to the cities, which had started in the 1950s, was replaced by a new urban exodus. The second and third generations of those who left the countryside for better socio-economic conditions found out that, by replicating some features of traditional society outside its context of poverty, things could improve. In fact, the consequent new lifestyles that developed comprise the fundamental aspects of the urban condition, including the proximity to the sources of knowledge and culture and new kinds of houses that are respectful of people's privacy. At the same time, they don't give up the advantages of the country, like the social network of relations or the pleasure of farming a vegetable garden and of cooking a typical recipe. As a result, new oxymora like *peri-urban agriculture*, *urbanized countryside*, *rural development*, have entered the common language. In industrialized countries, the vision of the territory as a *rural-urban continuum* makes the usual distinction between city and countryside disappear. Consequently, rural and local developments seem to merge.

#### Territory as part of the environment

Following the processes of modernization, especially in the richest countries, two impressing phenomena (or at least this is how they are perceived) occur. The first one is pollution, that is to say the alteration of a balance as the result of the dynamics: consumption of resources waste production that nature cannot absorb (from Latin *digerere*, distribute, bring here and there), rather than meaning decay or infection. The second concerns the climate changes connected to the increase of temperatures, new rain and snow regimes, ice melting, and the rise of the global mean sea level. Beyond the uncertainty with regard to the effect of human activities on those changes, in addition to the difficulty to determine the human impact on global climate, public policies have been considering the alarmist theories legitimate. After all, "there is no doubt that a pessimistic attitude and the forecast of a 'pagan' Apocalypse make people popular" (Rossi, 2008). Consequently, the word *territory* acquires more meanings, until it corresponds to the part of biosphere that overlooks it. In other words, the territory becomes an essential part of the environment, a set of conditions and factors connected to one another that surrounds life, a definition that corresponds to the concept of biosphere.

## EXAMPLES OF TERRITORY MANAGEMENT

Figure 1 - Scene from the movie by Edoardo Winspeare *'In grazia di Dio'*



Figure 2 - Social farm; Casale di Martignano, Rome



Figure 3 - *Lucania landscape*



Figure 4 - *Countryside near Lecce from the trailer of VHS, by Francesco Buccarelli and Alberto Caroppo, in occasion of a joint initiative by 'Olio Officina' and the Rural project 'Abitare i paduli'*





### Territory as a kaleidoscopic identity

Finally, it is globalization that further enriches the meaning of the word *territory*, because the process itself is 'a-territorial', that is its worse feature, with its consequent vertical management. Everything seems to weaken the sense of space: quick transports, the shift from a written to an audio-visual logic, digital technologies, the lack of time which is necessary to understand the changes, the illusory but deceptive ubiquity, the non-territorial multinational companies, resulting in a negligent attitude towards the community of people (Ferrarotti, 2009). The *Genius loci*, the guardian of habits and traditions, the native god who safeguards the boundaries and the common territory of the community, has been forgotten. The multiplier processes characterizing the modern era, resulting from the interaction between globalization and technological innovations, threaten the interpersonal relationships and the community spirit, and are damaging the material and intangible assets of the community. This decline seems to be the main cause of those global problems that mankind currently suffers from. First of all, the increasing unbalance between resources and population worldwide. Together with the economic crisis, the global situation reduces the Earth ability to meet the growing food demand.

However, there is an increasing awareness that sustainable innovation is possible only if based on agriculture, from the point of view of both production and culture, by recovering its primitive role as the root of every community. Identifying and giving a new value to our own roots and recovering the memory to the very beginning of our history seem to be a possible path to ensure our survival, fertility and the opportunity of renewing our creativity. Therefore, new processes to develop the territory, from a local to a global dimension and from a past to a future perspective, have begun. As a result, multifaceted identities are in constant evolution together with their food symbols. Equal and kaleidoscopic identities, made of memory and creativity, do not reject the outsider. Instead, they see the other as a resource rather than a threat, as a mirror rather than a black hole, which is fundamental and positive. Furthermore, they can recover the sense of brotherhood of rural societies, the interpersonal dialogue that foreruns the monologue, the value of hospitality that precedes any border.

