

## The beautiful agricultural landscapes of Molise as a resource for tourism

### Abstract

*The agricultural landscape of Molise, despite transformations, has preserved particular aspects that should be safeguarded and protected as they represent our identity. I would like, therefore, to propose an itinerary of some agricultural landscapes which are particularly significant and serve as identifiers of the region. The following landscapes have been chosen because they are to be found over a wide area of the territory of Molise and they also represent our economy as well as our past: 1. The mosaic-like landscape of polyculture; 2. Vineyards; 3. The peri-urban gardens; 4. The landscape of karst agriculture; 5. The sheep track landscape.*

*The disadvantaged areas of Molise will be able to rediscover their identity by transforming weaknesses into strengths through the new rurality which the most recent evolution of CAP (2012-2014) favours by supporting those who focus their attention on the rural-agricultural landscape. The new CAP favours those who choose to differentiate their cultivation and follow biodiversity rather than cultivate vast tracts of land with wheat or corn.*

*Tourism must take into account the image that is projected to the outside world, "l'espace touristique, c'est avant tout une imagine"; the beautiful agricultural landscape of Molise, might, on the basis of the values it represents, act as a symbol of this image which serves as an identifier and unifies the cultural resources tout court.*

**Keywords:** *Agricultural landscape of Molise, Identity, CAP, Tourism.*

### Historical agricultural landscapes and the agricultural policy of the EU

The beautiful agricultural landscape of Italy, praised by poets, writers and artists, immortalised in travellers' descriptions during the Grand Tour, is characterised by a mosaic of complex colours and shapes and distinguished by the variety of its produce. It has undergone a profound transformation, which has risked causing the extinction of the historical landscapes that in many cases have become part of the heritage of humanity (an example being the Cinque Terre of North Western Italy). These landscapes are unique due to the presence of multiple crops and are at risk of disappearing due to both the increase in industrial agriculture that makes the landscape more uniform and the abandonment of the land (from 1920 to the present day, the amount of land cultivated has reduced by 13 million hectares).

These beautiful landscapes conserved their distinctive characteristics up until the middle of the last century, distinctiveness which has been put at risk by new methods of cultivation, by new means of transport and by the development of new types of communal companies alien to the rural environment. However, notwithstanding the dangers, the pace of change has been relatively slow.

After the 1950s the massive technological transformations, together with an enlargement of the market, now globalised, and the presence of companies based upon big capital, accelerated the pace of change rapidly. This change has had no precedence in human history. These transformations can be traced back to several processes: the unregulated urbanisation of the agricultural areas around the cities and the homogenisation of the landscape due to the application of rules and regulations alien to the rural world which modified the shape and size of the fields as well as rural infrastructures and crop rotation—all of which altered the relationship between care of the land and respect for natural resources. For many years, the isolated position of the region of Molise and the presence of a predominantly traditional form of agriculture, practised above all in the disadvantaged internal areas, has preserved this landscape from radical transformation. The area has maintained a diversity of shape and colour, a multifaceted use of natural resources and a variety of crop production. The exodus from the agricultural and rural areas has led to depopulation of the internal and mountainous areas of Molise. The development of competitive and highly industrialised agricultural activity over the past decades, in particular in the mountainous areas along the



coast, has altered the distinctive characteristics of the historical landscape of Molise. This change is clearly visible in the abandonment of the lands, in the joining together of old rural properties, in the elimination of hedges and stone walls as the use of the land changed from agricultural to urban use, in the disappearance of gardens which generally indicated proximity to urban centres, the gardens of Venafro, Bojano and Campobasso, being just a few. These gardens are however still present in residual form.

