

# RELEVANT ELEMENTS FOR THE ELABORATION OF REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT VISION (RDV) IN ZADAR AND ŠIBENIK-KNIN: PROPOSAL OF METHODOLOGY FOR INTEGRATED TERRITORIAL PLANNING

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## INTRODUCTION

This paper aims at providing theoretical reference and methodological guidance for a socio-economic and territorial analysis to be carried out at local level, in the Counties of Zadar and Šibenik-Knin, as well as for the drawing up, as a result of the analysis, of a strategic framework for a bottom-up planning experiment within the World Bank Project "Framework for a Regional Development Vision".

The evolutionary and iterative approach to local systems planning adopted in this paper places special emphasis on the changes brought about in the territorial systems by intertwining socio-economic relations and by the creation of a system of rules and regulations deriving from historical experience and the context peculiar to the territory itself. The focus lays on the specific conditions and opportunities characterizing local peripheral systems (i.e. those systems away from urban agglomerations) and rural areas with comparatively low population density, to which the two Counties can be said to belong according to the classification of rural areas drawn up by the OECD and adopted by the EU.

The paper's aim is operational, in that it seeks to provide a methodology and offer a series of practical suggestions, both of which are necessary in the first place to rationalize the considerations to be made collectively in the course of thematic workshops envisaged by the work schedule.

Secondly, the methodology and suggestions provided here aim at providing a technical solution for the drafting of the "Framework for a Regional Development Vision" for both Counties, which is the final objective of the work project. The methodology derives from literature especially prepared by the European Union and can be applied to both negotiated programming within structural objectives, as well as to territorial development programs established within Community Initiative Programs, the LEADER Programme in particular.

An experiment of the application of the proposed methodology to a concrete case has recently been carried out in Italy in the area of the Conero National Park in the province of Ancona, with the recent adoption of the Multiannual Social and Economic Plan for the Park. This paper will refer to the ample documentation available on the Web ("*Quaderni del Parco*") on this subject, because there are significant similarities between the two Counties and this area in terms of importance of the coastal area, predominance of tourism and high-quality natural resources.

## THE TERRITORY AND INTEGRATED PLANNING

### Territorial approach to socio-economic development

The allocation and spatial distribution of natural resources are two key elements to be borne in mind when launching a process of socio-economic development in a relatively small territory. The experience in territorial planning acquired by many industrialized countries during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century showed the limits of those economic development policies re-applying "successful" evolutionary models, which, however, in the medium or long term led to poor or no results<sup>2</sup>.

This experience gave rise to what is known as "new planning", which entailed a different approach to socio-economic development, one based on the territory and the players involved.

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<sup>2</sup> Consider the extraordinary achievements in the Italian Mezzogiorno and, more recently, in the industrial area of central England.

European experience in structural intervention has become a point of reference for the implementation of territorial policies. The principle of *subsidiarity* and the deriving principles of *partnership*, *additionality*, *concertation* and *planning* are key elements characterizing any state intervention<sup>3</sup>. The European experience is integrated by approaches devised by single Member States, which have led to new planning methods and innovative objective-sharing processes.

The main point is the understanding of the Plan as a collective participation process through which a variety of subjects gain access to a coherent system of projects and make a reciprocal commitment to implement them (negotiated programming). This is an implicit recognition of the decisive importance of social cohesion as the basis for state intervention and overall development.

In other words, the plan is to be considered as an instrument to increase *relational capital* in a given territory. This requires a two-level approach:

- the first level is *internal to the given territory* and refers to “relations” between stakeholders having interests at local level, be they individuals or organisations of individuals, or public or private, formal or informal institutions. In this case, the analyses and proposals of the Socio-Economic and Territorial Plan, rather than prescribing goals and methods (as in traditional planning), are to be considered as starting points for considerations and dialogue on which to draw when designing more and more detailed projects as local-level relational capital continues to grow. Here the role of planners is that of real development agents (Figure 1), with the following tasks: 1) conflict mediation and resolution 2) animation and specialist advising 3) consensus-building.
- the second level concerns the *relations of the territory with the outside world*. The Plan, inasmuch as it is an instrument of relational capital valorisation, can also be viewed as a means of designing and promoting the area's image, an organic instrument of territorial marketing aiming at enhancing the presentation and the diversification of the area's special features within its development strategy. The Plan is furthermore a means of fund-raising, of attracting and collecting funds from higher-level public institutions (e.g. the State, international institutions) and of attracting foreign funds. The plan furthermore offers an array of project initiatives within an organic context aiming at enhancing the image of efficiency and reliability of the territory in the eyes of all potential external investors, serving also as a pilot project.