Considering the different meanings of the word, 'territory' is therefore the 'place' (the new combination of space, time and physical dimension) where agriculture interacts with the environment, other economic activities, urban processes and socio-cultural changes.

*The interactions between agriculture and the environment*

There is a strong connection between agriculture and environment. A relationship in which agriculture interacts in a positive way: it safeguards the hydrogeological balance of the environment, creates and protects the landscapes, collects carbon dioxide in the trees and grazing land. However, it brings also some negative effects: soil erosion, greenhouse gas emissions, waste of irrigation water, impoverishment of organic matter in soil through a massive use of mineral fertilizers and phytodrugs. *The Green Revolution* – the extraordinary agricultural evolution occurring in the second half of the XX century, especially in the developing countries – consisted in an intensive farming staple crops (corn, rice, wheat, etc.) thanks to the use of new brought on by the arrival of genetically modified crops.

Besides considerably reducing famine and malnutrition worldwide, it also slowed the growth of the agricultural area. As a result, it contributed to protect forests and biodiversity. On the contrary, in Latin America, Western Africa and South-Eastern Asia, which lands did not benefit from the *Green Revolution*, agricultural areas increased at the expense of forests, woods and grazing lands. Often, it brought the delicate initial balance of those ecosystems even to desertification.

Agricultural ecosystems are resilient, that is to say they can recover their initial balance when modified by various disturbances. Special agricultural techniques have been used in order to improve this capacity.

However, those techniques will not preserve agricultural ecosystems from their changeable balances. Therefore, farmers will have to keep up with those changes, in order not to be overcome by their effects. The final goal is not to protect ecosystems from failure, but to enable them to respond to failures. The interaction between agriculture and environment is particularly complex when coping with the maintenance of genetic biodiversity. The collection, defense and sustainable use of phyto-genetic resources are essential factors to face climate changes and food insecurity. Agricultural biodiversity encourages crop and, consequently, diet diversification. Just to give an example, the percentage of proteins in rice can vary from 10 to 14%, depending on the crop variety. On the other hand, the loss of biodiversity leads to the extinction or the marginalization of animal and plant species and alters the functions of ecosystems.

Moreover, it has a considerable economic impact, which corresponds to a loss of biodiversity equal to 50 billion euros per year, that is to say 545 billion euros between 2000 and 2010, approximately 1% of the global GDP (De Castro, 2010).

FAO states that only 30 out of 7 million of cultivated species provide

90% of the food energetic requirement of the global population, half of which is supplied by wheat, rice and corn alone. Furthermore, only 30 out of 15 million of birds and mammals are used to produce food, while only 14 provide 90% of the world production of food from livestock animals. Lately, an erosion of genetic diversification has been occurring among plants and animals that are used to produce food. This worrying situation, due to intensive monoculture farming and an excessive use of chemical inputs, could affect the selection of such plant features like resistance to cold, high temperatures, diseases or pests, and lead to a simplification of the ecosystems, which would put production at risk in the long term.

Another factor that interferes with the relationship between agriculture and environment is the erosion of water resources. In the last 20 years, water consumption has grown nearly ten times, that is to say twice as fast as the population. According to recent surveys, in 2035 one out of three people will be affected by water scarcity. Water is not distributed on Earth according to the different environmental exigencies. 15% of the global freshwater is concentrated in the Amazon Forest, where only 1% of the world population lives. On the other hand in China, where 20% of the world population lives, only 7% of freshwater is available. 70% of freshwater usage is due to agriculture. It is estimated that freshwater demand will increase of 30-50% by 2050.

The main part of water resources corresponds to seawater, which covers 71% of the planet surface. Today, sea life is increasingly depleting because of fishing, partly illegal, and pollution. Moreover, water is sought after for different aims. In particular, the increase of urban and industrial use of water has made the resource availability even more challenging. For instance, the development of metropolitan areas in emerging countries is depriving the farmland of irrigation water. Finally, the inaccurate use of irrigation water in dry lands generates marshlands, soil salinization, increasing water-related diseases and reduction of biodiversity. All together, these effects lead to a reduction of food supply.