The almost total disappearance of historical agricultural landscapes has been determined not only by changes in cultivation techniques and working of the land, types of crop, rural structures and exodus from the land but above all by the spreading of agricultural models based on competition in terms of quantity not quality. These agricultural models were favoured by the CAP (European Agricultural Policy), a model which was not suitable to the disadvantaged internal country areas of southern central Italy and of Molise. The politics of the CAP worked in favour of the large agricultural companies of central Western Europe, based on single crop farming. The result was an intensification of crop production which exceeded the farming capacity of the land of southern central Italy. In the 1990s a reform of the CAP modified the original objectives. A new model of territorial development was put forward based on an appreciation of the rural landscape of those areas considered at a disadvantage according to Council Regulation (Ec) N. 1257/1999 "Mountain areas shall be those characterised by a considerable limitation of the possibilities for using the land and an appreciable increase in the cost of working it, less-favoured areas which are in danger of abandonment of land-use and where the conservation of the countryside is necessary, in which farming should be continued, where necessary and subject to certain conditions, in order to conserve or improve the environment, maintain the countryside and preserve the tourist potential of the area or in order to protect the coastline".

New ways of using agricultural land should be favoured in these areas. These new ways could include: agritourism, green tourism, organic agriculture, production of quality local products, biodiversity, alternative energy sources, local food crafts, food fairs, festivals, and traditional markets. This new use of agricultural land has been at the centre of regional, national and Community politics (Structural funds, Leader Programs, PAL Local Action Plans and PSR (Rural Develop-

ment Plans), with the aim of appreciating the rural landscape for its aesthetic and economic ecological value and as an essential sustainable model of development. A re-evaluation of the rural landscape together with its safeguarding and greater fruition, does not imply the transformation of the land into a museum, creating "landscape parks" within which traditional objects and traditions are conserved, but rather offers the opportunity of applying quality agriculture to the greater part of the agricultural land which could be defined as "landscape agriculture" and can be linked to sustainable tourism which respects the environment and does not lead to the abuse of agricultural spaces. The most recent evolution of the CAP, as can be seen in the 2014-2020 draft, concentrates on the rural agricultural landscape. More funds will be available for the preservation of terraces, hedges, ditches, ponds and rows of trees, which caused so much trouble for monoculture farming. Abbot Longano's recommendations in 1790 appear prophetic. In order to improve agricultural practice, he stated: "It might be convenient to impose that the land be bordered with hedges or ditches. Because hedges fertilize the soil with their leaves and the soil of the uncultivated land used for making ditches is of excellent quality, also, both hedges and ditches will prevent the entrance of animals into the fields" (Longano, p. 102). The new CAP favors those who apply biodiversity in crop production rather than immense extensions of wheat or corn fields. Europe is investing in the safeguarding of the landscape. Of note is the attention paid to terracing, which has been of great importance in the mountain areas, both in terms of cultivation and protection of the land. In those areas where terracing has been applied, landslides have been avoided. The recent floods that devastated the region of Liguria have highlighted the fact that, according to a survey of the FAI, only in 5 cases out of 88 has terraced land been affected by flooding. In 95% of the cases, flooding affected those areas where terraced land was abandoned and had been overgrown with trees and shrubs. Care for the aesthetic aspect of the countryside, *venustas*, *voluptas*, *delectation*, is as important as the economic aspect, *utilitas*, given that beautiful agricultural landscapes are an important tourist resource. For tourists, who are aware and respectful of both the territory and the traditions and peoples that are hosting them, a "slow tourism" contrasts favourably with the frenetic kind of tourism which, for example, leads to the visiting of three European capitals in three days! Tourists who are more concerned with beautiful landscapes and the cultural, artis-



tic and archaeological heritage of places, would be interested in visiting areas such as Sepino and Pietrabbondante in Molise, whose uniqueness is not only due to their great historical and archaeological value, but to the fact that they are immersed in a stunning agricultural landscape (cfr. Figs. 1 and 3), with arable wooded land, small gardens and cattle track areas etc., a landscape which, even in its simplicity, offers added value. Agricultural landscapes are therefore an important tourist resource. A beautiful countryside conveys a clear message to observers and indicates a society which plans its future and respects its territory and resources.

