UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI PADOVA

DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE STORICHE, GEOGRAFICHE E DELL'ANTICHITA'

DIPARTIMENTO DI INGEGNERIA CIVILE, EDILE E AMBIENTALE

CORSO DI LAUREA MAGISTRALE IN LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Master thesis:
The multiple meanings of sustainability: the analysis of two eco-villages in the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines

Supervisor: Prof. Massimo De Marchi

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Summary

Introduction

This study will attempt to show if it is possible to conduct a lifestyle that is sustainable and communitarian from a social, economic and ecological perspective in the current society.

Someone has tried to do this, moving towards a way of living different from the one proposed by western society. The number of people initiating a process of critical re-organization of their daily life in the direction of a drastic reduction of the human impact on the ecosystem is increasing day by day. The experience of eco-villages is only one among the many projects aimed at a radical change in lifestyle that are diffusing in Italy and all over the world. An eco-village consists of a group of at least five people, not coming from the same household, that have decided to live together and share their everyday life, following values of mutual support, solidarity and respect for the environment.

This study focuses its attention on two eco-villages in the area of the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines. One experience is still existing (Granara eco-village, Parma), the other one is no more active (Cà Morosini eco-village, Reggio Emilia).

The research is based on fieldwork and on interviews with people who are currently living or who have lived within those two realities.

Italian eco-villages are connected together through a network called R.I.V.E. (Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici), that, through the work of volunteers, enables all Italian eco-villages residents to share knowledge, keep in touch, exchange ideas, experiences and suggestions. The research analyzes the role that this network has in developing the experience of eco-villages in Italy and in connecting Italian "sustainable" projects (groups of solidarity purchasing, co-housing, time banks).

The final goal of this study is to give an overview of the Italian present situation, clearly affected by the economic crisis. The etymology of the term "crisis" refers to a transitory period. As a result, "to be in crisis" implies that we suppose that this is a temporary period within a longer period of equilibrium. For this reason we are unavoidably in a time of transition: something has changed, carrying the world towards another direction, another equilibrium, that is more sustainable for both the humans and the ecosystem. Eco-villages and other experiences are pointing in the direction of this global movement.

The study begins with a research on the definition of the term "sustainability", its evolution, its relationship with the concept of development, the wide variety of dimensions of which it is composed. A spontaneous question arises from this analysis: is it possible to give a clear definition of this word?

O' Riordan (O'Riordan T., 2001, p. ixx) defines sustainability as an "evolutionary, creative and revelatory exploration".

This thesis aims to investigate if the lifestyle, the decisional mechanisms, the technologies adopted, the relational model proposed by the two realities which are the focus of this research and which take part in the R.I.V.E. association, could be

one of the routes that our society is expected to take in order to find a new possible sustainable stability.

1.Sustainability

1.1 What does sustainability mean? The birth of the concept and the three pillars approach

This study focuses its attention on the concept of sustainability; several theorists offered their opinion trying to provide a definition of this term, that nowadays is used to define many things, sometimes very different from each other.

Herman Daly, (Daly H., 2007, p.37), an American economists, trying to clarify the meaning of sustainability posed this questions:

"Exactly what is it that is supposed to be *sustained* in "sustainable" development?"

Is it the ecosystem? Is it the economy? Is it the quality of life of human beings? Is it all these things together? Or what is it?

Many answers have been given. Generally, at the basis of the majority of the definitions there are three main pillars that are supposed to be the object of the sustainability (in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 191):

1. Ecosystem integrity, that means not to provoke irreversible effects on the ecosystem

2. Economic efficiency, that increases if the quantity of non-renewable resources exploited is reduced and that of renewable resources do increase

3. Social equity, intragenerational (among people in the same community) and inter-generational (among present and future generations).

This perspective was emphasized in the "Programme for the further implementation of Agenda 21" (in Lafferty M., Meadowcroft J., 2000, p. 18) adopted at UNGASS in 1997 which described "economic development, social development and environmental protection" as "interdependent and mutually reinforcing components of sustainable development".

The 2005 World Summit of United Nations (UN, 2005 p.2) affirmed the same three pillars in its declaration:

"We reaffirm that development is a central goal in itself and that sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental aspects constitutes a key element of the overarching framework of United Nations activities."

Starting from these three principal aspects several dimensions of sustainability can be better specified.

Among these (in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 192):

- Economic sustainability: sustainable exploitation of the resources, that does not irreversibly compromise their quality and quantity.

- Environmental sustainability: respect of the ecological limits of the environment, it is necessary not to exceed the maximum capacity of disposal and absorption of the ecosystem.

- Demographic sustainability: it is explained with the concept of carrying capacity, that means the maximum population of a species that an ecosystem can support in perpetuity.

- Social sustainability: it can be represented by the equity in the distribution of wealth. It can be distinguished in three different kind of social equity:

a) environmental equity within a region or a nation (that is an equal distribution of environmental resources within a region or a nation and an equal possibility to protect themselves from negative environmental impacts). Environmental inequity can cause a worsening in the general social condition of a group of people.

b) intergenerational equity (that is the need to satisfy the need of future generations, producing long term policies.)

c) international environmental equity that is a particular attention in preventing environmental pollution that has trans-boundary effects.

- Geographic sustainability: it aims to build biodiversity networks to maintain the biodiversity of species and to have a balanced distribution of territory that is harmoniously composed by urban areas (that includes industrial settlement and centres of economic production) and rural areas.

- Cultural sustainability: it implies that the process of modernisation has endogenous roots and follows a continuous cultural line. This concept requires that sustainability is adapted to each reality to whom it is proposed, from this rises the necessity to find various local models of sustainability consistent with local peculiarities.

- Political sustainability: it is in line with social and cultural sustainability, it needs transparent decisional mechanisms in each territorial, administrative and political level in order to actively and directly involve people and local stakeholders in the decision making process for the policies affecting their present and their future.

Other authors have focused their attention on two sorts of "constraints" (Lafferty M., Meadowcroft J., 2000, p. 18) on developmental activities embedded in the notion of sustainable development.

First, there are physical environmental constraints. It means that the maintenance of a certain environmental base is a prerequisite for making continuing development possible.

Second, there are ethical constraints. It is morally right to respect the needs of future generation and world's poor.

Further reflections on the issue are provided by Jacobs (in Dobson A., 1999, p.27) which individuates six core ideas represented by sustainability, referring to commitments to:

1."environment-economy integration" (to ensure a policies coordination of these two issues)

2."futurity" (to take into account the impact of present activities on future generations)

3."environmental protection"

4."equity" (to meeting at least the basic needs of the poor of the present generations

5."quality of life"

6."participation"

The analysis of the concept of sustainability is various and rich. Different kinds and levels of sustainability have been identified in the course of the historical evolution of the term. It is possible to distinguish from strong and weak approaches to sustainability (in Bagliani M., Dansero E., p. 194).

Assuming that, prerequisite for sustainability to exist is the presence of a sense of solidarity towards future generations (this idea is the basis of the Bruntland report definition) that means leaving them a stock of quality of life that is at least, not less than the one of present generations, the two different approaches to sustainability we are going to describe, propose different definitions to "stock of quality of life" .

Weak sustainability approach defines the "stock of quality of life" as the material richness that is the sum of natural capital plus the human-made capital. This vision allows natural and human-made capital substitutability. Differently, strong sustainability approach, assumes that the capital to be left to future generations has to be the same of present ones, it cannot be substituted by human-made capital (in Bagliani M., Dansero E., p. 194).

Daly's definition of sustainability (Daly H., 2007, p.37), considers two different kind of sustainability, utility-based and throughput-based sustainability. From certain aspects this distinction can be considered similar to the dualism: weak versus strong approaches to sustainability.

Utility-based sustainability is similar to weak approaches.

"First, *utility* should be sustained, say the neoclassical economists; that is, the utility of future generations is to be non-declining. The future should be at least as well off as the present in terms of its utility or happiness as experienced by itself. Utility here refers to average per capita utility of members of a generation."

Throughput-based sustainability is closer to strong approaches.

"Second, physical *throughput* should be sustained" say ecological economists; that is, the entropic physical flow from nature's sources through the economy and back to nature's sinks, is to be non-declining. More exactly, the capacity of the ecosystem to sustain those flows is not to be run down. Natural capital is to be kept intact. The future will be at least as well off as the present in terms of its access to biophysical resources and services supplied by the ecosystem. Throughput here refers to total

throughput flow for the community over some time period (i.e., the product of per capita throughput and population)."

Weak and strong sustainability represent the extreme poles, in the middle, closer to one or to the other poles, there can be many kind of sustainable strategies, such as for example "sustainable growth" (weak), eco-modernization and ecological economy (they have a clear environmental perspective, their aim is to reorganize the overall system in order to improve the environmental performances, increasing the efficiency in resource consumption and reducing wastes production), bio-regionalism, localism, zero-growth and de-growth. Those last approaches are all considered strong forms of sustainability, their common trend is a radical critic to the concept of growth and development (Neumayer, 2003, in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 195).

De-growth is intended as the progressive reduction of the societal impacts on the ecosystems and as a re-balancing of economic and social inequalities (in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 196).

The bio-regionalist vision is based on the beliefs that a sustainable approach has to be necessarily based on the specific peculiarities of local environmental resources. Other radical approaches to sustainability propose alternative economies, some of these base themselves on solidarity and reciprocity, frugal consumption styles and empowerment of local economies and peculiarities (in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 196)..

Robert Solow (in Dobson A., 1999, p.125) expresses its preference for weak sustainability; Solow's basic idea is that we are committed "to leave to the future generations the option or the capacity to be as well off as we are", and more "there is no specific object that the goal of sustainability, the obligation of sustainability, requires us to leave untouched". He argues that the best we can do is to maintain a non-diminishing stock of capital in the form of wealth for investment and in the form of productive capacity and technological knowledge. His words clarify this concept "Resources are, to use a favorite word of economists, fungible in a certain sense. They can take the place of each other".

Herman Daly (Daly H., 2007, p. 36) poses its vision more oriented towards throughput sustainability and strong approaches.

"Utility is a basic concept in standard economics. Throughput is not[…]. Nevertheless, I adopt the throughput definition and reject the utility definition, for two reasons. First, utility is non-measurable. Second, and more importantly, even if utility were measurable it is still not something that we can bequeath to the future. Utility is an experience, not a thing. We cannot bequeath utility or happiness to future generations. We can leave them things, and to a lesser degree knowledge. Whether future generations make themselves happy or miserable with these gifts is simply not under our control. To define sustainability as a non-declining intergenerational bequest of something that can neither be measured nor bequeathed strikes me as a nonstarter. I hasten to add that I do not think economic theory can get along without the concept of utility. I just think that throughput is a better concept by which to define sustainability.

The throughput approach defines sustainability in terms of something much more measurable and transferable across generations—the capacity to generate an entropic throughput from and back to nature.[…]

Bringing the concept of throughput into the foundations of economic theory does not reduce economics to physics, but it does force the recognition of the constraints of physical law on economics. Among other things, it forces the recognition that "sustainable" cannot mean "forever." Sustainability is a way of asserting the value of longevity and intergenerational justice, while recognizing mortality and finitude. Sustainable development is not a religion, although some seem to treat it as such. Since large parts of the throughput are nonrenewable resources the expected lifetime of our economy is much shorter than that of the solar system. Sustainability in the sense of longevity requires increasing reliance on the renewable part of the throughput, and a willingness to share the nonrenewable part over many generations. Of course longevity is no good unless life is enjoyable, so we must give the utility definition its due in providing a necessary baseline condition. That said, in what follows I adopt the throughput definition of sustainability, and will have nothing more to say about the utility definition."