The most global topic of interaction between agriculture and environment is climate change. Its impact on agriculture is actually difficult to estimate and still variable, being insignificant in some areas but devastating elsewhere. Its measurement is very difficult, depending on complex and long-term operations. Even though it is generally agreed that the topic of climate change is significant, the evaluation of its spatial and temporal impact remains heterogeneous. One of the most frightening effects is desertification, which has already affected 100 countries where about 2 billion people live in arid and semi-arid lands in the South of the world.

Agriculture is not only subject to the effects of climate change. In fact, it is partially guilty.

According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC),

agriculture contributes to the emissions of greenhouse gas (over 13.5%) more than other sectors, like transports (13%).

*The interactions between agriculture and other economic activities*

At the end of the 1960s, in industrialized countries, agriculture had already finalized its modernization with two surprising outcomes: the decrease of the difference in production among primary sector, industry and services, and the levelling of social and economic behaviours. When Italy experienced the crisis of the production system, that Antonio Gramsci (1975) called 'Fordism', this resulted in a significant process of socio-spatial restoration at the beginning of the 1970s. In other words, industry was relocated in rural areas, thus starting new forms of interactions between different sectors. Consequently, the development of socio-economic relations between companies and the territory was connected to the industrial evolution (Saraceno, 1993). The traditional opposition between agriculture and industry has been replaced by a more complex panorama, which includes developing agricultural areas, new agricultural settlements and industrialized areas (Becattini, 1989). New agricultural systems are being applied, in order to meet the different needs of the community, to ensure the quality of production, safeguard the environment and provide cultural, social and recreational services (Basile - Cecchi, 2001).

The industrial districts of contemporary Italy have been developing in those areas where the local society is based on the culture, the know-how and the values of past generations that lived in sharecropping farms and developed various forms of collaboration within the different production units. The persistence of agricultural and working-class families, together with their behavioural characteristics, contributes to the industrialization of different entities. The process, which had already affected the areas of Alto Milanese, Brianza and Comasco, has spread in Veneto, Tuscany and Marche, where the agricultural society promotes agriculture and develops small manufacturing activities, while preserving its peculiar aspects. The plural activity of both individuals and families and the part-time work have evolved from necessary to usual activities and represent currently the core of Italian economy. "Italian workmen groups are well established in the agricultural society. Furthermore, their identification in the local and family environment creates a balance that avoids those social crises that, in different historical and social contexts, led to the eradication and alienation of the working class" (Ferrarotti - Crespi, 1994). At the same time, the agricultural sector strengthens its connections with the processing industry. Moreover, it fights against the crisis

of mass consumption by offering a wide range of quality niche products and services, as well as adopting new forms of communication (Brunori et al., 2003). By doing so, it restores a direct relationship with the consumer market and the citizens, and establishes new connections at both local and global levels.

Developing countries as well focus their current industrial development strategies on small and medium enterprises. Consequently, they have fostered flexible manufacturing systems that apply the same human and technological resources in different production lines. Besides, they are highly informal, that is to say they are ruled by local institutions. As it happens to agricultural production, these systems are controlled by small individual or family-run businesses located in metropolitan as well as rural areas, where they can develop by employing agricultural resources.

In some Indian contexts, there is a dual connection between this form of industrialization and agriculture. It can be based on production (e.g. when an industrial district specializes in agro-industrial productions that employ – partially, at least – agricultural products of the same area; alternatively, it can be a socio-economic relationship, which develops when the enterprise system is based on the social structure of the local agriculture and employs its resources (work and assets in particular). In both cases, the industrial activity of the *cluster* is a continuum of the previous manufacturing activity, and it appears like an evolution of protoindustry, which developed in the countryside before the advent of capitalism (Basile, 2002). It would be wrong not to support such processes and to force, in these countries, the adoption of those development policies that had, in the past, a considerable environmental and social impact on the industrialized hemisphere (Basile - Cecchi, 2006).

It is undeniable that the development of agriculture – that is to say its growth and structural transformation – can increase incomes and food production, as well as the availability of resources to combat famine and rural poverty. However, policies that fight against poverty and starvation must see the growth of incomes as an instrument rather than a goal. Moreover, hunger and poverty shall not be considered as the consequence of the lack of resources and food. Instead, they are due to the inability of some social groups or individual subjects to manage both resources and food (Sen, 1999). If these statements are true, as the majority of researchers think, we must agree that poverty and starvation cannot be faced by producing more food and greater income only. We must create and support more rights in favour of the less privileged individual subjects and social groups: the acknowledgment of those rights depends not only on the development of agriculture, but especially on other factors (e.g. institutions).