Today more than ever, agriculture is valued both in terms of culture and economics. Two levels can be noted; the economic and the aesthetic. The latter is not less important than the former and the two aspects can converge to remind us that, in the past, farmers entrusted themselves to the order and regularity of work in the fields, with the hope of

overcoming the difficulties presented by the environment as well as by famine. The order and beauty of the cultivated countryside was contrasted with chaos, insecurity and the fear of hunger. Agricultural activity can be seen not only as a search for that which is useful and beautiful but also as an art in which crop rotation creates a variety of different colors for each season. Agricultural activity has shaped the landscape by recovering land from the mountainsides, marshes, rocks and woods, through centuries of human endeavor in line with the times and the places. These agricultural landscapes should not be allowed to die but should be given a second chance without risking losing their distinctive characteristics by using them for purposes other than producing crops, purposes such as quality tourist activity which can revitalize the sector by producing quality products, crops endogenous to the area, educational farms, food and wine tasting tours as well as the reuse of old rural buildings such as farms, mills and pre-industrial structures.



Fig. 1. Fenced cultivated fields in the plain of Sepino. The archaeological site of Saepinum can be seen in the background (Source: Photo C.S. Castagnoli).



Fig. 2. The vineyard landscape of Fossalto (Source: Photo A. Pietrunti).



## The agricultural landscapes of Molise between stagnation and renewal

As has been already stated, the agricultural landscape of Molise has changed but has retained some of its distinctive characteristics, which should be safeguarded and protected, as they represent an artistic heritage worthy of being seen and experienced, given that it is an integral part of its sense of identity. I would like, therefore, to propose an itinerary by making use of images of various agricultural landscapes which are particularly significant as part of the identity of Molise. The itinerary that is being presented is specifically that of agricultural landscapes and not natural landscapes in general, such as woods, beaches and mountains. They show the countryside where nature has been subject to human influence together with a respect for nature and are areas often forgotten by man.

A journey which proposes new forms of “soft” tourism through agricultural landscapes which, if correctly appreciated, might help agriculture stimulate tourism and represent an image of Molise to the outside world similar to the way in which we associate tulips with Holland, lavender with Provence, and the flowering of lentils in Castelluccio (the *Fiorita*), the flowering of cherry trees in Vignola, the vineyards of Valtellina, the rice fields of Piedmont and Lombardy, the terraced landscape of the Cinque Terre, the flowering of almond trees in the Valley of Temples in Sicily, the Arab Gardens of Pantelleria, the orange groves of Conca d’Oro in the valley of Catania, the citrus groves of Amalfi and Sorrento, the stone walls of Puglia and the highlands of Ibleo, and so on. All these are extensively used in advertising and film sets and constitute an extra value for all those other resources, such as art, archaeology, food and wine tours and all those festivals linked to the landscape and its agricultural tradition.

The following have been chosen because they are the most widespread throughout the whole territory of Molise and represent our economy and our history.

### The variagated landscape of polyculture

This landscape represents small land holdings, a consequence of fragmentation following the division of the former feudal demesnes upon which the following rights were exercised, “watering rights, the right to rest, the right to cut dry wood, the right to pick acorns, the right

to obtain lime, and the right to graze animals in parkland”. This fragmentation of land was accentuated between the two wars, due to the greater number of people living on farmland and the custom of dividing the property among all the heirs, giving to each a small part of land as arable land, vineyards, pasture etc. This led to the formation of small land holdings which the toponymy of the area indicates: *Lenze, Pezze, Camere, Quartarello, es. Pezza della Signora, Pezzo dell’Aia, Pezzo di Malizia*. These small pieces of land were surrounded by hedges, stone walls (where the stones had been taken from the land) and trees, all set out in a way which indicated the boundaries of the land holding. They could, however, also be found isolated in the middle of a field. It is the landscape typical of small enclosed land holdings’ due principally to the necessity of having to set property boundaries but also to “protect the growth of trees and shrubs and stop them from being eaten by animals and the fruit of the trees from being stolen” (Sereni, p. 39). Seen from above, this landscape has the appearance of an enormous jigsaw puzzle, in terms of geometrical shape, colours and variety of crops.

