

# Chapter 1

## Agriculture and New Forms of Restoration of the Territory

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### ABSTRACT

*For some years now, the agricultural landscape has returned to the centre of geographical studies in general, and geo-economic studies in particular, as an expression of the territory's identity and as a preponderant element for the recovery of the territory itself. The case study analysed in this chapter is one of those cases of an ancient agricultural and territorial garrison abandoned for decades and which, today, has become an example of a perfectly functioning agritourism structure. The surrounding agricultural landscape, from a manifestation of territorial vocation abandoned, has been transformed back into a place of interest also for tourists. The vineyard-garden has been restored to a new function; from a simple place of production to a landscape-background for a new multifunctional and productive agriculture.*

### THE SCENARIO

In recent decades, the economic agricultural scenario has undergone profound changes. Worldwide commercial contacts between the different States have become increasingly frequent. They have affected a growing number of workers, involved in a dynamic and changeable economic frame that has influenced both domestic markets and international trade. Globalization has changed the global economic balance, transforming productive structures and competitive positions among the various workers and stimulating a greater seasonal adjustment and homologation of food consumption. Simultaneously, new development models raise culture awareness of the territory as a “system of local development systems because within it there is the condensation of economic activities connected to a society and culturally rooted in it” (Becattini, 2009), where supply and demand meet on a local scale and where a community of values takes shape, recognizing both producers and consumers. Among the changes that have affected Italian agriculture over the last two decades, a growing interest is devoted to productive and organiza-

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tional innovations carried out by agricultural companies, as well as to the landscape as a product and component of the agricultural project. This involved the strong involvement of the settled communities; the integration between spatial planning and rural development policies, a transformed social landscape demand and more generally the multi-functionality of agriculture. In Europe, there are some examples that demonstrate the growing interest for new forms of agricultural landscape. They confirm the transition from the specialization of rural space as an exclusively agricultural space to its enhancement due to its intangible features (the Departmental Park of Sausset Seine- Saint-Denis in the northeast of Paris and the ornamental vineyards in Barcelona are an example). Therefore, agriculture is enhanced by rural functions intended to link with the environment, the territory and local communities. The chapter will highlight the rediscovered link between rural space and the community of reference; the possible combination of economic value production of the farm and the identity value. Through the case study effected (in Apulia, Italy) it may be possible to understand if the combination of multi-functionality of agriculture and new forms of land recovery is feasible. The study namely the company “Amastuola” is at the center of a territory with a strong industrial vocation including the former Ilva steel plant (founded in 1957) now Arcelor Mittal in Taranto. The coexistence of the entire territory and Ilva, Europe’s largest steel and iron giant, was immediately marked by a dualism between environmental protection and safeguarding jobs. A dualism that over time has produced inquiries, strikes, requisition and has been put under external administration and which, at the same time, the steel plant has generated a strong economic dependence on the whole territory. The Taranto plant occupies 15,450,000 square meters. In 1981, when it was still called Italsider and was state-owned, it employed 43,000 people of which direct and indirect employees (in 1970 the so-called “IV Steel Center” of Taranto produced 41% of Italsider’s total steel, a percentage that in 1980 had even risen to 79%). The large steel industry was sold in 1995 to the Riva Group, a historic private company with an intense top-down structure, which despite profound company changes, maintained direct employment at the same levels and after ten years, in 2005, also guaranteed supplier contracts with 188 Apulian companies for a turnover of 310 million euros (Pirro, 2009). From 2013 to 2018, Ilva has been put under external administration for serious environmental and administrative problems. The property has belonged to the Indian steel industrial group Arcelor Mittal for approximately a year.

“The rhetoric development ended, the myth of the industrial society was consumed. However, what is left? The current situation is not an “after industrialization”, but a coexistence with its remains and its legacies. The history of Taranto tells us about capitalism, modernization, social memory, collective identity, human rights and the environment. A city that has “undergone” development since the end of the 19th century with the establishment of the Arsenale and the navy. Following, the construction of the Italsider steel plant, today called Ilva in the early sixties. In both cases it was a form of industrial and hetero-directed colonialism with the approval of economic groups and the selected few local politicians. Taranto represents the sinking of a twentieth-century development model that has sacrificed not only landscapes but human lives for the never-fulfilled dream of economic, cultural and social growth “(Vignola, 2017, p. 12).

In almost sixty years, the agricultural vocation of the Taranto province has practically been canceled towards the industrial mono-production. Awareness of serious environmental damage caused by the iron and steel plant has generated, in the last ten years, a profound reflection on the need to undertake new economic development strategies. The key concept for these strategies must and have to be the diversification of production and among these, certainly agriculture with its rediscovered multi-functionality.

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