*The interactions between agriculture and urban dynamics*

In 1950 less than one third of the world population was urban. Nowadays, after a little more than half century, half of the population lives in urban areas. According to the United Nations, in 2030 the urbanization rate will be more than 60%. The country with the highest number of people living in towns is Asia. In fact, it is estimated that the urban population of Asia was about 1.5 billion of inhabitants in 2003, twice as many as in America, which holds the second place. In the next twenty years, the urban development will take place particularly in the developing countries. Africa would have the fastest rate of growth: according to the United Nations, the average annual growth rate of the country will be 3.1% between 2000 and 2030. So far, the constant growth of the urban population has been considered a consequence of economic development. However, it could also be determined by the worsening of countryside conditions, having nothing to do with the development mechanism (Véron, 2006). Globally, the urban question has become a social issue with considerable effects on the development of the new rurality.

In Italy, most cities, especially the bigger ones, have become the destination of a further immigration wave, from the more marginal areas of the country and the southern part of the world. On one hand, people escape from poverty; on the other hand, young generations leave suburban areas due to the lack of job opportunities and the decline of the service network. As a result, thousands of small villages located in the inner parts of the Apennines risk to disappear. This depopulation process implies the neglect of extended farmlands. 2.7 million hectares out of 30, which correspond to the whole surface of the Italian peninsula, make up the urban area. However, 6 millions of grazing lands have turned into forests in the last few years, due to the abandonment of production activities (Barberis, 2009a). These areas are located along the Apennines range.

The newcomers, who left the inner rural areas, do not settle in the cities. Together with foreign immigrated people, they rather live in those wide hybrid areas where – from the 1970s already – urban features (e.g. high population rate and the predominance of buildings with respect to *open space* areas) and rural aspects, including agricultural operations and other activities connected to the cultural and landscape heritage, coexist. These territories have seen the foundation of groups of ‘villas’ owned by wealthy families as well as houses belonging to people who escaped from the craziness of town and hoped to give to their lives a meaning through some new agricultural activities. More recently, low-cost houses destined to the new poor and to people arriving from the inner areas have also spread (Di Mario - Pascale, 2009).

Currently, these are the social classes involved in the so called by Ge-

rard Bauer and Jean-Michel Roux (1976) ‘rurbanization’, a rough but straightforward neologism that melts *rus* (farmland) with *urbs* (city). The term means that, in the contemporary city, the suburb is not marginal and the centre cannot be decentralized, thus causing consequently the suffocation, decline and death of the area. We should recover the typical Mediterranean art of building, based on the fact that nature is not an enemy, but a collaborator. Carlo Cattaneo (1975) wrote that “the German language names the art of building and the art of farming with the same word; the term agriculture (*Ackerbau*) sounds like building rather than farming; the colonist is a builder (*Bauer*). When the unaware Germanic tribes got to know the Roman bridges, roads and walls and saw how they could easily grow vineyards on the untouched banks of the Rhine and of the Mosella, they collected all those works under the same term. Yes, a people must build its croplands as well as its cities”. Contemporary cities should be reassessed by considering the urban areas as ecosystems and epistemic communities that define shared concepts of nutrition, health, culture, safety, treatment of green areas, and ‘build-farm’ supply chains, ways of inhabiting and forms of sustainable transports.