This new approach is based on three key principles: concentration–integration, decentralisation–partnership and evaluation–monitoring.

### **Concentration – integration**

The Plan must focus on a few objectives; the deriving projects should reflect only a few clearly outlined priorities. Consequently, even within a given territory, action must be concentrated. The territory is not homogeneous. Therefore, the priorities envisaged should be translated into explicit choices. The Plan should therefore support the most promising local initiatives and activities, giving preference to those actions and public works which are likely to have the most significant impact on local identity, and which, by integration with other actions, can produce the best results in the territory. Pilot projects to be given precedence are to be chosen according to their demonstrative features and high level of replicability.

### **Decentralisation – partnership**

The Plan should be based on the knowledge of local needs and resources and promote partnership in both its aspects: the vertical aspect, between institutions at different hierarchic levels (State, Counties, Municipalities) and the horizontal aspect, between local (formal and informal) institutions, the civil society and collective bodies, and individual citizens. This principle should also apply to the selection of objects, their implementation and evaluation. In this respect, it should be emphasised that community regulation and practice attach considerable importance to integration between heterogeneous subjects. In other words, the quality of aggregation is measured by the diversity of the partners according to provenance (e.g. the public sector, the private sector and social organisations), field of activity (e.g. agriculture, industry, banking, tourism). Diversity can also be measured by the various contributions to and different roles within the partnership.

### **Evaluation – monitoring**

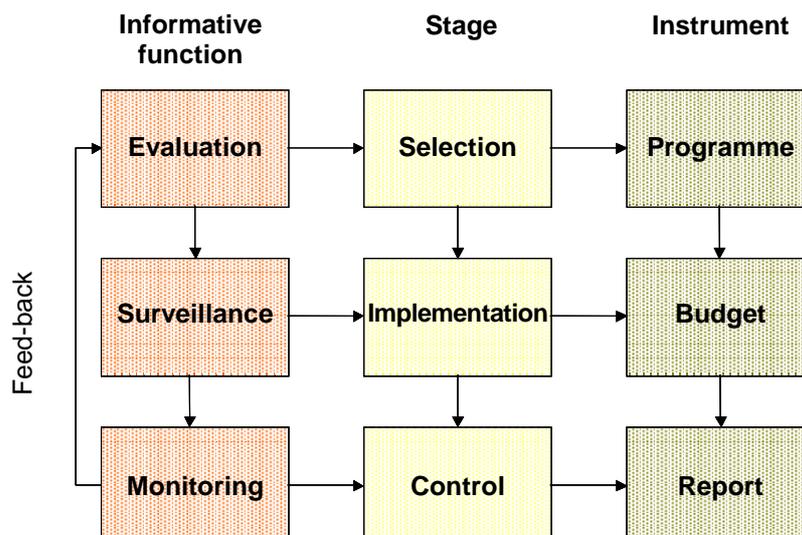
Evaluation must be carried out in each stage of the process of implementation, that is *ex-ante*, when actions are decided upon; *in itinere*, when actions are carried out, and *ex-post*, when actions are assessed in the light of the experience acquired and with the objective of repeating, modifying or expunging them from future planning (Figure 1).

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<sup>3</sup> Luciano Monti (1996), *I fondi strutturali per la coesione europea*, Edizioni SEAM, Roma.

Stefano Vaccari (1999), *Politica comunitaria strutturale e programmazione nazionale*, Edizioni SEAM, Roma.