The right of ownership of the land was obtained through great sacrifice and conflict with the excessive power, first of the feudal owners and then of the ruling middle classes. It was the result of hard work and humiliation, in particular of the sacrifice of immigrants, the “so-called Americans”, who after years of hard and dangerous work in the mines of Germany, Belgium and the United States of America, invested the little capital they had saved in property in their land of origin. The attachment to the land, as mentioned by Jovine in “Travels in Molise” is in no way exaggerated “... The cultivated land is often the result of the hard work of generations of farmers who tilled, built walls, dug water channels, transported for numerous days (often on their shoulders) the fertile soil ... The small plot of land became, from year to year, something which had been nourished through hardship and was finally seen to flourish after long periods of back breaking work. This explains the physical attachment to the land, not any piece of land, but that piece of land which they had worked so hard to make flourish. A small farm, a strip of land, as they say here, has ten different names for each different aspect it reveals, names which are known only to the family that work the land, names such as the song of the pear tree, the broad bean field, the scrubland field and the val-



ley of stones, names which are all mentioned with a tenderness you would normally reserve for a living creature” (Jovine, pp. 86-87). The landscape of the small land holding, while showing signs of abandon, has kept its particular fascination. Fascination determined not only by the alteration of crops, of woods and of colors, but above all by the sentimental tie which the farmer has to the land. This mosaic-shaped landscape is primarily used as arable land, interspersed with other types of crops; wheat and corn were, and are still today, the most widespread types of crops cultivated. They are the most suitable for growing in the clay-like soil. Wheat is grown everywhere, even in steep and inaccessible areas: “Wheat is not a currency, it is the product with which most other values are related. The wheat is valued and is used to pay the professional workers their wages. The land rent is paid with wheat, loans are given to land-workers in wheat and settled in wheat” (Presutti, pp. 99-100). Wheat and corn are the only crops worthy of cultivating. Whenever an alternative forage crop is planted, because the land is fallow, the land is not rented out. Arable land is never without crops and this is the difference with those specialized land areas of the valleys in which different kinds of cultivation are practiced: for example, the planting of trees, olives and oaks. It is the ideal landscape through which to promote the territory and all its local products, together with sport and fitness opportunities, three fundamental aspects of quality tourism.

### The vineyard landscape

The vineyard is another typical landscape. The recurrent toponym *pastena* brings to mind the ancient 10th century agricultural contracts *ad pastinandum* which preceded sharecropping. The contract was stipulated between the landowners, the feudal lord or the Abbot and the peasants. These had the obligation of tilling the land, planting vineyards, olive trees and hedges, building walls and reclaiming marshland. The term *pastena* and its derivatives still survives in many areas and reminds us of this ancient form of contract - e.g. *Pastena* a hamlet of Castelpetroso (Isernia). Cultivating vineyards is today almost always a professional activity. It was extremely widespread in the past and present in every farm, no matter how small the land holding was. The vines were grown in the Latin way, i.e. in the same plot of land together with figs, corn, beans, potatoes and fruit trees. R. Pepe mentions its diffusion in the final report he wrote for the Murat survey of 1811: “apart from the mountainous areas where vines do not take root, every township of the district has an area with a vineyard present and this vineyard is so extensive that care is no longer taken in the choice of terrain, in its exposure to the sun or of the vines themselves. All the vineyards are kept low. Only in gardens or pathways are they allowed to grow tall and form arbours which had the function of creating shady areas in summer” (Castagnoli 1998, p.



Fig. 3. At the foot of D'Evoli Castle in Castropignano, the middle part of the Valley of the Biferno river and a landscape of fenced fields. Below, at the foot of the rock “ru cantone de la Fata”, and regularly-shaped fenced fields delimited by rows of trees (Source: Photo C.S. Castagnoli).



647). Vineyards had for long been cultivated as if they were Mediterranean gardens (cfr. Fig. 2).