After the economic crisis of 2008, the Italian metropolitan suburbs are about to explode. This is due mainly to two factors: the disappearance of social safety nets, which were held in place by traditional welfare models; and the increase of unemployment. In Rome, the children and grandchildren of the generation who lived make-shift peripheral housing or in small hamlets in the 1950s and 1960s and left the Italian central southern countryside, are now showing distinct signs of adaptation to the crisis. These social groups have seen their income reduce to the brink of bringing them below the poverty line. Their state of future uncertainty has fostered an aversion towards the weakest members of society, perceived as ‘the other’, not because of any innate prejudice but because of a deep seated fear of falling to the same level. Consequently, there have been attacks on blacks, North African or Bengalese people which, on some level, are carried out in order to put a barrier between this precarious indigenous social group and the perceived ‘other’. This aversion against the weak can also be explained in terms of expression of the frustration felt by the new poor in their social immobility. An outlet for this frustration is, perversely, to attack those who are in a worse condition, who become their scapegoat. Such cases represent a hatred for higher classes that is aimed at lower social classes. It is a distorted way of establishing a sense of dignity (Ferrarotti - Macioti, 2009). These feelings foster the populist movements for the violence against immigrants as well as the protest against institutions, which are considered liable for the wave of foreigners in the multiethnic districts of the city. The gap between citizens and institutions has been filled by a new breed of orga-

nized crime associations, which encompass criminal gangs, parts of public administration, the tertiary sector and xenophobic movements, that manage and control the social services offered to the poor.

The other side of the coin shows a growing attention to *social farms* and *urban horticulture* in the countryside, where agricultural activities and services for people merge and produce an economic value as well as developing new relationships within the community and the urban area. Moreover, *farmer's markets* are also increasing. A farmer's market is an ethical purchasing group that provides a community food service with local products. These initiatives have also created unprecedented synergy among agricultural, tourism and cultural sectors within protected areas. Starting from different requests and experiences, these forms of 'urban' agriculture aim to promote models of productive welfare and to be the joint and welding of those territories where convergences and intersections are more frequent. Despite the efforts of some local authorities, it is still impossible to plan and manage the 'cityterritory' by means of the existing tools only. It is essential to design projects capable of mobilizing local communities by considering them as a whole not disparate groups. In order to revitalize community territories and allow them to fully exploit the opportunities offered by globalization, we should help them to better understand their distinct identity. In doing so, cultural and economic exchanges with other territorial communities on a global scale would be an enriching experience and would develop a collaborative relationship. Information and communication technologies may enhance the local networks ability to build their own image in a creative way and to rediscover the *Genius loci* as a tool to gain self-awareness and open-mindedness.

### *The interactions between agriculture and socio-cultural changes*

With a delay of forty years from the advent of *rurbanization*, the most famous Italian Research centre in the socio-economic field, the Censis Foundation, has finally started analyzing the changes in Italian agriculture over the years. Recently, it carried out various researches on the primary sector, which reveal the new face of Italian countryside. As often happens when the outcomes of social research and communication strategies support one another, the different interpretations of data risk losing the perception of reality and instead turn into myths, metaphors, new paradigms or stereotypes. The survey *Un futuro per l'Italia: perché ripartire dall'agricoltura* (*A future for Italy: why we need to return to Agriculture*), carried out by Censis on behalf of the Italian Confederation of Farmers and presented in 2014, shows that one out of two Italians grows

a vegetable garden, a percentage that is even higher among young people (51.2%). Talking about gardening in general, the percentage rises to 70%. According to the interviews carried out by Censis, Italian people have become, rather suddenly, very proud of their agro-food quality products: 27.2% deems the 'made in Italy' food products as the most important component of national patrimony after Italy's artistic and cultural heritage. 82% considers agriculture the driving force of the country's growth. Moreover, 85% of parents support the desire of their children or grandchildren to work in the sector of agriculture, with only 15% of people opposing this decision. According to Censis, the mentioned interest towards agriculture is due to the effects of the great economic crisis. In fact, people have become disillusioned towards the ability of industrial technology and the advanced tertiary sector to support the development. On the other hand, the crisis has encouraged the countryside to renovate itself and to act as a protagonist, as exemplified by social agriculture.