Figure 1: Components of planning system



This principle is the consequence of a dynamic approach, *learning by doing*, in which the various stages of the planning process are systematically accompanied by evaluation and correction, the need for which may arise from the continuous and systematic monitoring, in each stage of the process, of the relevance of objectives to the area's needs and of the changes in the external scenario, as well as of the results of the actions.

The Plan should also envisage the creation of an appropriate data bank to be systematically updated taking into account system variations and gathered experience. This means devising a series of indicators and procedures that will be able to provide evaluation parameters for the programme's content and for the institutional development brought about by the Plan. In this respect, it should be emphasised that public initiative cannot be assessed only by expenses incurred, taking into account only the financial aspect; what is called for are physical measurements correctly gathered and appropriately examined. The setting up a monitoring centre is therefore of great importance for the success of the Plan, the role of which is also to improve those instruments and institutions necessary to enhance territorial planning capacities.

The aforementioned principles define the scope for the action of the territorial institution responsible for defining and formally approving the Plan, both within the institution itself, as in relation to other institutions relevant for the successful implementation of the Plan. The institution should concentrate its own resources on integrated projects to be carried out in a limited portion of the territory. The institution should require from other relevant entities the same coherence applied to its own internal decisions. From this point of view, the areas directly or indirectly damaged by the conflict and the subsequent institutional modifications should be granted priority on the basis of the same principles when applying for international funding. In other words, these areas could be included in pilot projects aiming at revitalising the process of territorial development by including it in an international context.

The general purpose of this project is seeking ways of improving territorial competitiveness, a crucial element for evolution in a "global" context and, with reference to neighbouring territories on both sides of the Adriatic, finding the necessary synergies. Territorial competitiveness not only entails the ability to compete on national and international markets, but also involves features which go beyond the merely economic and touch upon social, ecological and cultural aspects.

Improving territorial competitiveness is an evolutionary process which presupposes:

- Seeking global coherence, that is, respect for local distinctive features;
- Involvement of local players and institutions (stakeholders);
- Integration and coordination of activities bearing in mind the principle of sustainable growth;
- Cooperation with other territories with the aim of taking advantage of opportunities and other synergies, essential also for the selection of the appropriate strategic approach to these areas.

In this context, an examination of the given territory and its boundaries is also called for; in other words, the analysis should consider the integrated system (broader area) in which the given territory is situated and later focus on its internal resources. In this respect, the local government body as an analysis unit may well be discarded in favour of new cross-cutting collective bodies based on historical, cultural and geographical considerations. Thus the problem arises of which public bodies are best suited to coordinate action and

make decisions. This also entails the issue of their coordination and of the integration of their activity at various hierarchic (vertical) and functional (horizontal) levels.

Cultural identity is a concept that, in the areas under consideration, has sometimes been a divisive issue rather than a development catalyst. However, the experience acquired by the LEADER programme has amply shown that cultural identity can serve as a catalyst on which to base local development processes. In any case, the cultural identity of a territory can be "multifaceted", taking into account all the various social groups and the interplay of public and private interest existing in the area.

With reference to the latter aspect, interpreting the system of relations among players interested in the area's development is crucial, as is promoting dialogue which will enable them to express the reasons of conflicts and identify shared objectives. The identification the relevant stakeholders for a given territory, their objectives and position with reference to the main development issues can efficiently open the dialogue and help pinpoint the problems that require further investigation.

Simply drawing up a chart of the relevant positions as the one shown in Table 1 can provide an overview of the main strategic options and of existing and potential partnerships (or conflicts). To complete the chart, each item can be assessed by a system of marks (from one to five stars, as shown) showing the stakeholders' growing interest in the specific problem.

**Table 1: Table of problems and interested stakeholders**

Stakeholders	Problems of the territory					
	1	2	3	4	5	.....
A	**	****	***	*	*	.....
B	****	*	**	*	**	.....
C	*	*	**	*****	****	.....
D	*	***	**	*	*****	.....
E	*	**	****	*	*	.....
F	***	*	*	*	*	.....
.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

## Elements for the evaluation of territorial capital

A project aiming at assessing the opportunities for local development must take into account the tangible and intangible elements available to the area. The concept of "territorial capital" stems from the experience of the LEADER programme and its evaluation is an essential stage in the discovery and valorisation of territorial potential.