Daly (Daly H., in Research on the Scientific Basis for Sustainability, 2006, p.9) defines three conditions for sustainable use of resources and waste disposal:

"1.Renewable resources such as fish, soil, and groundwater must be used no faster than the rate at which they regenerate. (For example, fish stocks may not be depleted faster than the fish can reproduce);

2.Nonrenewable resources such as minerals and fossil fuels must be used no faster than renewable substitutes for them can be put into place. (For example, reinvesting profits from fossil fuel powered processes into renewables such as solar or bio-fuel so that there will be adequate energy available if oil is no longer available);

3.Pollution and wastes must be emitted no faster than natural systems can absorb them, recycle them, or render them harmless. (For example if sewage is released into a lake or river, unless it is at a pace such that aquatic life can absorb the nutrients, it cannot be considered sustainable)."

As it can be noted, Daly's definition of sustainability, such as any definition of sustainability, requires more than a mere technological modernization or a vague tendency to ecological efficiency. Scientific research and technology have to proceed together with the scope to identify, as precisely as possible, what are the conditions of the whole global ecosystem. Technological modernization must be coordinated with constant scientific monitoring of ecological processes, ecosystem mechanisms and social systems and the interactions among them.

1.2 The consolidation of sustainable development as political paradigm

1.2.1 International conventions

"But what could possibly combine ecological protection, economic growth, social justice and intergenerational equity, not just locally and immediately, but globally and

in perpetuity? The answer is sustainable development, which specifies that we can have them all." (Dryzek, 2005, p.145)

Sustainable development process has its first roots in 1972 with the United Nation Conference on Human Development in Stockholm.

The Conference saw the participation of more than one hundred countries and a Plan of Action for the future was written. It contained twenty-six principles for an ecological development, in order to promote a responsible use of resources, to protect the environment and the future generations. The firsts Stockholm principles give an idea of the proposal launched by the Conference (United Nations, 1972):

"1. Man has the fundamental right to freedom, equality and adequate conditions of life, in an environment of a quality that permits a life of dignity and well-being, and he bears a solemn responsibility to protect and improve the environment for present and future generations. In this respect, policies promoting or perpetuating apartheid, racial segregation, discrimination, colonial and other forms of oppression and foreign domination stand condemned and must be eliminated.

2. The natural resources of the earth, including the air, water, land, flora and fauna and especially representative samples of natural ecosystems, must be safeguarded for the benefit of present and future generations through careful planning or management, as appropriate.

3.The capacity of the earth to produce vital renewable resources must be maintained and, wherever practicable, restored or improved."

Even if the Stockholm Conference represents the beginning of the international commitment to the prevention and promotion of environmental integrity, it still offers a partial analysis of the issue. In fact, during the conference great attention received the problems due to industrialization, but a scarce consideration was given to Third World development necessities. In the same year of Stockholm Conference, the Club of Rome (an international organization composed of industrialists, politicians, and academics) published the report "Limit to growth". It gave a major boost to the discourse of limits to development. The report provided a set of computer-generated projections of the global future that showed in graphical terms that if humanity continued on its profligate course then it had at the very most a century before disaster would strike. They asserted that the current lifestyle was provoking the total destruction of planet's resources. The survivalist discourse was protracted by the ecologist Garret Hardin that enounced his ecological Eleventh Commandment: "Though shalt not transgress the carrying capacity" (in Dryzek J. S., 2005, p. 27), where for carrying capacity is intended the maximum population of a species that an ecosystem can support in perpetuity (in Dryzek J. S., 2005, p. 27).

"When the population of a species grows to the point where carrying capacity is exceeded, the ecosystem is degraded and population crashes, recovering only if and when natural processes restore the ecosystem to its previous capacity."

For Meadows and the Club of Rome "a sustainable society is one that has in place informational, social, and institutional mechanisms to keep in check the positive feedback loops that cause exponential population and capital growth". They believed

that sustainability means an end to economic growth. The Club of Rome's survivalist point of view has been kept alive by the Worldwatch Institute, under the leadership of Lester Brown (he had published in 1980 the document "Building a Sustainable Society"), with the publication of annual *State of the World* reports since 1984. The Club's studies have been largely criticized for their catastrophic forecasts that have never really happened, in fact their previsions did not take into account the factors of evolution of technologies, substitution of resources and prices change. Anyway their theoretical contribution has been fundamental because it gave force to the idea that limits to growth do exist. In 1974, the Coyococ Conference marked another historical passage in this long run for sustainability; the debates had a greater opening to Third World countries and was based on an increasing consciousness about limits to growth. The problems of unequal distribution of resources and of finite quantity of global resources were discussed. In particular it was given attention to the concept of "basic needs" and to the necessity to redefine global lifestyles and development objectives. Prior to the 80's, sustainable development concept was developed as an alternative to mainstream interpretation of development intended as mere economic growth. Then, the concept was widened by survivalists limits discourse, rooted in the consciousness that the Earth could not withstand a Third world that duplicated Western levels of affluence. Sustainable development prominence grew with the publication of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's World Conservation Strategy in 1980. In the same year the Brandt report on poverty was published, this was a sign of the emerging growing cognizance about state of the world's conditions.

In 1983, Gro Harlem Bruntland, prime minister of Norway, was asked by the Secretary General of the United Nations to chair an inquiry into interrelated global problems of environment and development. Bruntland's World Commission on Environment and Development published its report, Our Common Future, in 1987. This important document indicated common concerns, common challenges and common endeavours to be taken in consideration to build a sustainable future. The first part (regarding Common Concerns) is organized in three chapters: "a threatened future", "towards sustainable development" and "the role of the international economy". The second part (Common Challenges) contains several chapters dealing with themes such as population and human resources, food security, species and ecosystems, energy, industry, and the urban challenge. The last part (Common Endeavours) talks about the problem of "managing the commons", "peace, security, development and the environment" and about proposals for institutional and legal change. The report (United Nations, 1987) proposed one of the actually most used definition of sustainability:

"Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

Later it declared:

"Sustainable global development requires that those who are more affluent adopt life-styles within the planet's ecological means in their use of energy, for example. Further, rapidly growing populations can increase the pressure on resources and slow any rise in living standards; thus sustainable development can only be pursued

if population size and growth are in harmony with the changing productive potential of the ecosystem.

Yet in the end, sustainable development is not a fixed state of harmony, but rather a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs. We do not pretend that the process is easy or straightforward. Painful choices have to be made. Thus, in the final analysis, sustainable development must rest on political will."

Bruntland's definition does not satisfy everyone, in fact it is still focused mainly on the concept of growth. Later the concept of growth it has been criticized by those arguing that a never ending growth was not sustainable. Theoreticians of de-growth like for example Serge LaTouche promote a new way to look at sustainability, that will change the hugely diffused perspective that an high quality of life is strictly linked with economic richness. Anyway, since the end of 1980's, the paradigm of sustainable development has imposed itself on international attention and it has been taken in consideration in all development policies. Vallega (Vallega 2001, in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 188) defines it a "political paradigm" because it was not born from a specific scientific theory, but from the political will to harmonize two objectives: economic development and environment protection.

Sustainable Development officially acquired international interest at the 1992 United Nation Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro. The summit adopted "Agenda 21", the action plan for Sustainable Development of twentieth century. During the conference was constituted the United Nations Commission for Sustainable Development, the body that will have to implement Agenda 21. The Agenda is composed of four main sections: social and economic dimensions, conservation and management of resources for development, strengthening the role of major groups, means of implementation. Each of these referred to a sustainable way to develop future actions, their prime intention was to give operational structure to the wishes proposed in Bruntland's report to attribute to each state a precise assignment; the first social and economic dimensions for example fostered international cooperation to accelerate sustainable development in developing countries and related domestic policies. Other references were made to the need of demographic sustainability and sustainable human settlement development. The document identified the necessity of sustainable use of resources and territories promoting an active role of several economic and political actors among which local authorities. The agenda proposed economical, technological, legal and educational means of implementation for developing a sustainable future.

Lafferty (Lafferty M., Meadowcroft J., 2000, p. 19) individuated four main goals pursued by the sustainable development concept proposed by UNCED:

"1.to satisfy basic human needs and reasonable standard of welfare for all living beings

2.to achieve more equitable standards of living both within and among global populations"

the change should "3.be pursued with great caution, to avoid disruption of biodiversity and the regenerative capacity of nature, both locally and globally

4.be achieved without undermining the possibility for future generations to attain similar standards of living and similar or improved standards of equity"

Despite its great historical and political value, UNCED caused great debates regarding the scarcity of results to which arrived. In fact, the underpinning conflicts among Northern and Southern countries did not allow to formulate mandatory and operational commitments for the States.

Contemporary to Rio Summit, the Global Forum took place, an important meeting to which participated over six hundred NGOs and grassroots associations from all over the world. The themes of the forum were very similar to the Rio ones, but the outcomes of the meetings were completely different. The concept of development promoted by Global forum participants was totally different: if Governments, despite the evident global environmental damages, did not deny their faith in a never-ending growth as prerequisite for developing society, NGOs and grassroots associations put in discussion not only the concept of development, but also that of sustainable development. They stated that even if motivated by ecological consciousness, governments participating in Rio conference, protracted a model of cultural superiority that would have not respected people's differences.

Several international meetings have followed Rio 1992 focusing on development; moreover, since the beginning of the new century an important changing factor has caught the international attention: the globalization. This phenomenon has rapidly changed the way of communication, as well as the technologies and this would have had meaningful effects on development processes.

The year 1997 was declared "International year for the Environment", it has passed five year from Rio and in New York was held a meeting to verify the status of implementation of Agenda21. Kyoto protocol was drafted that year, a document that represents the fundamental international commitments for monitoring, preventing and adjusting climate change transformations.

In September 2000, New York hosted the Millennium Summit, the famous Millennium Development goals were adopted. 48 indicators were defined in order to measure the progress of sustainable development.

In 2002, Johannesburg hosted the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). In those circumstances, the "Plan of Implementation of Agenda 21" was adopted. Civil society organizations, NGOs and economic actors (following the ideas launched by Agenda 21 in 1992) took part in the conference and it was pointed out the importance of national governments in the adoption of policies for sustainability. Future generations were clearly identified as the object of the actions for a better future.

If from a certain point of view the involvement of civil society and corporations was a positive improvement at international level, from another perspective it meant that businesses did acquire an official role in the rush for sustainable development. A large number of environmentalists were present, but their voice, reminding that a

drastic reduction of economic activities impact on the environment was necessary, was not loud enough.

WWSD outcomes lack of the great ideals of change that were present in Rio declaration; in 2002, only one year later the Twin Towers attack, globalization and terrorism appeared to be the major worries. The document did not make clear reference to sustainability, that remained very much a discourse rather than a list of clear measures to be adopted.

Even the World bank committed itself in the pursuit of sustainability; in 1992 it was published the World Environment Report where it was declared that environmental management and economic development could proceed together. The World Bank also sponsored the research for sustainability indicators as alternative to already well established measures of national wellbeing (such as gross national product).

In 2012, Rio de Janeiro hosted the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development ('Rio + 20'). Heads of State and Government and high-level representatives recognised in the Conference outcome document (The future we want) that the twenty years since the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 have seen uneven progress, including in sustainable development and poverty eradication United Nations, 2012, p.). They emphasized the need to make progress in implementing previous commitments. In particular, the document set out a framework for action covering all three dimensions of sustainable development (environment, social and economic), pointing out that the inclusion (civil society involvement) and green economy are important tools for achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication.

The document stated: "We are convinced that in order to achieve a just balance among the economic, social and environmental needs of present and future generations, it is necessary to promote harmony with nature." (United Nations, 2012, p.66)

Moreover, it recognized the key role of all levels of government and legislative bodies, with a particular acknowledgement to the local and subnational levels: the document highlighted the important role that such authorities and communities can play in implementing sustainable development, including by engaging citizens and stakeholders and providing them with relevant information, as appropriate, on the three dimensions of sustainable development.