This interpretation does not translate the complex meaning of *rurban*, which developed – as previously mentioned – in the 1970s, and that the National Institute of Rural Sociology (INSOR) caught through the analysis of census data, both general and agricultural, and by collecting the information regarding rural villages and urban centres separately (Merlo - Zaccherini, 1992). The interest showed by citizens towards agriculture must not be considered as the second-best of a sector that seems to offer more job opportunities, especially for young people. Instead, it is the effect of a long process of socio-economic and cultural renovation of the Italian farmlands, which are now an essential part of the economy and the society of the country. The image of agriculture as the 'replacement' or the 'emergency kit' of a capitalism that has become unable to enhance development and offer employment – in other words, a sector that employs people who have not found better work conditions and accept the low salary and the high company risk related to agriculture – does not support the social innovation that has occurred. On the contrary, it seems more the effort to generate an even worse stereotype of agriculture. This prejudice is connected to the assumption of some *opinion leaders*, who established an area of small and very small

companies to be kept separated from the economy and society of the country, to be 'safeguarded' from any cultural contamination of other companies or sectors, opposed to science and scientific research and protected with specific politics; a safe haven that shelters from the problems of contemporary era. If this assumption spreads, we would experience a new attempt to submit the rural areas culturally, of those groups that support their individual and capitalistic interests, rather than the general ones. Instead, the evolution in the reputation of Italian agricul-

ture must be explained differently: after a long process of socio-economic and cultural discrepancy, the city and the farmland appear as a *continuum*. At the same time, the rural aspects of urban society develop innovative models for all the communities and cease to be a world aside, both in the real world and in the collective imagination, as well as in the development of new identities. More specifically, the idea that social innovation, which has been developing in the last 30-35 years in the rural areas, may represent a therapeutic tool for civilization is increasing within the public opinion. The new rurality expresses itself through the renovation of a relational and territorial agriculture and the growth of a generation of new farmers, whose purpose is to produce food in order to get public goods than can supply collective needs (van der Ploeg, 2008). In order to restore the order of priorities that had been forgotten with the advent of agricultural modernization, the means become the goals: man, his needs and higher ambitions, as well as the public, relational and environmental goods are the goals of economic activity, whereas the production process, the product and its exchangeability are only the means. This is the context where, at the end of the 1970s already, the innovative ventures within social agriculture took place. The phenomenon of *rurbanization* contributed to the creation of a new kind of consumer, who wants to take part to the production of the agricultural product, rather than remaining a passive spectator in the marketing theatre. In other words, the new consumer wants to be a co-protagonist who interacts with the producer. He does not simply collect information about the various products, looking at the label and buying the goods in any shop. He wants to participate actively to the relationship of exchange and be involved in a purchasing group or food community, which performed the first pioneering experiences between the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. Digital technologies allow him to shorten the distance of communication within cultural and economic exchanges and interpersonal relationships, and give him a new perspective towards globalization. In order to develop any dynamic relationship we do not necessarily have to be autocrats and nationalists, consuming homemade products, or food produced by the neighbor next door. On the contrary, we should develop the ability – highly evolved in Greek civilization first and then in Roman one – to satisfy the pleasure of eating products from all over the world, to know their cultures and to merge the various food cultures. The import and export of food products foster the integration of people, because food exchange has always encouraged dialogue and hospitality towards the foreigner. Therefore, it was not the onset of the international crisis in 2008 that caused the new rurality. The crisis showed the weakness of a development model dating back to few decades ago. Consequently to the collapse of the

ruling structure of the international financial system, the balance between capitalism and democracy failed. However, this latent process of crisis determined a further deterioration of the environment, the increase of an unbalance in the distribution of resources and power connected to globalization, and the damage of relational goods that had already occurred with the rise of consumption society. The good performance of the market and of the institutions is based upon some essential resources including faithfulness, collaboration, responsibility, cohesion and solidarity. In other words, these resources constitute the social capital, which develops from a non-selfish impulse. Financial economy of post Fordism increased the depersonalization of business relationships, degrading the concept of person (Becchetti - Bruni - Zamagni, 2010). The idea that men and women are moved only by self-interest instead of the good relationship with people and the ethic sense of responsibility towards one another has spread further. This opinion clearly denies that human beings look for consideration, social approval and relationships first, before trying to achieve their interest and profit. There is a predominant common belief that people's wealth is only material, while spirituality can be put aside. Moreover, financial speculation on food is considered fundamental for trading, even if it increases food insecurity at the expense of part of the world population. In this sense, the big crisis is very useful, because it destroys the mentioned opinions by showing their fallacy. As a result, relational goods and social capital are gaining importance for the development processes. These are the values on which the new rurality has based the role of agriculture as the generator of communities. And this is exactly the issue where the old socio-cultural and economic oppositions, which were considered necessary and irremovable, and the prejudices about the countryside as an area reluctant to innovation, have definitely collapsed.