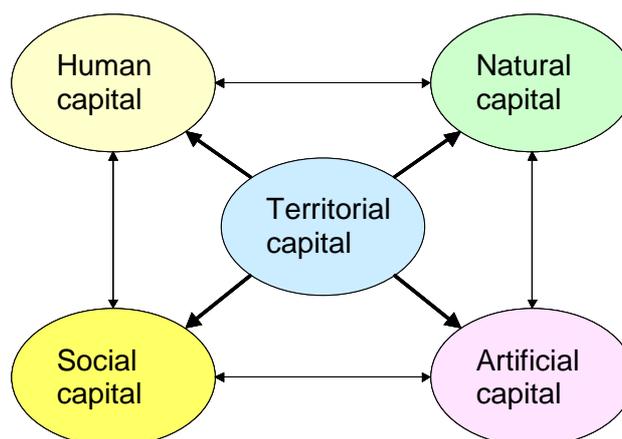
Territorial capital is made up of those elements that represent the wealth of that territory, both in terms of natural resources as well as of experience and culture (know-how) and social relations within and without the territory itself. The concept is not static, in that it does not reflect the status quo on the territory; it cannot be evaluated purely in terms of the area's history, but rather through an ongoing back and forth exercise between analysing today's capital, examining the past and planning for the future.

The evaluation of territorial capital allows to choose the most appropriate way of increasing it and consequently creating a territorial added value. This result can be achieved by selecting a few key elements on which to base the development project.

The discovery, or rather, the re-discovery, of poorly exploited traditions and resources, the valorisation of specific and characteristic local traits and the creation of new opportunities by taking history as a starting point are only some of the approaches to be borne in mind when implementing the project.

The evaluation of territorial capital requires the identification of its components. This can be done by breaking territorial capital down in four components, as follows (Figure 2): natural capital, human capital, social capital and artificial capital.

- *Natural capital* is made up of natural resources, biodiversity, landscape, soil, absorption capacity, organic substance and fertility, hydrogeological balance, water, etc.
- *Social capital* is a system of local collective bodies (formal and informal), local government, rules and customs, property and use relations, forms of organisation and participation, system of enterprises and economic activities, markets and relationships with the outside world, etc.
- *Human capital* is knowledge, experience, culture and identity, education, spirit of initiative, demographic structure, health, etc.
- *Artificial capital* is machinery, factories, infrastructure, land use, income level and distribution, etc.

**Figure 2: Components of territorial capital**

The four elements are closely interrelated. The quality of this relation is the basis for assessing landscape value, local development, quality of life, image and perception of the territory, in short, the attractiveness and competitiveness of the area. Naturally, with reference to each element, the favourable components that promote socio-economic development of the area are also accompanied by unfavourable aspects that hamper development. These are the ones that the Plan intends to solve: concerning natural capital, for example, these aspects include illegal building and polluting plants; in social capital: organized crime or ethnic discrimination; in human capital: rate of school drop-out, insufficient literacy, invalidating pathologies; in artificial capital: lack of infrastructure or backward technology.

All these elements will contribute to depicting the territorial profile and serve as the basis for an analysis of strengths and weaknesses, which will in turn indicate the appropriate development strategy to be applied. A particularly powerful tool is the SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) which emphasises the following aspects (Table 2):

- *Strengths*: favourable conditions for the implementation and the success of the project;
- *Weaknesses*: the corresponding unfavourable conditions;
- *Opportunities*: possible future events, which, if they come about, may contribute to the success of the project;
- *Threats*: future events that, conversely, may jeopardize the success of the project.

**Table 2: Key factors for territorial development**

Key development factors	Strength (+) or Weakness (-)	Opportunity (+) or Threat (-)
A	+	-
B	-	+
C	+	+
D	+	-
E	+	+
F	-	+
.....	.....	.....

### Drawing up strategic guidelines

The methods for the selection of possible local development strategies are founded in what has been said before, that can be summed up as follows:

- a static and dynamic analysis of socio-economic characteristics;
- identification of key elements or catalysts;
- integration and coordination of stakeholders and actions.