At national level, sustainability had several inroads. In 1990, Japan, Norway, Australia adopted national sustainable development programs. In the United States sustainability had its highest moment during Clinton's administration, with direct support from Vice President Al Gore. Except for that period, American sustainability policies have never had great appeal in the Congress, Bryner (2000) expressed clearly USA approach to sustainable development "Sorry, not our problem" (Dryzek J. S., 2005, p. 151). Still in 2014 (in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 116), USA have never ratified Kyoto Protocol, despite at the beginning of the century they were responsible for 36% of global polluting emission. Northern Europe countries took seriously in consideration sustainable development issue. Finland, Norway and Sweden were rated by World economic Forum the most sustainable countries in 2002 (Dryzek, J. S., 2005, p. 150).

1.2.2 European route toward sustainability

The European institutions have incorporated sustainable development in their constituent treaties. At the Paris Council of 1972 Europe started its First Environmental Program. It has been followed by six other Environmental programs until nowadays. Since the end of the 80's in particular the environmental sustainability has come to attention; in 1990, the European Agency for the Environment was created.

The fifth European program on the environment (1993-2000) called "Towards Sustainability" is in line with the Agenda 21 and it can be seen as the passage to a new European perspective on the environment, where sustainability stops to be interpreted as a mere policy for reducing pollution (European Union, 1998). Moreover it is in line with the 1992 European conference at Maastricht were great relevance was given to sustainable growth. Five main targeted sectors (agriculture, transports, industry, tourism and energy) and seven main targeted themes (climate change, air quality acidification, urban environment, coastal zones, waste management, water resources management, nature and biodiversity protection) were identified. Three areas of major risk, industry, nuclear safety, civil protection and environment emergencies, were put in evidence. Seven kind of political instruments were individuated among these: improving environment data quality, scientific research and technological development; sectorial and spatial planning; fair market mechanisms (doing the fair price); promoting public information and quality education; developing professional training and formation; identifying financial support mechanisms. The 5th programme vision focused on re-organizing production processes, promoting materials' recycling and reducing the production of wastes. A great innovation undertaken by the programme was the introduction of voluntary based instruments, that aimed at stimulating private and public organization responsibility to develop and implement form of sustainable production and management. The sixth program (2002-2012) primarily focused on these aspects: climate change, nature and biodiversity, environment and health, natural resources and wastes management. It individuated three sectors of major risk: tourism, transports and agriculture, on which further policies will be adopted in order to promote a better inter-States coordination for the implementation of policies.

The period 2007 – 2013 has been guided by two main European strategies: the Lisbon Strategy and the Goteborg Strategy, that defined how to implement the actions at Community and at national states level. The strategies developed four kind of policies: transversal (among which the environment policy was included), external, citizens directed and sectorial. This mechanism promoted a more integrated approach among disciplines at different political levels: for example, the environmental issue received great attention because it was considered in all its aspects: an integrated plan of action was proved to be necessary in order to organise an effective sustainable policy.

Since Maastricht conference, the concept of sustainable development has been considered issue of European importance; in Amsterdam (1997) "sustainability" was inserted as fundamental principle of the European Constitution draft.

In 2001, the Gothenburg Council approved the "European Strategy for Sustainable Development" that recognised that, in the long term, economic growth, social

cohesion and environmental protection must go hand in hand (the three pillars of sustainability).

The declaration (European Union, 2001, p. 3), stated: "Sustainable development offers the European Union a positive long-term vision of a society that is more prosperous and more just, and which promises a cleaner, safer, healthier environment – a society which delivers a better quality of life for us, for our children, and for our grandchildren." Six priorities were defined: combating poverty and social exclusion, dealing with the economic and social implications of an ageing society, limit climate change and increase the use of clean energy, address threats to public health, manage natural resources more responsibly, improve the transport system and land-use management. Gothenburg strategy were updated by the Renewed European Sustainable Development Strategy (2006) (European Union, 2006, SDS, p. 3).

"The overall aim of the renewed EU SDS is to identify and develop actions to enable the EU to achieve continuous improvement of quality of life both for current and for future generations, through the creation of sustainable communities able to manage and use resources efficiently and to tap the ecological and social innovation potential of the economy, ensuring prosperity, environmental protection and social cohesion."

The 2006 Renewed Strategy identified four key objectives: environmental protection, social equity and cohesion, economic prosperity and objectives aimed at meeting European international responsibilities. Ten policy guiding principles were defined in order to support public administration in the implementation of the strategy: promotion and protection of fundamental rights, solidarity within and between generations, open and democratic society, involvement of citizens, businesses and social partners, policy coherence and governance, policy integration, use of best available technologies (B.A.T.), precautionary principle, polluters pay principle.

"The EU SDS and the Lisbon Strategy for growth and jobs complement each other. The SDS is primarily concerned with quality of life, intra- and inter-generational equity and coherence between all policy areas, including external aspects. It recognises the role of economic development in facilitating the transition to a more sustainable society. The Lisbon Strategy makes an essential contribution to the overarching objective of sustainable development focusing primarily on actions and measures aimed at increasing competitiveness and economic growth and enhancing job creation"

The EU SDS identified the following key challenges: climate change and clean energy, sustainable transports, consumption and production, conservation and management of natural resources, public health, social inclusion demography and migration, global poverty and sustainable development challenges. For each challenge, operational objectives and targets were identified, in particular 122 measurable indicators were defined in order to monitor general objectives, operational objectives and planned actions.

The European Commission approved in march 2010, EUROPE 2020, a strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. This document (European Union, 2010) assessed the overall European situation of crisis and stated:

"We need a strategy to help us come out stronger from the crisis and turn the EU into a smart, sustainable and inclusive economy delivering high levels of employment, productivity and social cohesion."

EU defined where it wants to be by 2020 and proposed some priority targets:

1) 75 % of the population aged 20-64 should be employed, 2) 3% of the EU's GDP should be invested in R&D, 3) the "20/20/20" climate/energy targets should be met (including an increase to 30% of emissions reduction if the conditions are right), 4) the share of early school leavers should be under 10% and at least 40% of the younger generation should have a tertiary degree, 5) 20 million less people should be at risk of poverty.

The European Commission (European Union, 2010, p. 3) put seven flagship initiatives:

""Innovation Union","Youth on the move", "A digital agenda for Europe", "Resource efficient Europe, "An industrial policy for the globalisation era", "An agenda for new skills and jobs2, "European platform against poverty"

It can be noticed that the "sustainability vision" proposed by European programmes have still not put in discussion the concept of growth.

In November 2013, the Seventh European Environment Program has been approved in Strasbourg; it was called "Living well, within the limits of our planet". A particular attention has been given to enhance the sustainability of the Union's cities. It stated (European Union, 2013, p. 196):

"The Union should further promote and, where appropriate, expand existing initiatives that support innovation and best practice in cities, networking and exchanges and encourage cities to showcase their leadership with regard to sustainable urban development."

The main objectives of the 7th European Environment Action Program (7th EAP) are the following:

(a) to protect, conserve and enhance the Union's natural capital; (b) to turn the Union into a resource-efficient, green and competitive low-carbon economy; (c) to safeguard the Union's citizens from environment-related pressures and risks to health and well-being; (d) to maximise the benefits of Union environment legislation by improving implementation; (e) to improve the knowledge and evidence base for Union environment policy; (f) to secure investment for environment and climate policy and address environmental externalities; (g) to improve environmental integration and policy coherence; (h) to enhance the sustainability of the Union's cities; (i) to increase the Union's effectiveness in addressing international environmental and climate-related challenges.

The priority objectives of the 7th EAP, in line with the Rio + 20 outcome document (2012), reflect the three dimensions of sustainable development (environment, social and economic), and recognise that the inclusive and green economy is an important tool for achieving sustainable development and poverty eradication. The program

preamble describes in a few words what is the vision which is intended to help guide action up to and beyond 2020:

"In 2050, we live well, within the planet's ecological limits. Our prosperity and healthy environment stem from an innovative, circular economy where nothing is wasted and where natural resources are managed sustainably, and biodiversity is protected, valued and restored in ways that enhance our society's resilience. Our low-carbon growth has long been decoupled from resource use, setting the pace for a safe and sustainable global society."

Then, the program indicates for each priority objective operational targets to be necessarily reached. Some of these, will be described in the following paragraphs. By 2020, the Union has committed to achieve that the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services will be halted, and at least 15 % of degraded ecosystems will be restored; the impact of pressures on the water environment and the air pollution levels will be significantly reduced; the land will be managed sustainably and soils and forest protection measures will be developed and implemented. The Union has committed to reduce GHG emissions by 80–95 % compared to 1990 levels; the overall environmental impact of all major economic sectors will be reduced and resource efficiency improved. In particular more sustainable consumption patterns and lifestyles will be promoted; the waste managing will not cause harm to health and the environment. In order to safeguard the Union's citizens from environment-related risks to health, many measures will be undertaken, among these: it will be used only plant protection products not having any harmful effects on human health or unacceptable influence on the environment.

In line with the Aarhus Convention, the European institutions have committed to ensure transparency, inclusiveness and a better accessibility to environmental data. The programme main goals aim at promoting an integrated approach to the environmental issue. The European States have committed to include environment relevant targets and objectives in any sectoral policies at Union and Member State level. The elaboration of policies for sustainable urban planning and design (including transports, sustainable buildings, energy efficiency and urban biodiversity conservation) has been recognised as a matter of primary importance. The Union has committed to provide an effective support to national, regional and international efforts to address environmental and climate-related challenges and to ensure sustainable development (European Union, 2013).

1.2.3 Local sustainable development

As it has been stated at the beginning of the chapter, the concept of sustainable development has been taken into account since the consciousness that western countries growth path could not be followed by developing countries has increased. If those latter had carried on the same development strategies of the richest states, the global ecosystem would have been drastically damaged.

"Economic growth is still necessary to satisfy the legitimate needs of the world's poor,[...] but should be guided in ways that are both environmentally benign and socially just."(Dryzek J. S., 2005, p. 153)

Several paths have been proposed to foster this "sustainable way" of acting, both at global and at local level.

"It is better to think of sustainable development […] as at most a discourse that will inspire experimentation with what sustainable development can mean in practice. Sustainability, like democracy, is largely about social learning, involving decentralized, exploratory, and variable approaches to its pursuit. Sustainable development (unlike survivalism) can be a multilayered and multifaceted enterprise. Rather than try to impose a common definition replete with an associated set of precise goals, a "decentered" approach would stress pluralistic and local experimentation." (Dryzek J. S., 2005, p. 158)

Since the middle of the 90's the concept of sustainable development has had a great success, overarching all the other ideas regarding the relationship between man and the environment. Dealing with environmental issues could not avoid taking into consideration sustainability. The problem is that the concept of sustainable development has not a clear and common definition and it is comprised of too many ideas. Thus some theoreticians believe that this aspect might limit the capacity of this concept to have an efficient implementation in the reality.

Others (in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 193), on the contrary, think that the ambiguity of the concept represents the only point in common among all the different definitions, this means the possibility to adapt the concept to the local characteristics of each different reality.

To synthesize this reflection Redclift (Redclift, 1991, in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 194) gave a precise expression, affirming that sustainable development: "means different things to different people".

In this sense (in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 194), "from sustainable development comes the possibility of a decentred approach to the pursuit of sustainability."

In recent years in particular, many theoretician supported the idea of a multi-layered approach to the concept of sustainable development. Bagliani and Dansero underlined that sustainability does not make reference to an abstract space, an homogeneous background, nor a dehumanized natural environment. It is important to consider that sustainability has a territorial dimension.