Therefore, agriculture is not fallback option or temporary solution to a declining capitalism as it was considered in Roosevelt's America after the big crisis of 1929, by using the key expression *Back to the land*. However, those programs to clear land for agriculture were soon replaced by new processes of industrialization and urbanization. After the 'big transformation' of the period between the 1950s and the 1960s, agriculture is now at the end of a long process of socio-economic evolution, from a mainly rural to a mainly industrial Italy. The new Italian territories, neither rural nor urban, experience the growth of new local relationships, civil economies, agricultural services and networks of mutual aid, grown spontaneously in that *humus* of thousand-year old rural traditions and cultures that formed the system of *welfare ante litteram* (Pascale, 2013). The attention given by the public opinion to agriculture should take into account a long-term period, in order to fully understand its

causes and its features. It should also be considered as a chance to re-think development strategies. In other words, it should recover the inspiring idea of all the valuable projects on the territory, including the integral land restoration and the agrarian reform, from Carlo Cattaneo to Francesco Saverio Nitti, from Arrigo Serpieri to Manlio Rossi-Doria and Giuseppe Medici. This driving force had been forgotten in favor of any feasible development. However, it should be the core of all projects with an international orientation, in order to tackle the serious global problems, namely food insecurity, energy crisis and environmental instability.

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KEYWORDS: territory; communities; innovation.

## ABSTRACT

Considering the different meanings of the word, territory is the 'place' (the new combination of space, time and physical dimension) where agriculture interacts with the environment, the other economic activities, the urban processes and the socio-cultural changes. After a long process of socio-economic and cultural discrepancy, the city and the farmland appear as a *continuum*. At the same time, the rural aspects of urban society develop innovative models for all the communities and cease to be a world aside, both in the real world and in the collective imagination, as well as in the development of new identities. As a result, relational goods and social capital are gaining importance for the development processes. These are the values on which the new rurality has based the role of agriculture as the generator of communities. And this is exactly the issue where the old socio-cultural and economic oppositions, which were considered necessary and irremovable, and the prejudices about the countryside as an area reluctant to innovation, have definitely collapsed. The new Italian territories, neither rural nor urban, experience the growth of new local relationships, civil economies, agricultural services and networks of mutual aid, grown spontaneously in that *humus* of thousand-years old rural traditions and cultures that formed the system of welfare *ante litteram*.

## RIASSUNTO

Prendendo in considerazione contestualmente i suoi diversi significati, il territorio è il 'luogo' (cioè la nuova combinazione di spazio, tempo e dimensione fisica) dove l'agricoltura interagisce con l'ambiente, le altre attività economiche, le dinamiche urbane e i cambiamenti sociali e culturali. Dopo un lungo processo di progressiva sovrapposizione socio-economica e culturale, città e campagne si presentano senza più discontinuità rilevanti. E, nel contempo, le componenti rurali della società civile esprimono modelli innovativi per l'insieme delle comunità senza più rappresentare un mondo a parte non solo nella realtà, ma anche nell'immaginario collettivo e nella costruzione di nuove identità. Tornano così a essere ritenuti importanti i beni relazionali e il capitale sociale nei processi di sviluppo, cioè quei valori su cui la nuova ruralità ha inteso rifondare la funzione dell'agricoltura come generatrice di comunità. Ed è precisamente a questo punto che le antiche separatezze socio-culturali ed economiche, considerate fino a poco tempo fa irriducibili e necessarie, e i vari pregiudizi, che dipingevano le campagne come entità restie all'innovazione, appaiono ormai definitivamente crollati. Nel nuovo volto dei territori italiani non più rurali e non più urbani emergono in forme nuove legami comunitari, economie civili, agricolture di servizi, reti di mutuo aiuto e di reciprocità sorte spontaneamente nell'*humus* di tradizioni e culture rurali millenarie, le cui forme concrete costituivano sistemi di *welfare ante litteram*.