With the exception of cereal crops, farmers grew vegetables and pulses in the lower levels, followed by vines, with fruit trees planted higher up. It was an intensive way of using the entire space, a small plot of land made available for the subsistence living of the entire family. These aspects are again mentioned in the description of vineyards given by Presutti at the beginning of the 20th century: "Around each township, and in particular at the slopes of the hill on top of which the village is found, there are large plantations of shrubs and trees, whose beautiful green color is in striking contrast to the surrounding barren countryside. They are the so-called vineyards, belonging both to the farm workers and especially to the principal landowners of the village. In any property, even if of small proportions, there must be a vineyard. The vineyard is not an appropriate term: as all kinds of fruit trees were also cultivated there, given the families need to be supplied with food: vines were grown... as were also clumps of olive trees" (Presutti, p. 86). A number of projects in different Italian regions are based on an appreciation of countryside tourism, in particular of the vineyards. They are certainly vineyards with a famous public image, due to advertising, and offer an example of a successful integrated relationship between agriculture and tourism which could also be applied in Molise. As an example, some projects of tourist itineraries linked to the discovery of agricultural landscapes can be mentioned. Agricultural landscapes can often be compared, in terms of shape and colours, to a work of art. In Tuscany, in Tavernelle Val di Pesa (Firenze) and in eight towns of the Chianti area, bicycle tourism and walks through the vineyards to churches and castles are available and in Torgiano (Pg), Umbria, as a result of the project "Torgiano by bike", fifteen kilometres of mountain bike tracks have been created along the route around the village and in the centre. Other projects include routes along the river park of the Tiber. In Montefalco, twenty seven kilometres of tracks for walking, cycling or horse riding have been made available. In Alcamo (Palermo) five different itineraries have been developed and are related to wine tours and the cultural and archaeological heritage of the area. In Ghemme (Novara) the "Itinerary" routes offer forty-five kilometres for bicycle tourism. In Nizza Monferrato, following a regional project, a "green" itinerary for walk-

ing or cycling, measuring a total of 87 km between castles and vineyards, has been created. These are all examples of ways in which the agricultural landscape has been effectively used.

### Peri-urban gardens

Near the urban centres, in areas where a lot of water was present, vegetable gardens indicated the closeness of inhabited areas. Being vegetation that needed constant attention throughout the entire year, they were not far from inhabited centres. These places survive in towns like Venafro, Bojano and Campobasso. Reference has been made to small family gardens which might develop in the future. The presence of city vegetable gardens is an ancient reality which is also being rediscovered today in Italy (the most famous of these gardens is that of the White House, which is currently being promoted by Michelle Obama). Educational gardens, social gardens, community gardens and therapeutic gardens are all being developed. Different towns are promoting the practice of cultivating vegetable gardens in unused public areas (in 2009, Brescia alone assigned over 120 gardens). The widespread use of vegetable gardens not only favours the production and acquisition of zero kilometre products but also embellishes the landscape. Areas currently uncultivated and unproductive are being replaced by well-cultivated landscapes. In this way, the useful is being combined with the beautiful. Of particular importance in the town of Venafro are the clearly visible Gardens of Christ, in an area close to the Quattro Cannelle fountain, which are part of the history and tradition of Venafro. Vegetables have for centuries been cultivated there as the area is rich in water with a system of irrigation divided into streams and rivulets. The remaining vegetable gardens of Campobasso (cfr. Fig. 4) were once famous for their abundance of vegetables.

They occupied the entire area of what is today the Vazzieri neighbourhood (from the word, "verziere", meaning orchards), as well as areas near the city walls in what are today via Petitti and via D'Amato. These are indicated on maps with the name of via Giardini. Another garden area is near the Fota. A "rare" example of this kind of vegetable garden can be seen clearly in the area near to the bus station. Worth noting is the fact that flowers can be found, together with vegetables. The tradition of combining different kinds of crops is well expressed by Michele Cima of the town of Riccia, a poet who writes in dialect and who wrote: "Beans





Fig. 4 - The remaining gardens in Campobasso in the Vazzieri neighbourhood (Source: Photo C.S. Castagnoli).

born in the country lane of Pauline are placed in the company of carnations and withered roses”.