For De Matteis (De Matteis G., 2005, in Di Bella E., Province of Torino, 2006) the "local" is taken to mean the geographical scale which allows the interactions typical to physical closeness: face-to-face relationships, trust, reciprocity, etc; the local environment is a group of environmental local characteristics in which a local network of subjects act. At local level, both the cognitive and material interaction of the local network of actors and the environment and the ecosystem; and the interactive relationship of the local network with the over-local networks (regional, national, European, global), can take place.

The territory (in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 199) is to be considered the appropriate scale to implement processes of sustainable development.

Since the beginning of the 90's, in line with these reflections, local authorities has undertaken several agreements in order to start a process of local sustainable development.

In 1994, at the European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns in Aalborg, Denmark, the Charter of European Cities and Towns Towards Sustainability was adopted. European cities committed themselves to implement a plan of urban sustainability in line also with the proposal of Agenda 21. The charter contained a list of models to sustainably interact with territory and use resources that could be taken into account by local administration. The document established that citizens participation was necessary in the phase of the drafting of local plan for urban sustainability. Long term plan of action were adopted and systems to monitor the efficacy of the proposed actions were developed.

The 2nd European Conference of sustainable cities was held in Lisbon in 1996. Since the first Aalborg meeting, 250 towns have signed up the Aalborg Charter (they were 80 in 1994). In Lisbon was underlined the importance to inform citizens and involve them in the process of transformation of their cities in more sustainable ones.

In 1999, the Italian Local Agenda 21 Coordination was created in Ferrara. Local governments voluntarily committed to the definition and implementation of an action plan for sustainable development involving the local community which is called to participate in the process. Moreover, local administration committed to the diffusion of Local Agenda 21 and to cooperate with international networks of local administrations.

One year later, the third European Conference on Sustainable Cities & Towns was held in Hannover, to which 250 local authorities participated.

Hannover declaration (Hannover Call, 2000) preamble stated:

"We believe that the economy – as the human activities that process natural resources into goods and services that satisfy human and societal needs – must become socially just and ecologically efficient, avoiding unnecessary consumption of non-renewable resources. We accept shared responsibility for sustainable development."

In 2002, an important meeting was held in Johannesburg; Representatives of 23 Regional Governments and several associations of Regional Governments met together during the World Summit on Sustainable Development. They declared to be conscious that they were by reason of scale, in many circumstances best placed to address specific sustainability issues and in other circumstances they were essential partners in solidarity with other spheres of government and civil society for integrated and coordinated policy and implementation. Johannesburg's participants committed by 2015 to reduce the number of people without drinking water of 50% and to provide them access to public health services; to improve the access to modern and financially sustainable energy services; to improve the access of goods from developing world to international market; to increase the technological partnerships; to improve the access for a quality education for all.

A great importance in the path of local sustainability have the Aalborg commitments (2004). During the fourth European Conference on sustainable cities, 14 principles and 10 commitments were drafted. In the document (Aalborg+10, 2004) local governments declared:

"Our vision is of cities and towns that are inclusive, prosperous, creative and sustainable, and that provide a good quality of life for all citizens and enable their participation in all aspects of urban life."

They committed to adopt sustainable measures to improve the quality of their administrative performance in relation to these ten issues: governance, local management toward sustainability, natural common goods, responsible consumption and lifestyle choices, planning and design, better mobility and less traffic, local action for health, vibrant and sustainable local economy, social equity and justice, local to global. The Aalborg document pointed out that local authorities had to set individual local targets within 24 months following the date of their ratification, to set time frames related to the targets that were suitable to demonstrate progress on their commitments, to make a regular Aalborg Commitments monitoring review of the achievements available to the citizens and to the European Sustainable Cities and Towns network. The Aalborg commitments met the Thematic Strategy on the Urban Environment approved in 2006 by the Commission of European communities in Brussels. The main objectives of the strategy (European Union, 2006, Thematic strategy on the urban Environment, p. 4-9) aimed

"to contribute to a better implementation of existing EU environment policies and legislation at the local level by supporting and encouraging local authorities to adopt a more integrated approach to urban management and by inviting Member States to support this process and exploit the opportunities offered at EU level."

The document evidenced the necessity to have an integrated approach to environmental management at the local level based on effective consultation of all stakeholders. Great attention was given to the issue of transports: a guidance on sustainable urban transport plans was provided in order to suggest to local administration a list of best practices that could use to develop their own strategies. The commission strongly encouraged member states to develop programmes to promote sustainable construction in their towns, to promote energy efficiency and use of renewable energy among local and regional actors, to make an appropriate land-use planning. Improving sustainable urban design would mean a significant reduction of urban sprawl, of the loss of natural habitats and biodiversity, air pollution and noise, encourage cycling and walking, and improving European citizens quality of life. Attention has been given attention to wastes reduction policies and recycling.

In 2007 the European commission prepared a guidance (European Union, 2007) on Integrated Environmental Management that contained guidelines for local administration in order to support them in the organization of local action plans on sustainability. The guidance suggested organizing the plan in a series of ordered passages: the implementation of an analysis of the local context, the definition of clear objectives, the approval of the plan by political actors, the implementation, the monitoring and conclusion phases.

Moreover the commission proposed ten issues that the Integrated Environmental Management (IEM) could address (improving water quality, improving waste management, increasing energy efficiency and use of renewable energy, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving outdoor air quality, improving urban transport, preventing and reducing noise and protecting quiet areas, better local governance, better land use and planning, increasing biodiversity and green space, reducing environmental risks).

The 5th European Sustainable Cities and Towns Seville Conference (2007) gave a major boost to local governments asking them to sign up the Aalborg Commitments. At Dunkerque 6th Conference (2010) local governments convened together and adopted the slogan "Creating innovative, sustainable and inclusive communities" under which committed to 14 actions to carry on in their territories.

Last year the 7th Conference of Sustainable Cities and Towns took place in Geneva (2013) with the name: "A green and socially responsible economy: a solution in times of crisis?" (ICLEI European Secretariat GmbH (ICLEI Europe), Service Agenda 21 – Ville durable, 2013). The European Sustainable Cities Platform was launched; it consists in an information hub for local governments, organizations involved in urban sustainability at the European level, and interested individuals. It aims to bring together all relevant partners working on issues around sustainable cities, and offers a one-stop shop for any local community trying to find the right "entry door" for engaging in sustainability action.

The major themes tackled by the Conference have identified cities as the best place for creating a green and socially responsible economy, where activities that value human relations and ecologically sound processes can be promoted. A number of priorities have been individuated: localization of economic activities, (cities and regions have been encouraged to explore their own strengths and potential before looking beyond their area), public and private sectors cooperation (in order to find new efficient ways of resource managing), social cohesion (to ensure that quality of life is for all), involvement of local and regional authorities into international processes.

These aspects described until this point, represents the European local governments route to sustainability. A slow, but constant movement toward its direction has started, now it is necessary to share best practices, diffuse knowledge and begin to overcome the crisis. The route is long, but documenting each of the small successes in this field contributes to fostering a development in this sense.

Local initiatives can be the base for a process of development really sustainable, able "to sustain" the needs of both people and the environment as well as the interactions among these two; local and bottom up represent two necessary adjectives, but they cannot be considered sufficient; according to Richardson (in Baker S., Young S., Kousis M., Richardson D.,1997, p. 58), sustainability must be also biocentred. It means that the centre of the process of societal change is an harmonious relationship among human being and nature.

"In contrast to the capital-intensive high-tech future offered by the anthropocentric development paradigm, the biocentric paradigm is associated with Right Livelihood, appropriate technology, labour-intensive, small-scale production, the active promotion

of biodiversity, inter- and intra-generational equity and "bottom-up" community control."

1.3 Sustainability as quality of life

As it has been described in the previous paragraphs the term sustainability basically refers to three main aspects: environment integrity, social equity and economic efficiency.

Daly's question: "What is it supposed to sustain?" is very useful in investigating the real sense of this word. This section will be focused on the social aspect of sustainability.

Social sustainability concerns with many different issues. In order to better understand what are the fundamental priorities on which this kind of sustainability has to be founded, a deep analysis of the concept is essential. The world "social" is relating to human society, the interaction of the individual and the group, or the welfare of human beings as members of society. Then, the prior objective that social sustainability is supposed to pursue is to create the necessary conditions for human beings' welfare.

The biocentric approach to sustainable development proposed by Richardson (Baker S., Young S., Kousis M., Richardson D., 1997, p. 43-45) aims to establish an harmonious relation between the human beings and the ecosystem, promoting a sustainable way of living that includes the social, the economic and the environment aspects.

"There are two basic approaches: the antrophocentric, sometimes referred to as the environmental, and the biocentric, sometimes referred to as the ecological or Gaian. The former approach, adopted by the traditional political parties, by business and trade union interests, and by governments and bureaucracies generally - the European Union among them - presupposes no great changes in the political and economic process or the relationship between humankind and nature. In contrast, the biocentric approach, adopted by ecological interest groups and the majority of Green parties, is predicated upon a fundamental change in the relationship between humankind and nature, with consequential social, political and economic implications."

"The biocentric approach to the human condition is radically different. It is anti-materialist in that it eschews the pursuit of wealth as a goal in itself and seeks to enhance the non- material (some would say spiritual) dimension of the human experience. There is emphasis on the quality of life as distinct from the quantity of material possessions, on feelings and values, on the inner rather than the outer self. Partly this is a question of recognizing the wholeness of the self (material and non-material) as well as the wholeness of the planet. But more fundamentally, from the point of view of the present chapter, it is a question of recognizing that the pursuit of wealth through industrial expansion and economic growth is ultimately incompatible with the Earth's finite resource base. Central to this approach is the view that the Earth's resources should be used as capital rather than as income, otherwise humankind is merely consuming what rightly belongs to future generations. The

concept is that of Right Livelihood. Consumption should be based on human need rather than human greed."

This vision poses the pursuit of quality of life as a prerequisite for reaching a real sustainable development, that will be possible only if a radical change in the relationship between humankind and nature will take place.

Still, the majority of policies developed by states and local administration persist in associating sustainable development to economic growth. On the basis of this assumption, the current most diffused methods of measurements of national well-being are economic, such as the GDP. These kind of measurements do not provide the adequate information to reach a real sustainable development that includes all the aspect described before. For sure, they do not offer information about the welfare of people. Paradoxically if more people need medicines, it will result in a higher level of national well-being. In fact, more people buying medicines, means an increase in GDP.

Is not people's well-being something the State has to take care of?

It is not scientifically demonstrable that national economic growth corresponds to individual growth, physical and psychological well-being, human needs satisfaction and consequently to an increased level of social sustainability.

It is essential that the change of the society is oriented to a higher level of wellbeing for all, in order to reach an higher level of sustainability also from the social and relational point of view. It is certainly very difficult to measure if a society is walking along this path, anyway, some indicators have been created, which attempt to focus on new domains, different from the economic one. The state of Buthan, for example, has been experiencing the Gross Nation Happiness Index for a few years (Alkire S., Ura K., Wangdi K., Zangmo T., 2012, p. 1).

"The GNH Index is meant to orient the people and the nation towards happiness, primarily by improving the conditions of notyet-happy people."

"The GNH Index provides an overview of performance across domains of GNH (psychological wellbeing, time use, community vitality, cultural diversity, ecological resilience, living standard, health, education, good governance)."

The index integrates together several aspects of human life; the main idea on which it is based is that human happiness is a multidimensional concept influenced by ecological resilience as well living standards and all the other domains indicated by the Centre for Buthan studies.

Each facet of human being's existence is correlated to each other. Both Richardson's biocentric approach and GNH Index are based on this common awareness. Social, environmental and economic sustainability are components of a sole objective. None of this aspect can be reached without one of the others. They are completing each other.

Social sustainability means reaching a lifestyle that is equal, just for all, but also that is of good quality for all. Being aware of the fact that human life is necessarily

connected to all the other human lives and to the global ecosystem, can guide human strengths towards this kind of sustainability and consequently to the improvement of each human being's quality of life.