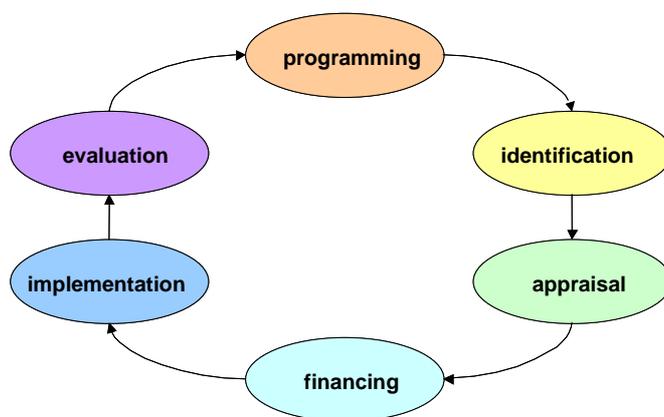
For this purpose there is a valid analytical instrument that facilitates the task of the planner by proposing a rational approach to document drafting: the *Project Cycle Management* method which is an established approach in territorial and public intervention planning.

The Project Cycle Management is divided into six stages (Figure 4) which lead to the drafting of an integrated territorial project.

The stages are the following:

- **programming:** defining a basic information framework which will help identify the main problems and opportunities in the area with the aim of setting the main objectives;
- **identification** of ideas and actions by involving potential beneficiaries and all those who are interested in the development of the area;
- **appraisal** (formulation) of project ideas by assessing their feasibility and sustainability and presenting them in a clear shape (project schedule); seeking financial sources;
- **financing:** the project actions must meet requirements of the local, national and international institutions which contribute to their financing;
- **implementation:** at this stage, the project is operational, which calls for implementation procedures and contractual instruments to be specified;
- **evaluation:** the project must prescribe the methods and indicators which will be used to carry out *ex-ante*, *in itinere* and *ex-post* evaluation of actions: the data will be used to enhance the experience and knowledge to draw upon during project implementation and to launch similar projects in the same territory or in other areas.

**Figure 3: Stages in Project Cycle Management**



The obvious advantage of this method is that it forces planners to identify the real needs of the territory by means of a permanent and thorough involvement of the stakeholders. The main strength of this procedure is that it produces a planning document in line with international standards and includes all essential elements. Furthermore, the method guarantees transparency and visibility of decisions and methods used to reach them.

Three fundamental principles to be taken into account when applying this method are:

- the **relevance** of actions as compared to the real needs of the population (discard those actions which comply with the interest of a single social group, rather than the interest of society as a whole);
- the **feasibility** of interventions in the territorial context and the real chances for these interventions to attain the planned results (discard public works and enormous infrastructural projects funded by external capital, an approach typical of many unsuccessful past experiments, in favour of low-cost initiatives exploiting internal resources – the four capitals – and involving as many and as diversified institutional and social players as possible);
- **sustainability**, that is, the coherent and appropriate use of territorial resources and the ability to learn from positive and negative experience in future projects.

At the core of this approach lies what is known as the *Logical Framework Approach*, made up of several instruments of analysis which can help identify problems and solutions. Each instrument applies to a single stage of analysis and all the information is gathered in a matrix known as the *Logframe*, which sums up the logical procedure behind the drafting of strategic guidelines.

During the Workshop, the participants will learn to use these instruments and will then be able to actively contribute to project design.

## **Coordinating action on the territory**

The methodology illustrated in this paper aims at producing an operational document containing a package of actions to be applied to the territory and which will aggregate the policy demand of single stakeholders by bringing it in line with local strategies and integrating it into overall objectives. The project document, which defines and coordinates strategies, will be accompanied by a list of intervention schedules providing the essential information necessary to draft single operational projects.

Naturally, since the World Bank Project “Framework for a Regional Development Vision” is a pilot project for two Counties and given the short time available and lack of opportunities for closer examination, it is highly unlikely that the project will be filled out in detail during the workshop. The Workshop will rather focus on a shared and technically sound analysis of the development opportunities for both areas in view of future examinations and of the definition of operational strategies.