The vegetable gardens in Campobasso around the Fota, were praised by the poet, doctor and naturalist Altobello: “the door is opened at noon and out she goes jumping to wake up the mills and the millers and dresses the gardens in silver, shimmering between vegetables and spigatelli”. Mention should also be made of the area of the vegetable gardens of San Giuliano del Sannio, once used specifically for cultivating vegetables. This is an area rich in water which extends to the valley of Sepino, where, as can be seen from the picture (cfr. Fig. 1) a beautiful agricultural landscape can be admired with fenced fields of the same size which, according to scholars, refer back to the grid system used by the ancient Romans.

### The landscape of Karst Agriculture

The landscape of Frosolone and the Matese is typical of the karst mountain areas.

Agricultural activity is carried out in dry sink-holes and in areas of gravel land. They are areas which can be defined as “*delle oasi culturali di alta montagna*” (“cultivated oases of high altitude mountains”) (Mario Fondi). The main crops cultivated there are: wheat, potatoes and lentils, and the territory is often characterized by open fields divided into parallel lines or bordered by dry stone walls (*macere*) which are taken from the land itself. The chromatic effect is beautiful, verdant oases immersed in an expanse of greyish limestone and reddish soil, surrounded by copious and sparse tufts of grass (cfr. Fig. 5).



Fig. 5 - A landscape showing oases of crop cultivation in the mountain areas of Frosolone. Elongated strips of cultivated fields of reddish color are clearly visible (Source: Photo C.S. Castagnoli).



## The landscape of the Cattle-Tracks

Whilst not being an agricultural landscape in the traditional sense of the word, the landscape of the cattle-tracks is a distinctive trait of the territory of Molise. It reflects an intermediate reality - something between a natural and an anthropic environment. With reference to the physical environmental, a variety of turf comes to mind which consists of different species of grasses, legumes, Umbelliferae and Asteraceae, species that re-grow spontaneously without any particular technical-agronomic treatment, but above all it gave milk and its dairy products a pleasant taste and smell. Natural grazing and fertilizing from the passage of the cattle was sufficient to keep the grass short and green, giving it the appearance, even in winter, of a 'lawn.' The cattle-tracks are also an anthropic environment because of human activity: the planning of the cattle track network, the natural boundaries created with bushy hedges, tree plantations or just trees, (commonly called 'monks' because they were cut into the shape of a man's head and also supplied fodder and firewood). The cattle tracks were bordered with stone columns with the letters RT (Regio Tratturo - Royal Cattle Track) and included information on milestones which indicated the will of the authorities to have the borders of the cattle tracks respected. Other human activity involved included the presence of taverns, mills, farm houses, pre-industrial structures, hydroelectric plants, towers, animal pens and temporary shelters, as well as inhabited centers which grew and developed along the route. It constitutes a cultural heritage of humanity which deserves recognition given its widespread presence in the whole of Mediterranean Europe, from Spain to the Carpathians, and as such would merit being included in the World Heritage List.

The cattle track network, whilst not being exclusive to the territory of Molise, is a specific and characteristic aspect of the region. Its uniqueness is not just due to the 450km network of the cattle tracks but also because it has formed a grid upon which the urban and productive system of Molise has developed. At least seventy seven towns are crossed by cattle tracks and numerous are the economic activities developed as a result of transhumance: the working of leather and shoe production, the production and sale of wool products and the production of dairy products, to mention just a few of the most important which were directly related to it. Sheep were not the only animals involved, but also goats, horses, cows and pigs, these last being involved in local transpor-

tation. The cattle track network was also used as a normal means of communication. Communication routes were developed at three levels: cattle tracks of no less than 60 Neapolitan steps, equal to 111,60 metres (corresponding to a thousandth of a degree of the equator or of any meridian), tracks 18 to 37 metres wide, and then the offshoots of the cattle tracks (which linked the main routes together) of 8 to 10 metres wide. While the main cattle tracks ran in a North-South direction, the smaller tracks and the offshoots ran from East to West as parallels.