According to Serge Latouche (Latouche S., 2005, p. 82), perhaps the main intellectual Francophone reference on de-growth,

"since we are aware of the damages caused by the development, we need to aspire to a better quality of life, not to a never-ending GDP increase."

"the post-development is necessarily multi-dimensional. It consists in the research of methods for collective self-realization that do not promote a material welfare that destroys the environment and the social ties. The aim of a good quality of life is declined in multiple forms, that are different for each context."

The author advocates a fundamental change of key references such as the propositions and principles guiding the economy. He opts for a society of de-growth; this latter should be understood as a "society built on quality rather than on quantity, on cooperation rather than on competition […] humanity liberated from economism for which social justice is the objective. […] The motto of de-growth (Martínez-Alier J., Pascual U., Vivien F., Zaccai E., 2010) aims primarily at pointing the insane objective of growth for growth. De-growth is not negative growth, a concept that would be contradictory and absurd, meaning stepping forward while going backward."

According to Bertrand Louard (in Latouche S., 2005, p. 79):

"Another form of wealth must be invented; a new wealth that is not based on the quantity of goods consumed or actions exchanged, but on the contrary a richness of meanings and expressions, that reflect and at the same time that build the social relationships and the relationships between men and nature."

"By denying the regenerative capacity of the nature and by degrading the natural resources to *raw materials to be exploited* and not considering them as *source of life*, the modern world has cancelled the relation of reciprocity between the man and the nature."(Latouche S., 2005, p. 98)

In order to re-establish a relation of reciprocity between man and nature Latouche's has developed a program around "8 Rs": Revalue, Re-conceptualize, Restructure, Redistribute, Re-localize, Reduce, Reuse and Recycle. He took inspiration from the "six Rs" proposed by the consumption treaty of Rio's 1992 Global Forum (Haas P. M., Parson E. A., Levy M. A., 1992). The original document was based on the descending hierarchy of "revalue, restructure, redistribute, reduce, reuse, recycle."

The essential idea on which the Rs's vision is based is that the diffuse belief "more is better" cannot bring the society to a sustainable future. It is fundamental to revaluate the principles on which the human life is founded and modifying the main concepts on which the society is based. The concepts of scarcity and abundance must be radically transformed. The present economy, in fact, turn the natural abundance into scarcity, artificially creating sense of lack and false needs in the human beings. The change of values has to be followed by a new restructuring of the societal models of producing and living, based on social structures providing a high quality lifestyle for

all. This is based on the idea that a more just distribution of resources is needed. Latouche's imagines also a redistribution of the work. Many researches carried out by the Wuppertal Institute (Sachs W., Morosini M., 2011) highlight that a growing number of people would like to have more time to spend with their family, for developing hobbies, or just to relax. Contemporarily, one of the biggest societal problems is represented by the high unemployment rate. Latouche's hypothesizes that if policies aimed at redistributing working hours among employed and unemployed people were developed, the jobs would increase and the quality of life of those who are actually overburdened by an excessively heavy job would improve. He proposes a reduction of the society speed, in order to allow people to live well their time and their space. High consumption level does not necessarily corresponds to high happiness level.

Relocalising means going in the opposite direction compared to the logic of de-localizing production in countries where it is cheaper. Instead, it implies promoting a new localized life, closer to the needs of people and of the territory.

"It is not to develop many small realities avulse from the global context, but on the contrary to promote a systemic re-appropriation of the territory and developing a network of local experiences that can revitalize the desert created by the globalization process."(Aloi M., 2008, p. 147)

Reducing quantity and improving quality, it is what it is proposed also according to the "Politics of sufficiency" (Schneidewind U., Zahrnt A., 2014) of Uwe Schneidewind (president of Wuppertal Institute)[1] and Angelika Zahrnt (Wuppertal Institute's research staff). The underlining idea of this politics is expressed in these words:

"It is about having enough to meet one's needs – while thinking not only about material needs."

"Sufficiency is about the quality of 'being in the world'. About finding the right relationship to space and time, to possessions and the market."

"So a change of course towards sufficiency means correcting the balance. It is not about abandoning the impressive historical gains in productivity, but about a new communion of productive progress and frugality."

Wolfgang Sachs (in Schneidewind U., Zahrnt A., 2014, p. 14) introduced the concept of sufficiency into the sustainability debate in Germany at the beginning of the 1990s. He encapsulated it in four principles, the English translation of these principles is the four 'Lessens', which express the idea that we need to lessen our speed, our distance, the encumbrance of our acquired possessions, and the role of commerce and the market in our lives.

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[1] The Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy has the legal status of a non-profit limited company (gemeinnützige Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung, according to German law) and receives basic funding from the Land North Rhine-Westphalia. It is in the responsibility of the Ministry of Innovation, Science and Research of the Land North Rhine-Westphalia. Third-party funding supports most of the Institute's budget and projects.

These are 'Slower, less, better, finer'. Better and finer, reducing and revaluing, toward a society oriented to quality instead of quantity, this is the slogan toward which a sustainable change has to move.

1.4 Some Italian experiences of sustainability

For several years, new sustainable lifestyle oriented experiences have been developed. Individuals, associations, local administrations have begun walking around the route to sustainability; creative proposals, innovative solutions, small steps have been done in this direction. Realities such as co-housing, eco-villages, transition towns, cittaslow, solidarity based purchasing groups, social streets, mutual auto-organization groups (Mag), permaculture academy, guerrilla gardening, WWOOFing (World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms), swap weeks, car pooling… each one of these represent a facet of a wider change, they are new way to consider economy and the daily life, all of them can be seen in the perspective of Sach's four lessens: slower, less, better and finer.

1.4.1 Co-housing

Co-housing (The Cohousing Association of the United States website) literally means living together, in fact it indicates

"a type of intentional, collaborative housing in which residents actively participate in the design and operation of their neighbourhoods. Cohousing provides the privacy we are accustomed to within the community we seek. Cohousing residents consciously commit to living as a community. The neighbourhood's architectural design encourages both individual space and social contact. Private homes contain all the features of conventional homes, but residents also have access to extensive common facilities such as open space, courtyards, a playground, and a common house."

In Italy there are several experiences of people that live in cohousing; there is also a network for cohousing that consists of associations and groups of people that promote or experience cohousing on the territory (Editrice AAM Terra Nuova website).

1.4.2 Eco-villages and the Italian Network of Ecologic Villages (R.I.V.E.)

The reality of eco-villages have existed on the Italian territory and all around the world for several years. Eco-villages have been started from people that intentionally have decided to share the same lifestyle and the same housing conditions in order to direct their lives towards a more sustainable existence model that is of quality for all. These people are moved by a strong sense of respect for the Earth and its nature, and by a desire to live in solidarity with the other human beings. They often live in rural areas, farm a field and try to create conditions for economic self-sufficiency in their villages.

An eco-village, as it states the Global Ecovillages network (GEN) definition is

"a human-scale settlement consciously designed through participatory processes to secure long-term sustainability. All four dimensions (the economic, ecological, social

and cultural) are seen as mutually reinforcing." (Global Ecovillage Network Europe website)

The Italian Network of Ecologic Villages (RIVE) defines it as

"a reality consisting of a minimum of five adult people not coming from the same household and not having parental bonds among them, that live together, share the same living place and that have a common project of sustainability: ecological, economic, social, cultural in order to achieve both individual and collective growth. These conditions must have existed for at least two years." (Rete italiana Villaggi Ecologici, 2013)

The Italian Network of ecologic villages was born in 1996 with the aim of connecting these heterogeneous realities, spread in the Italian territory and to support the creation of new eco-villages. At present the Italian eco-villages (established and developing realities) are more than 40.

1.4.3 Transition towns

The Transition Towns (Transition network website) have been developed on the base of a wider movement (the transition movement) which has been founded by a teacher, Rob Hopkins, in 2006, in Great Britain. The Transition is a cultural movement that has the scope to orient the society: to a new form of living less reliant on fossil fuels and on over-exploitation of other planetary resources; to a reduction of carbon emissions; to an improved wellbeing for all and stronger local economies. The movement has been diffusing all around the world and it is composed of a wide network. The Italian network aims to inform, inspire, encourage, support and train those who would adopt and implement the Transition model within their community starting with an initiative of local transition.

The Transition strategies have the scope to re-organize new energy plans, localize the production and the resources of the communities (food, goods and services production). Transition projects rise from the intentional commitment of citizens to reorganize the economic and social model of their territory; citizens commit together to start a process of change. Transition strategies are practical and good-sense based, they are founded on strong local relationship networks. In Italy many towns, on the base of the choice of their citizens, have started processes of transition. One of the most famous Italian transition town is Monteveglio, Bologna (Transition Italia website).

1.4.4 Cittaslow

The Movement of "cittaslow" (Cittaslow International website) was born in 1999 in a little town of Tuscany. The basic idea on which it is founded is the necessity of re-thinking the town, based on the improving of life quality and on the principles of the larger "slowfood" movement (based on the idea that food is tied to many other aspects of life, including culture, politics, agriculture and the environment. Humans' food choices can influence how food is cultivated, produced and distributed, and as a result bring about great change towards a good, clean and fair society). The majors of Bra, Orvieto and Positano have answered to the ideals of "cittaslow" since the first development of "cittaslow" philosophy.

"The Slow Cities movement promotes the use of technology oriented to improve the quality of the environment and of the urban fabric, and in addition the safe-guarding of the production of unique foods and wine that contribute to the character of the region.

In addition, Slow Cities seek to promote dialogue and communication between local producers and consumers. With the overarching ideas of environmental conservation, the promotion of sustainable development, and the improvement of the urban life, Slow Cities provide incentives to food production using natural and environmentally-friendly techniques (one method for this promotion is through the Presidia)."

1.4.5 Solidarity based purchasing groups and Solidarity Economy Network

G.A.S. is an acronym for the Italian expression "Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale" (solidarity based purchasing groups). They are a number of consumers who cooperate, on a voluntary base, in order to buy food and other commonly used goods directly from the producers or from big retailers at a discounted rate (Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale's website). The founding idea does not only come from the need to have discounted goods, but primarily, from the expression of a critical approach to today global economic model and lifestyle of consumerism. Usually people joining together in solidarity purchasing groups share the following values: promotion of consumers' awareness of their role and power; sustaining local products (or, if not local, the fair trade ones) coming from farms and enterprises that operate legally, respecting workers and environment (often they sustain organic food producers (Colombo L. A., 2013); encouraging the relationship between producers and GAS members, and the solidarity and fraternity among them.

A Solidarity Purchasing Groups network currently exists; nowadays the Italian network counts about nine hundred solidarity based purchasing groups registered on www.retegas.org website, and many others who are not registered.

The "retegas" can be put beside to the "RES" (Rete di Economia Solidale website) that stands for "Rete di Economia Solidale" (Solidarity Economy Network) that connects all the realities of "other" economies existing in Italy.

1.4.6 Social streets

The first social street was born in Bologna, in September 2013. The initial idea was born from the facebook group "Residenti in Via Fondazza – Bologna" (Via Fondazza Residents - Bologna). The aim of the social street (Social Street Italia website) is to create social relationships among people living in the same street to live well in the neighbourhood, to share common needs, to know people and share skills, to create collective projects, and to pursue a common benefit from the creation of a positive social network.

In order to reach this objective social streets create close groups on Facebook. Since a year from the foundation of the first social street many others have been born in all the Italian territory. The social streets map can be found on the website www.socialstreet.it, that is regularly updated by the "Via Fondazza" social street-founders.

The "Social street" represents a laboratory of social sustainability, of re-appropriation of the territory and of the town. Improving social relationships means promoting a spirit of cooperation among citizens and improving mutual support (transport sharing, exchange of goods or skills, conflict reductions).