Owing to this document, it will be possible to charge a single collective body, acting on a well-defined territory, with the coordination and examination of local demand. This body will also have the task of integrating and linking overall strategies for the area with those of single players.

The advantages of this type of approach are numerous: a greater concentration of interventions in the territory; reduction of conflict between local and overall strategies; integration of projects into enterprise and territory level, as well as coordination between sectors and diversified sectoral policies.

The potential beneficiary should therefore be able to clearly see the advantages of aggregation as compared to autonomous acting, which consist in the optimization of funding opportunities envisaged by the current incentive mechanisms. This aspect will be examined further on.

This planning tool should be drafted by a public or private entity which:

- is able to operate in a limited area, which is representative of the territory under consideration (neither too large nor too small);
- is already present in the territory and has its own human and material resources, which require no additional funding;
- possesses specific competences for project implementation in the area;
- has the necessary planning and cognitive instruments;
- has autonomous financial resources and is able to cofinance projects which will be coordinated with own, public and private resources already present in the territory, as well as with other resources, both public and private, from other donors not present in the area under consideration.

Priority should be given to already existing entities (Counties, Associations of Municipalities, National Park Boards); however, the setting up of temporary associations between entities and/or enterprises can be envisaged. This has indeed been promoted and carried out through EU policy incentives, as shown by the example of Local Action Groups (LAG) set up by the LEADER programme.

The tasks pertaining to such an entity will encompass not only project design, but also:

- conducting awareness and information campaigns to promote project design;
- providing technical support to project design and to the direct management of some projects;
- periodical *in itinere* evaluation of action implementation and *ex-post* result monitoring.

The adoption of single projects and their verification and control during implementation lies within the province of the relevant administrative entities, which will be able to use the information gathered by the coordinating body. The latter is required to promptly inform of any problems which may arise.

The projects drafted by individual beneficiaries may also be accompanied by cross-cutting projects proposed by the coordinating body itself and aiming at a better implementation of the planned strategy. These projects may concern, for example, education, valorisation of traditional and quality products, land ownership, technical assistance services, financial engineering, forestry, protection of rural heritage, management of water resources, environment monitoring.

The Plan, as any other request for funds, must meet community and international selection criteria, with the possible addition of some specific elements necessary to reach a critical mass, for example:

- the total of requests and the quantity of allocated resources must reach a minimum level;
- the amount of own financial resources must exceed a predetermined threshold;
- the number of players involved must be representative of all players present in the area under consideration.

The project document could be structured as follows:

- provide reasons for the project package;
- set out general and specific targets for the area;
- state whether the area is representative of the broader territory it is part of; state whether this also holds true for the coordinating body; state whether the implementing subjects are representative of all subjects present in the area;
- include an organization chart of the coordinating body;
- provide an overview of strategies and state whether they comply with national and international strategies;
- provide a short summary of projects and resources;
- provide a list of projects.

To emphasise the advantage of submitting to potential donors a package of applications rather than isolated ones, the following incentives may be envisaged:

- reaching the maximum amount of financial aid laid down by community regulations;
- exceeding the maximum amount in special cases envisaged by community regulations;
- additional funding proportional to the additional resources allocated by the coordinating body;
- defining priorities in drawing up classifications, or rather, confidential classifications (lexicographic criterion).

In short, the choice of this approach for gaining access to public funding is completely in line with the principles of "new programming" and with community strategy. In this context, the possibility for collective bodies to submit a package of coordinated actions for the territory may, on the one hand, enable concentration of resources and achievement of concrete results and, on the other, promote competition among different areas for the granting of public funding, which, in turn, may enhance project design capability and intervention efficiency. Another equally important advantage is the constant flow of comprehensive information on cofinanced initiatives under way.

From an operational point of view, the implementation of the project presupposes the identification of players that can make up the coordinating body. It is advisable that this be an exclusively technical body with employees possessing specific knowledge of the territory and outstanding organisational and planning ability. For example, a group comprising a limited number of people (5-7) can include officials from local administration, local professionals and planning experts.