Cattle tracks can best be used today, given their high natural value, as a source of free time activities such as walks or horse riding. This seems to be their most obvious use. However, those activities with which they were linked in the past might also be applicable today. Cattle rearing and all the activities connected with it, agricultural production of typical local foodstuffs, which could have "Typical Local Cattle Track Products" applied as a brand name. All of this could constitute a basis for rural tourism and an experience of a different kind of landscape, both in terms of quality and diversity of products, which vary according to the geographical area. Much has been written on ways of appreciating the cattle-tracks and on the creation of a Cattle-track Park. But still today the cattle-tracks are not used to their full potential, and, despite being protected areas, they continue to lose their identity. Only the presence of a solitary horse-rider or some nostalgic shepherd with his sheep, bring back to mind images of a past long gone. Mention might also be made of other kinds of agricultural landscape: the traditional olive groves, the protected areas, the landscape based on the Agrarian Reform of the Lower Molise Territory, (which, in terms of shape, soil composition and colours of the yellow and sandy clay, is a foretaste of the kind of landscape more typical of the territory of the Capitanata - today part of the district of Foggia in the region of Puglia). Other characteristic areas are the olive plantation landscapes of Venafro in particular, where an Olive Park has recently been created. Then there is the fruit-growing landscape. The apple orchards in particular preserve the ancient variety of endogenous cultivars and maintain the biodiversity of the agriculture of Molise.

## Agricultural landscapes and tourism

To conclude this review of the beautiful agricultural landscape of Molise, it is natural to ask



if an acknowledgement of the value of the agricultural landscape is a profitable endeavour and if tourism can benefit from it. We will briefly try to illustrate the various reasons why the link between agricultural landscape and tourism is valid: today, there is an acknowledgement of the value of the agricultural landscape as a profitable enterprise. New funds obtained through the CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) are available for whoever safeguards any complex landscape mosaic, such as that which is characteristic of the Italian rural landscape. Between 2014 and 2020, the CAP will allocate 400 billion Euros to European community agriculture. One billion two hundred million Euros will be allocated to agro-environmental projects, the so-called “greening”. One of the most important objectives, which indicates a watershed, is the incentives given for those who diversify the crops cultivated. Agriculture is definitely the activity more closely connected to the land for the production of goods and services which have the characteristics of public goods such as landscapes; common goods such as parks; cultural goods linked to tradition; and goods and services such as handicrafts, tourism, and, in particular, “green” tourism.

Green tourism is connected to the need to escape the city and to come into contact with natural environments of different degrees and kinds. A kind of tourism which could be defined as sustainable and which is, and has been, the main point of discussion of international meetings on tourism. One such meeting in 1995 produced the Lanzarote Charter in which an integration between tourism and environmental sustainability was stated as being the desired goal. Of notable importance in terms of achieving sustainable tourism is the European Charter for Rural Areas of 1996, signed by the members of the EU. This charter indicates three principal functions of rural space: an economic function for the production of goods and services; an ecological function for the safeguarding of the natural heritage; and a social function for the relationships which are formed between people linked by cultural and social ties. Agricultural landscapes are to be safeguarded in the same way as works of art. The European Landscape Convention of 2000 held in Florence was signed by all the members of the EU. It emphasized the safeguarding of every kind of landscape, both those of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas, even if degraded. The preamble states: “that the landscape is a key element of individual and social well-being and that its protection, management and planning entail