1.4.7 Mutual auto-organization groups (Mag)

"Mag" is an acronym for the Italian expression "Mutua AutoGestione" that means Mutual auto-organization. It is a cooperative society, composed of natural and legal persons, that performs a financial activity in order to sustain the solidarity economy, the innovative and eco-friendly systems of production and exchange, the social integration. The first "Mag" was born in 1978 in Verona, from the idea of offering micro-loans to those who had no access to the banks credit. These realities have spread in all the Italian territory and continue sustaining small productive realities, social enterprises, and initiatives of "new solidarity economy". The "Mag"s (Tedeschi Di Dario F., 2005) propose a new finance that is ethical and supports those who would not be financed by traditional banking circuits.

The Mag6 of Reggio Emilia (Mag6 website) describes the Mag as:

"a network of people, groups, enterprises, that aspire to a fair and just economy, sharing what they are and what they have (money, time, skills, information, goods, services), joining together on the base of common values (peace, solidarity, ecology, inter-culturalism, critical approach to the dominant economic model), […] and cooperating for the common welfare."

1.4.8 Permaculture academy

The permaculture theory (Accademia Italiana Di Permacultura website) is based on an integrated vision of the environment and the planet in all its components. It is based on three principles: taking care of the earth, taking care of human beings, limiting the resource consumption to human essential needs and sharing them equally. Permaculture consists in an integrated planning of the ecosystem with the aims: to create a sustainable, harmonious and pleasant environment; to develop a conscious and ethical conservation of all the productive ecosystems that present the diversity, the stability and the flexibility of the natural ecosystems. Permaculture can be applied to a balcony, a small garden, a big piece of land or a natural area, a house in rural or urban area, as well as economic strategies and social structures. Its core principle encapsulates ecology, geography, anthropology, sociology and planning. It can be defined as permanent agriculture for a permanent culture. It means that human culture cannot survive without a long term project of sustainable and ethical management of the earth. In Italy the Permaculture movement has been developing for a few years. In 2006 the Italian Permaculture Academy was officially founded as a non-profit organization.

1.4.9 Guerrilla gardening

The Guerrilla Gardening movement (Guerrilla gardening website) consists of free citizens that are passionate of green and that have voluntarily committed to re-green the urban space. Their actions are called "green-attacks" and are performed in the logic of radically opposing the urban degradation. The principal activity of the group is

planting flowers and trees in order to re-shape the town in a greener perspective and taking care of forgotten areas of the urban space. The Guerrilla Gardening movement was born in Italy from the action of a group of Milan's youth and has been diffusing in all the Italian territory. The actions are documented and reported on the website in order to provide useful information to whom aspire to plan a " green attack" on his/her territory. The movement represents a spontaneous example of re-appropriation of the territory based on direct citizens' actions that aim to create a better and more sustainable environment.

1.4.10 World Wide Opportunities on Organic Farms (WWOOF)

The WOOF (WOOF Italia website) has the purpose to offer the possibility: to interested people to visit and get to know about organic farms and rural project in all over the world; to organic farms, eco-villages or rural projects to host people. In return for volunteers help, WWOOF hosts offer food, accommodation and opportunities to learn about organic lifestyles.

The WWOOF website gives this definition:

"WWOOF is a worldwide movement linking volunteers with organic farmers and growers to promote cultural and educational experiences based on trust and non-monetary exchange, thereby helping to build a sustainable global community."

WWOOF is present in many countries in the world, in Italy it became an officially recognised voluntary organisation in 2001. People interested in offering or promoting an experience in an organic farm or another smallholding can become member of the WWOOF (paying a membership fee). The membership card provides WWOOFers (those who are interested in starting an experience) of an accident insurance and give a legal justification to the presence of a voluntary collaborator on the farms.

1.4.11 Swap weeks

This initiative, to which participate many receptive activities (mostly bed and breakfasts and agro-tourisms) propose "swap weeks" during which money is not accepted, the tourists are hosted for free in change of goods or services. In change of their hospitality, hosts can ask to the guests something they need within a very wide range of things or services (homemade products, music lessons, support in the harvesting activities…). If the hosts do not have specific requirements, the guests can offer their skills or their support. These initiatives developed in Italy five years ago (2009) and it is currently having a great success. It is a new form of solidarity and reciprocity that is based on alternative ideas to the traditional economy. Hosts and guests contact each other through the website of the initiative (La settimana del baratto website).

The "swap week" represents, such as other initiatives of sustainable tourism, a new opportunity to create a network of sustainable relationships, not based on the economic growth, but on the personal and social growth.

1.4.12 Car pooling

The principle on which car pooling is based is very simple: connecting people who need to travel with drivers who have empty seats in their vehicle. In Italy and in many other countries, car pooling has been rapidly diffusing; in fact it offers the possibility to travellers to spend less money, to know people, and at the same time to reduce the number of cars used for transports, safeguarding the environment. This phenomenon represents an example of sustainable way of travelling, that has gained a momentum also due to the great current recession. Sharing time, services and resources is the direction towards which is directing to overcome the crisis. The most famous Italian website for connecting people willing to share transport is BlaBlaCar (Bla bla car website).

2. Eco-villages

2.1 What are the eco-villages?

The expression "eco-village" stands for ecological village. It is not easy to give a precise explanation of this expression because one of the main characteristics of these realities, that in the last years have spread on the Italian territory and all over the world, is their high level of differentiation and heterogeneity.

The definition of eco-village presented in the "Basic Agreements" (Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici, 2013) of the Italian association of eco-villages gives this meaning to the word "eco-village":

"a reality consisting of a minimum of five adult people not coming from the same household and not having parental bonds among them, that live together, share the same living place and that have a common project of sustainability: ecological, economic, social, cultural in order to achieve both individual and collective growth. These conditions must have existed for at least two years."

People that live together, share the same living place and have a common project on sustainability. These three common characteristics represent the basis requirements an eco-village is supposed to have to be considered as such. In the course of time many different acceptations have been given to this term.

The first appearance of the word "eco-village" was in September 1991, arranged by Diane and Robert Gilman of the Context Institute in Seattle (Context Institute website)[2]. In their report, "Ecovillages and Sustainable Communities", that have been commissioned to them by Hildur and Ross Jackson, responsible for the charitable entity Gaia Trust[3] in Denmark, they came up with a definition (Gaia Trust website) of an eco-village as,

"a human scale, full-featured settlement, in which human activities are harmlessly integrated into the natural world, in a way that is supportive of healthy human development and can be successfully continued into the indefinite future."

Diane and Robert Gilman observed that the common character between all the eco-villages was the value system rather than physical structures. Then, it is evincible that a fixed standard an eco-village is supposed to accomplish does not exist. Each one has its own look and character, according to location, climates and the cultural background of those who create it.

The expression "eco-village", as we stated before, indicates the existence of an ecological establishment of people. The adjective "ecological" refers to many aspects; firstly to the environmentally friendly technologies on which the village will

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[2] Context Institute is an independent non-profit organization, founded in 1979 by Robert and Diane Gilman, focused on developing and implementing sustainability's lifestyles.

[3] Gaia trust supports sustainability projects around the world (in particular have supported the Global Ecovillage Network and the Gaia Education project).

be based (building, energy and resources supplying, transports…) in order to have the lowest possible environmental impact on the territory and respecting its carrying capacity. Many eco-villages (Sevier L., (2008, p. 37) attempt to reduce the need for fossil fuels, grow their own food, make use of ecological technologies for heating, electrical and water systems.

The adjective "ecological" can be also referred to social aspects (Guidotti F., 2013, p. 212); many eco-villages use the so called "ecological communication" (a non-violent methodology for peacefully dialoguing among people; it is often used as tool of conflict resolution). Then, ecological refers to the sustainable relationships that those who live in an eco-village aspire to establish with the whole ecosystem and with the human beings. In this sense, sustainability is one of the founding points of the philosophy of the eco-village, as the RIVE claims in its 2014 booklet (Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici, 2014):

"In fact, the RIVE is made up of communitarian realities which present different philosophical and organizational structure, but that are commonly oriented to a responsible and sustainable model life from ecologic, spiritual, socio-cultural and economic point of views, considering the sustainability as a human group's attitude to satisfy its own needs without reducing, but at the opposite improving the environmental prospects of the present and future generations."

"Ecological and cultural dimension are not to be intended as separate universes, but they are directly interrelated: in fact, the ecological problems cannot be solved without a real social change, going beyond the symptoms and taking care of the causes is necessary." (Anitori R., 2012, p. 54)

As the eco-anarchist Murray Bookchin claims (in Olimpi S., 2003, p. 39), "the attempts to realize a green or ecological capitalism are condemned to be unsuccessful because of the nature of the system in itself, that is of never-ending growth". Bookchin believed that for an ecological society to exist, the domination of men on other men has to stop.

The second term of the expression "eco-village" is the substantive "village". This word well explains the nature of these realities. The eco-villages represent groups of people that undertook a 360 degree approach to sustainability; they offer a complete model of living the modernity that aims to be self-reliant and alternative to the traditional western lifestyle. They are small communities of people having a defined social structure, an own decisional mechanism and sometimes an autonomous economic structure; their aim is to re-create small local societies in which each member give his/her contribution for the persistence of the common welfare. For all these reasons eco-villages can be considered "villages", they are not on the geographical map, but they are new small societies taking care of the territory.

In the "village" perspective, a major accent has the strong sense of community on which the eco-village is based. The small size of the group makes it possible the development of strong ties among its members. Each one is responsible for the collective wellbeing and its contribution is fundamental.

Jan Martin Bang (Bang J. M., 2010, p. 10), counselor and expert of the life in the eco-villages, explained this concept using the following words:

"The main difference among a traditional village and an eco-community is in the disposition to the change and to social creativity"

In fact an eco-village is defined by the most as an "intentional community" (Guidotti F., 2013, p. 18). The difference between an eco-community and a traditional village is in the intentionality from which it rises up: an eco- village is founded on the free will of individuals (Bang J. M., 2010, p. 10).

The concept of small societies in all respects came up in J.T. Ross Jackson's thought (Jackson J.T.R., 2004):

"An eco-village is, ideally speaking, a microcosm of the macrocosm, as it represents in a very small area […] all the elements and all the problems present in the greater society, while providing visible solutions to these problems, whether it be living sustainably, resolving conflicts peacefully, creating jobs, raising children, providing relevant education, or simply enjoying and celebrating life."

Small but vital microcosms composed of individual having common values, which intentionally commit to follow them together.

Actually the Global Ecovillage Network (Global Ecovillage Network Europe website) uses the following definition:

"An intentional or traditional community that is <u>consciously designed</u> through locally owned, participatory processes to regenerate social and natural environments. The four dimensions of sustainability (ecology, economy, the social and the cultural) are all integrated into a holistic approach."

Carefully analysing this transcription, Mimmo Tringale (Anitori R., 2012, p. 46), the director of the magazine AAM TerraNuova, underlines the importance of the "intentionality" of these experiences. They are "intentional, ecologically sustainable, communities". This is the essential peculiarity that makes eco-villages as they are.

"An intentional community is not necessarily an eco-village, but on the contrary an eco-village is always an intentional community".

The Fellowship for intentional communities[4] claims at this regard:

"We believe that intentional communities are pioneers in sustainable living, personal and cultural transformation, and peaceful social evolution." (Fellowship for Intentional Community website)

Going back to the GEN' s definition, an important allusion is given to four dimensions of sustainability; In 1996, Hildur Jackson (in Anitori R., 2012, p. 45) after a big debate among people coming from eco-villages from all over the world, associated them to the four natural elements:

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[4] The Fellowship for Intentional Community (FIC) nurtures connections and cooperation among communitarians and their friends. FIC is a Non Profit that provides publications, referrals, support services, and sharing opportunities for a wide range of intentional communities, cohousing groups, ecovillages, community networks, support organizations, and people seeking a home in community.