Such a group will be charged with presenting the appositely developed strategies in a Strategic Plan by drawing up a document structured as follows:

- summary of main objectives and secondary objectives which will be attained in the short or medium term (1 to 7 years);
- ways of attaining the objectives; in other words, definition of strategic guidelines and analysis of their consistence with super-territorial strategies (State, EU, WB);
- definition of selection, control and monitoring procedures (evaluation *ex-ante*, *in itinere*, *ex-post*);
- synoptic overview of the project, structured according to type, intervention areas, localisation and players involved;
- budget of financial and physical resources; chronogram of deadlines;
- list of project schedules.

The group will have to closely follow the issuing of tenders for public financing and periodically monitor the progress of project implementation. The group will also undertake to tackle those problems that may surface during project implementation by finding appropriate solutions. For example, if a project requires certain permits or certificates (building permits, sanitation) to be carried out, personal contact with the relevant body or official can be decisive.

What should be pointed out is that the contracting parties are government bodies and aid beneficiaries that, by signing the application, undertake a formal commitment. On the other hand, the beneficiaries and other entities with coordinating and supporting functions establish a cooperation which may or may not be remunerated. The cost of information campaigns, technical assistance, education, control and monitoring can be cofinanced by the same sources that provide funds for the other projects. These activities should therefore be also structured as projects and included among the higher-level projects.

The role of the coordinating body is only partly similar to that of a Local Action Group established within the framework of the LEADER programme. While the latter deals directly with project financing, the former acts as a mediator between demand for and supply of territorial policy.

In coordinating and providing support to projects, an essential element is the ability to create those synergies that will contribute to optimising the impact of the project on the territory and on local economy. However, possible linkages among the different actions are not always specified in project documentation; the coordinating body is therefore called upon to establish linkages on a case-by-case basis. For example, a project concerning the valorisation of typical products can be included in a wider project of creating a network of rural tourism centres, which in turn can be linked to the maintenance of hiking trails and production of travel brochures. Such examples could be innumerable; this is maybe the best illustration of the integrated approach promoted here. Finding relations among and between projects may well constitute the basis for the development of a territory; if such a mechanism cannot be established, petty interests will prevail over collective interest and common objectives.

## CONCLUSION

The history of economic planning and programming clearly shows that there is no universally valid solution applicable to all territories; no single model has prevailed for its efficiency, flexibility and chances for success. Experience rather shows that any attempt to reduce the complexities of the real world to inflexible planning schedules has always resulted in failure. Bearing this in mind, this paper only intends to offer a few suggestions for territorial development, rather than impose a stiff methodology.

The methodology introduced here is in fact a means of analysing the elements to be taken into consideration when designing a project through a rational and iterative approach. The development of other equally functional approaches is possible, as is the use of other efficient instruments or methods not examined in this paper. On the other hand, no methodology can guarantee success, but can only contribute to enhance the consistency and completeness of the project.

Therefore, the main issue is the decision to start a process leading to an improvement of the current situation, rather than the choice of the method of implementation or, paraphrasing a metaphor popular among planners, a chess player cannot reasonably pretend to plan ahead all the moves that will lead to victory; in fact, he can only make each move rationally, by examining the opponent's strengths and weaknesses emphasised by the player's own moves and by reviewing all modifications brought about by the opponent's moves, and thus gain advantages.

When information is scarce, an optimising approach would be inappropriate. In a case of bounded rationality, what is called for is satisfactory behaviour. First and foremost, avoid making mistakes. Secondly, a significant ability to evaluate the current situation and possible strategic advantages (*Opportunities*) and disadvantages (*Threats*) the next move can bring about is essential. The next move must be carefully planned to lead to a better position not only in absolute terms, but also with reference to changes deriving from the opponent's moves. When information is scarce and chance is a determining factor, a high level of flexibility, or ability to promptly remedy one's own mistakes is essential in order to grasp the opportunities offered by the opponent and to avoid falling into his traps.

The first move to be made is therefore providing the Plan with purpose.

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