rights and responsibilities for everyone”. The former President of Italy, Giorgio Napolitano, has stated that The Italian landscape is an unmistakable feature of our national identity and an essential factor of attraction and strength of Italy in the new international context”. An acknowledgement of the value of disadvantaged areas offers an excellent opportunity for the spatial redistribution of tourism. Tourism should respect the specific characteristics of local areas as well as the delicate ecological balance distinguishing each area. This entails trying to reduce to a minimum the construction of new structures and infrastructures. An appreciation of endogenous resources, which are a characteristic of agricultural landscapes, the high quality of the resources, and good quality tourism, are all essential elements necessary to stimulate tourism. A solidity has to be given to these ideas as otherwise they will simply remain mere slogans without practical consequences. The claim that local environmental resources are of a high quality does not always correspond to reality since it is a practically a widespread claim. Quality tourism is a chain that starts from the land, and includes structures for accommodation, the transport system and land marketing plans. For Italy, and particularly the Molise, it is indispensable to create a demand for tourism which is non exclusively based on the creation of new structures, but on a cultural policy which places history, art and landscape in a central position, in order to make the country’s image more appealing to quality tourism. This is a task for public and private local entrepreneurs. What is required is an efficient advertising campaign which highlights the value of endogenous sources, of which the agricultural landscape is a central feature.

Tourist demand over the past few years seems to be directed towards new forms of tourism, which includes so-called ‘niche tourism’ (*the multiple tourism of the third millennium*). This requires an active rediscovery of landscape, traditions, rurality, and territorial identity. These together constitute the local resources and are the distinctive characteristics of each specific place. These characteristics include the mountain areas, the land and the climate, ways of working the land and rural tourism. The European Commission has defined this last as that kind of tourism specific to: “agricultural areas in which agriculture itself is the main element of attraction and where the offer is based upon local products, food and wine, the landscape, and on an interest in the customs and traditions of a people”.

Following the season of standardised beach



and mountain holidays, which often led to overcrowded for two to four weeks, the tendency today is to satisfy more individual tastes and sensitivities. Interest is being shown in less well known places often ignored by mass tourism, areas which do not possess monuments and art of any great value, but which are characterized by an attractive 'mix' of nature, landscape, architecture, food and wine traditions, local customs and craftsmanship. The post-modern tourist wishes to experience something more natural and less 'artificial', to be a guest and as such 'sacred' (in the sense of being catered for as a unique individual). Often these tourists look for accommodation in old restructured rural buildings which have been given a new lease of life. This is one reason for the success of new forms of hospitality well-represented in Molise in places such as Castropignano, Sepino and other tourist centres, or places like Borgo Albergo di Ripalimolise.

This kind of tourism does not lead to an aggressive violation of the landscape, as it did in the past, with 'concrete jungles' spreading everywhere. This new tourism is based upon the safeguarding of the landscape and an appreciation of all that which already exists.

The disadvantaged areas of Molise might be able to rediscover their identities by transforming what were once weak points into areas of strength. This can be done by rediscovering and favouring a new form of rurality based upon an agriculture linked to other sectors of the economy, primarily tourism, as well as on the fact of being able to experience living in non-degraded areas. This represents a new model of rurality, not insular as in the past, but open to the rest of the outside world through the presence of tourism. Tourism cannot do without a positive image presented to the outside world, "*l'espace touristique, c'est avant tout une image*" ("*tourism is essentially a question of image*") (Miossec, 1997, p. 41). It is essential to have a strong image based on a sense of identity through bringing together all the cultural resources available to an area. A beautiful agricultural landscape and all the values associated with it might carry out this function.

A 'culture of the land' model based upon rural development, multi-functionality, agriculture and quality sustainable tourism, would certainly prove to be successful, above-all for the currently

disadvantaged areas. It requires however, a deep change of attitude on the part of people. The premises for such a change already exist. All that is necessary is to support and strengthen an already-occurring process. This process leads to a different approach towards nature and is based upon coexistence and not exploitation. It is based on an idea of landscapes as aesthetic realities (to be admired) and as ethical realities (to be experienced). Safeguarding the landscape also means safeguarding our own mental and physical health. This however, implies that people are culturally evolved and are aware of the fact that the 'unlimited growth' which we have been applying to date has to stop. An awareness must develop of the fact that our well-being is not tied to consumerism and income, but more fundamentally to the quality of the environment in which we and future generations will live.

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