"An eco-village is a sustainable settlement in a rural or human environment that respects and restores the circulatory paradigm of the four natural elements, earth, water, fire and air, in the nature and among individuals. The elements comprehend each aspect of the human life: the physical structure (earth), the infrastructures (water), the social structures (fire), the culture (air)."

Jackson (in Anitori R., 2012, p. 45) elaborated a precise theoretical structure, explaining the meaning each of the elements is supposed to have for the eco-village's organization.

"Respecting the earth means that the food has to come from organic agriculture (at least 80%) from the eco-village's bioregion; that green building technologies have to be employed; that vital cycles and waste production is analysed; that nature must be rehabilitated. Respecting the water means taking care of the villages and the bioregion's hydric resources; applying integrated system for the reduction of consumption and for implementing renewable energies; reducing the transports; increasing the use of telematic systems of communication and information. Respecting the fire means implementing a collective decisional structure; developing a sustainable economy; developing a self-reliant system of basic health assistance; developing training centres for collective and individual formation. Respecting the air means creativity, art and personal growth; rituals, celebrations and cultural diversity; a new holographic and circular vision of the world; a route towards peace, love and global awareness."

His elaboration represents the social model proposed by an eco-village, comprehending the resources use, the economic activities, the social structure. Anyway, this has to be considered only a hint he gave to eco-villagers, in fact each village reserves its own strategy to develop its own unique reality.

As it is well perceivable from Rossella Anitori's words (Anitori R., 2012, p. 7), the people who choose the eco-village life are individuals who have started to follow their dreams. In the introduction of her book "Vite Insieme", she describes her first reaction when she had discovered the existence of the eco-villages,

"there were people in Europe, in the United States or in Africa who had managed to shape a world that fitted their desires".

2.2 Eco-villages: origin and diffusion of these realities

The origin of the movement of the eco-villages has its roots in two main different elements. The first one is represented by the communitarian phenomenon and the other one is represented by the increasing awareness about the environmental issues.

The first factor has very ancient roots in the history; examples of "alternative communities" can be easily found in the Christian tradition, that presents many cases of Heretical groups detaching from the mainstream model in search of "authentically Christian" way of living.

Other traces of the communitarian vision have been developed in the nineteenth century; in fact, in line with the "Illuminist" perspective of opposing to the tyranny of

the State and of the Capital, many theoreticians, mainly those having an anarchist and utopist socialist cultural background, found in the "communitarianism", a viable alternative to the society (Olivares M., 2003, p. 6). They thought that National States should have been dissolved in many organized small communities, that would have represented the base for a society founded on the people's will.

Since the 60's, with the rising up of contestation movements of the globalized and capitalist society, many communes spread in America, with the aim to experiment alternatives to the traditional family structure. Grazia and Donata Francescato (Anitori R., 2012, p. 17), in their study about the North American communes, state:

"The communitarian movement can be seen as a reaction to the exasperated individualistic ideology that is expressed by the socio-economic system based on the capitalistic strategy of the corporations. […] The nineteenth century communitarian movement had its origins in Europe and it represented the startup, in the context of the developing American society, of components of classic utopianism. The current communitarianism (that started in the 70's) instead, comes from the American culture, even if it presents itself as an opposition to it."

The new "communitarians" were young people, the most of them having high education levels, that openly contested the bourgeois values, refused the consumerism culture, and believed that the traditional developmental strategies were outdated and a radical change was necessary. Those people decided to move away from the towns with the aim to create libertarian micro-societies. These realities were different from those initiated in the nineteenth century, they were based on the idea that it was necessary to start from the individual for implementing an effective societal transformation. In this perspective, the most of the communities did not have the ambition to destabilize the existing societal model, but they limited their action to implement alternative lifestyles on a smaller scale.

In Italy the communal movement started in the 1960's; it was rooted in a deep sense of opposition to the economic model, to the gender inequalities, to the increasing distance between the richest and the poorest of the society, to the societal structure based on the family's hierarchic model… and to the societal organization in general.

In the same years the environmental issues made their first apparition on the global political agenda and the environmental unsustainability of the industrial model became evident.

Since those years, many communitarian realities have spread in Italy, in 1974 the book of Grazia and Donata Francescato tried to provide a description of the Italian Communitarian movement; the authors underlined the extreme difficulties they faced in providing a comprehensive analysis of this phenomenon, that was unknown to the public opinion (Francescato D., Francescato G., 1974, p. 231). The work of Emina Cevro Vukovic, (Vivere Insieme! Il libro delle Comuni, 1974), more than an hundred communities in the Italian Territory at the end of the '70s, in particular these realities were in Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Liguria and Lazio (Anitori R., 2012, p. 36).

With the beginning of the 1980's the communities panorama underwent a transformation, many realities that had developed in the previous years disappeared and they were substituted by others. New global challenges have been prospected,

and the environmental issue has become one of the most debated. The new communities, which since that moment had been centred on a strong critic to the bourgeois institutions, have become centres of promotion of social ecology. Since this transformation has taken place, they have started to be considered eco-villages to the detriment of the expression "common", that loses its appeal. They transformed the negative contestation in a positive proposal (Anitori R., 2012, p. 36). "Contesting the society became a starting point, it was no more considered as the final objective of the struggle".

The need to recreate a relationship between man and nature became central, such as the need to pass from an antrophocentric to a biocentric perspective (Anitori R., 2012, p. 37).

"They were a mass moved by needs that were not still rooted in the class struggle, but inspired by a wider ecological awareness that represents without doubt the answer to the future".

"If the context of the proletarian radicalism was the industry, that of the ecological movement is the community: the neighbourhood, the town, the municipality" (Olimpi S., 2003, p. 45)

The communities changed their objectives and transformed their attitude towards the territory. They maintained their radical characterization, but they acquired a new fundamental peculiarity: they became rooted in the territory; the eco-villages represented not only a radical choice of a few crazy visionaries, but a strong and rooted proposal of change.

More than forty years have passed since the first Communes appeared in Italy (Anitori R., 2012, p. 41), and most of them have gradually improved their relation with the territory that hosts them. They have become positive models of sustainability for the people living within them, but also for the people interacting with these realities from outside. One of the most ancient Italian Commons is "La Comune di Bagnaia", in the Siena province; it was founded by a few people in 1979, and since 1996, after its participation to the RIVE's first informal meeting, it has undertaken the route to sustainability and it has become member of the RIVE.

The Italian network of Ecological Villages (RIVE) clearly expresses in its aims declaration that "the eco-villages develops as entities rooted in the territory, and as such they promote exchange of information, goods, cultural, social political, artistic, therapeutic, spiritual, educational experiences […].The village, intended both as living place and as network of experiences, aims to transform the way of living and the organization of the work that has to be considered as a tool for producing goods, but also as an instrument for inventing ideas and proposals that can change the values and the daily behaviours of those who live within the eco-village and those who come into contact with it" (Olivares M., Viverealtrimenti website).

The declaration stresses that something has changed, the final goal of these new communities is not to create small happy islands, totally denying any relationship with the mainstream society, but, at the opposite, they aspire to suggest a new creative way to interact with the world, and, being aware of the mistakes the humanity has already done, are ready to restart in a more sustainable way.

2.3 Sustainable communities: the importance of the network

2.3.1 G.E.N.: the Global Eco-villages network

The phenomenon of the eco-villages would have been limited to some "foolish" experience abandoned somewhere in the world if it was not supported by the intervention of the network. In 1991, with the Hildur and Ross Jackson, responsible for the Gaia Trust Danish NGO, asked to Diane and Robert Gilman (responsible for the Seattle Context Institute) to undertake a study in order to individuate the strategy for developing a radical change of the society towards a better future. The Gilmans published a dossier with the name "Ecovillages and sustainable communities". In their study they provided a map of the whole variety of the existing communities, describing the great cultural and social potential that they proposed. On the base of Diane and Robert Gilman' s considerations, the Danish association Gaia Trust organized a meeting in September 1991, in Thy, Denmark, where all the representatives of the existing relevant sustainable realities were invited. The participants realised that the creation of a global network would have been necessary in order to create a meaningful strategy of change that was rich and strong and to connect all the existing realities. In 1995, another conference was held in Findhorn, this was the breakthrough for the eco-village movement. Four hundred people participated, many of them from eco-villages. The conference's participants came to the decision to create the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN). At present, the GEN has more than 15.000 members all around the world. It is represented in each continent and has been acknowledged by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC) as a nongovernmental organization having a special consultative role. Three main networks refer to the GEN: the GEN Europe (for Europe and Africa), GENOA (for Oceania and Asia) and ENA (for the Americas).

The GEN's main purposes are the following[5]:

1. To advance the education of individuals from all ways of life by sharing the experience and best practices gained from the networks of eco-villages and sustainable communities worldwide.

2. To advance human rights, conflict resolution and reconciliation by empowering local communities globally while promoting a culture of mutual acceptance and respect, effective communications, and cross-cultural outreach.

3. To advance environmental protection globally by serving as a think tank, incubator, international partner organization and catalyst for projects that expedite the shift to sustainable and resilient lifestyles.

4. To advance active citizenship and community development by coordinating the activities of regional eco-village networks and reaching out to policy makers in order to accelerate the transition to sustainable living.

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[5] Data taken from the *Constitution of Global Ecovillage Network, (GEN-International),* the Global Ecovillage Network, Connecting communities for a sustainable world

The GEN has been created to answer to the existing serious global problems: increasing reduction of natural resources, excessive expansion of the urban areas, processes of impoverishment of the global population. Its main aim is to diminish these global stresses and to propose viable alternatives through the example of models of communitarian sustainable life, characterized by values of mutual support. GEN's main characteristic is its trust in the good intentions and creativity of citizens as the key-forces for the future change: the eco-villages are the example of how the creative ideas of some visionary people can become reality and developing a change from the bottom.

2.3.2 RIVE (Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici): the Italian network of ecological villages

The RIVE started officially in 2007, when it Statute was completely written, but its initial idea is older. It started in Alessano, Lecce province, in December 1996, in the circumstance of the conference "Eco-villages: a solution for the future of the planet" that has been organized by the municipality of Alessano and the centre of studies "Cosmòs"[6] of Milan. To the conference took part the representatives of the GEN-Europe, of some European eco-village such as the affirmed village of Findhorn in Sweden, and of many Italian communities (association "Torri Superiore", "Verde Vigna" Community, "Villagio Carzachi", "Damanhur" Community).

The 1996 conference, evidenced that many points in common were present among the different Italian realities, after it, Mimmo Tringale, director of the Italian magazine "Aam Terranuova" and since a long time passionate supporter of the communitarian lifestyle, decided to organize a further meeting for all the Italian communities' representatives[7]. The meetings became frequent, initially the communities met once a year, but the number of their assemblies gradually increased.

The association was constituted in 2004, to the first event there were "Torri Superiore", "La Comune di Bagnaia", "Upacchi", the "Damanhur" communities' confederation, "Urupia", "Bhole Baba" and Mimmo Tringale.

Since the beginning, a great difference among the realities participating to the association was extremely evident. The most different were Damanhur and Urupia, the first inspired to religious and philosophical values, the other to anarchist value. The major effort of the association was to emphasize the communalities among the realities, and minimize the differences. With the passing of the time, some of the realities have abandoned the RIVE and others have joined.

The Constitutive act of the association was signed up in 2005, in the agriculture cooperative "Il Forteto", in Vicchio, Florence province. The signing members were Alessia Bellucci, the cultural association "Torri Superiore", Giuseppe Gorlani, the agriculture cooperative "Utopiaggia", Domenico Tringale, the association "Eco-village

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[6] The Cosmòs Research Institute is a non-profit association. It proposes seminars and courses on various issues and theories such as, natural therapies, meditations, Chinese philosophy. Its principal aim is to go toward an harmonious balance between man and environment.

[7] Information gathered by the interview to the actual president of the RIVE association,Francesca Guidotti, 28 years old, living in the eco-villages "Cà dei Venti", placed in Tuscany, in the municipality of Cantagallo (PO).

Basilico", the association "the Mother Earth's people", the association "La Comune di Bagnaia". The RIVE's Constitutive act (Rete Italiana Villaggi ecologici, 2005, *Atto Costitutivo Associazione Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici – RIVE*) stated:

"Art 2 – The association is not for profit, nonpartisan, nondenominational, and pursues purposes of solidarity and social promotion by means inspired to democracy and equality principles. The association purposes are the promotion, the research and the support of experiences of a communitarian way of life: based on new forms of coexistence and participated democracy; in line with principles of solidarity, freedom, peace and ecological awareness; aimed at the adoption of decisions based on the consensus of everybody. It encourages the diffusion of the experiences of the eco-villages and the communities already existing, and supports the developing projects, further to the cooperation with all the realities working for a culture of peace, reciprocal acknowledgment, respect of the differences and solidarity."

The RIVE act provides an exhaustive definition of the values on which an eco-villages should be necessarily based on: participated democracy, solidarity, freedom, peace and ecological awareness; they do not only represent realities where an environmentally sustainable way of living is carried on, but they are primarily realities based on values of human solidarity and reciprocal support.

The RIVE initial aim was to give a structure to the movement of the people that was born and to create a stable entity able to interact with other realities around the world. RIVE would have supported those aspiring to establish new eco-villages and would have enabled a better exchange among the existing realities.

RIVE promotes the peace and enhances the differences: these two values represent the base of the association, in fact RIVE combines together many different realities and promotes the beginning of a peaceful cooperation in order to create something positive for any of them. The RIVE has defined some main values in which many different realities identify themselves. Each eco-village has its own characterization and is different from the others, not any of them has the same way to interact with the territory and the rest of the world. Each of them, anyway, carries on a process of personal and collective growth with the goal to create a fair society, to respect the nature and self-realizing.

Twenty eco-villages are currently present on the Italian territories, plus seven developing eco-villages and thirteen eco-village's projects. Since a long time, there has been a high concentration of eco-villages in Tuscany. The strong presence of these realities on the territory and the boost given by the responsible of the magazine "Aam Terranuova", seated in Florence, have determined the recent years' proliferation of eco-villages in this region. The majority of the eco-villages are located in rural areas, the average number of people living in an eco-village goes from ten to twenty (except for the villages of "Damanhur" and "Il popolo degli Elfi" that count respectively 600 and 200 units). Lumen (Emilia Romagna) is composed of sixty people. Several projects have been developing in recent years in Southern Italy, some of them are founded on a spiritual dimension, others have a more laic or social vision. Some realities have arisen from already existing permaculture projects, others were originated from a vegan choice. Some projects are developing schools or forms of non-formal education, other are specialized in the field of renewable energies. Their origins are often different, but then many of them make similar choices.

The existing Italian eco-villages are[8]:

1. Arcipelago Sagarote, Cosenza province

It is a cultural association of volunteering, no profit. It promotes cultural and recreational activities (theatre, music, handicraft for disabled people).

2.*Campanara*, Florence province

The project started in 1985, when a group of people bought the rectory and the church of the village of Campanara. Currently the eco-village is made up of seven adults and seven children. The objective of the group is to reach the self-sufficiency, to promote and enhance ancient arts and handicrafts, to develop a respectful relation with the whole ecosystem.

3.*Ciricea*, Pistoia province

Since 2010 a group of six people has started to live together in a big farmhouse. They cultivate two hectares of lands, produce olives and fruit. They organize cultural activities and workshops.

4.*Corricelli*, Prato province

Initially, it was a group of houses built with wood and straw, then the residents built a brick house. The eco-village could be considered a "happy de-growth" experimentation, it has a project of permaculture and the residents make use of techniques of empathic communication for peaceful decision-making.

5.*Damanhur*, Communities' confederation, Torino province

It was founded in the middle of the '70s, currently six hundred people live within it (they are subdivided in twenty-five residential units). Damhanur is a centre of spiritual, art and social research. The community main peculiarities are the spiritual research and the economic self-sufficiency (they have developed their own community money). Some studies define this community a "sect" for its strong membership ties and the internal organizational structure; this claim is refused by the community supporters and by the RIVE (Guidotti F., 2013, p. 45), that describe the village as a centre of enhancement of the local territory, promoter of a culture of peace, and socially and politically committed. The former president of the GEN Europe was Macaco Tamerice, a Damhanur's member.

6.*E.V.A.* (Homebuilt Eco-Village), L'Aquila province

It started in 2009 after the earthquake in L'Aquila, from a group of people willing to self-organize and live together. They built five houses in wood and straw by themselves. Their main economic resource comes from the cultivation of saffron.

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[8] The information are taken from the book of Guidotti F. (2013) and the website of the RIVE

7.*Giardino della Gioia*, Foggia province

The project has started in 2011. It consists in eight adult people living together and cultivating olive trees. They practice the synergic agriculture and tend to the self-sufficiency. Their houses are "yurta"[9] and produce energy with solar panels. They have a common kitchen, the compost toilet and a "circus" for cultural events.

8.*Il Popolo degli Elfi*, Pistoia province

Since the 80's a group of people have established a community in the Pistoia Apennine. The eco-village consists in two hundred people, subdivided in fifteen residential units. Its peculiar tracts are the self –sufficiency, the swap-economy and the promotion of activities of street-art and theatre.

9. *La Città della Luce*, Ancona province

The eco-village is composed of twenty-five people; it was founded in 2006 by a group which shared the same interest for Reiki[10]. The eco-village develops research studies and offers training courses about the bio natural disciplines. The organizational structure of the members is based on a sharing economy; they work within the village as craftsmen, olistic operators, and other jobs.

10.*La Comune di Bagnaia*, Siena province

It started in 1979; initially it was only a common, then, it became an eco-village. It is made up of 25 people. It is characterized by a total economic sharing, organic agriculture and breeding, decisions based on the consensus method, self-sufficiency, political and social commitment.

11.*La Nuova Terra*, Udine province

The eco-village has been born form "Eureka, the Research Institute for a high quality life" constituted in 1997, committed to agricultural research and specialized in the homeodynamic method of agriculture. "La Nuova Terra" is composed of thirty people.

12.*Lumen*, Piacenza province

It consists in sixty-three people of whom twenty-five children. The group restored a big farmhouse in a rural estate dating back to the seventeenth century. The eco-village main activities are the "Naturopathy school", the "Wellness academy" and the "School of natural cookery".

13.*Pignano*, Pisa province

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[9] The "yurta" is a large, round semi-permanent tent with vertical walls and conical roof

[10] Reiki is a spiritual practice, now considered to be a form of pseudoscience, developed in 1922 by Japanese Buddhist Mikao Usui, has since been adapted by various teachers of varying traditions. It uses a technique commonly called palm healing or hands-on-healing as a form of alternative medicine and is sometimes classified as oriental medicine by some professional medical bodies.

It was founded in 2002, in an ancient Tuscan village. It is composed of twenty-six people between adults and children. It hosts an accommodation activity, a school of not-formal education, and a farm of biodynamic agriculture.

14. *Popolo Arcobaleno per l'Acquacheta*, Florence province

It is made up of some households that have decided to restore an old village in the Acquacheta valley. They have started cultivating the abandoned lands and to protect the area (that is situated within the National Park of the Casentino Forests. They make a collective use of the land and aim to become self-sufficient. They promote didactic courses to people who are interested.

15. *Torri Superiore*, Imperia province

The eco-village is placed in a small thirteenth century medieval village and is made up of twenty-five people. The community, that has been active since 1989, has restored some medieval buildings and currently it hosts an eco-tourism accommodation activity and a cultural association. The productive activity is based on agriculture, olive harvesting and breeding.

16. *Upacchi*, Arezzo province

The eco-village was founded in 1990 and it was born from the restoring of an old abandoned village. Currently it is composed of thirteen households; each member has its own and the economy is not shared. It has common spaces managed by the community.

17. *Vi.E* – Evolutive Village, Viterbo province

The village was founded in 2010 from the desire of a group of nine adults and five children to experiment a new form of living. They rented a house and started with their project. Currently is composed of thirteen households. The members have a different religious and social background, but their common aim is to live together learning from each other's differences. They produce agricultural products and promote cultural activities.

18. *Il Vignale*, Viterbo province

The project is set in a rural area of five hectares and started in 2010; it is composed of ten people constituted in an agriculture cooperative. The group tends to be self-sufficient, it has developed a project of permaculture and promotes music, circus and theatre activities. The village main building is currently in progress of restoring through green buildings technologies.

19. *Villaggio Verde*, Novara province

It was founded in 1982 by Bernardino del Boca, a supporter of "the age of Aquarius" philosophy. It is composed of 24 people. The village is placed in a rural area and cooperates with the association "Amici del Villaggio Verde" in the experimentation of biodynamic, synergic and permaculture agricultural activities. It promotes cultural activities about the theosophy and the psychoenergetics.

20. _Villa Villa Vigna_, Viterbo province

It is made up of a group of people from 23 to 29 years old, living close to the town of Velletri. They live together, in a house and in a yurta. They use green technologies for the energy provision. Some of them work in the village cultivating the land and taking care of the bees.

The RIVE's president has identified other three eco-villages which have adhered to the RIVE until 2013:

Hodos, Pisa province

The community is made up of six adults and one child; it was born in 2002 from the heritage of two previous experiences: the Centre for Psychosynthesis[11] Roberto Assagioli and the association "Cibo per la Pace". The village is a centre of research about Psychosynthesis, the members share the economy putting their incomes in a common fund. The energy supply is in part provided by solar panels. They have a small agriculture production.

La Contea degli Angeli, Grosseto province

The village is made of seven adult people and four children, it is set in the Tuscan mountains close to the Penna Mount. The project started in 2008 when the group acquired fourteen hectares of land and began the process of restoring the old buildings in the area. The houses were restored with green building technologies. The village comprehends a space for yoga, dance, meditation courses; they practice organic agriculture and aim to develop a project of pet-teraphy. The village has an organic restaurant.

Podere Noceto, Siena province

The village is placed in a rural area in the Siena province. It is a small reality, currently it is composed of five people. The village is self- sufficient for what concerns the energy supplies and the water heating system. The food is partially supplied by the village's organic agriculture activity.

Moreover, the RIVE's president (Guidotti F., 2013, p. 34-124) has individuated other fourteen realities very similar to the eco-villages that have been part of the RIVE until 2013: three of these projects were members of the RIVE and eleven were not members. In her book "_Ecovillaggi e cohousing_", Guidotti describes a further experience, called "Utopiaggia", placed in the Perugia province. According to her analysis, this village, despite it is not a member of the RIVE, is to be considered in all respects an eco-village, because it has the same characteristics and pursues the same values of the RIVE's villages.

This overview of the Italian ecological villages' reality illustrates as these world is various and multifaceted. The dynamicity of the eco-villages' arena is to be considered at the same time a factor of richness and instability. In fact, in a short

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[11] The Psychosynthesis is an approach to psychology that was developed by Roberto Assagioli

period the geography of this panorama could largely change and evolve, new villages could be established and others disappear with a certain frequency.

External to the RIVE, some others realities called "eco-villages" do exists, but they are a different matter. Most of the times, they have been developed from "green" enterprises that have promoted the building of villages or structures through the implementation of green building technologies. Sometimes these residential proposals comprehend also projects of co-housing or of sharing economies…this experimentations can be considered as well good attempts to live sustainably, but they cannot be deemed "intentional communities" in which people change radically its lifestyle, as it is supposed to happen in the RIVE's eco-villages .

The RIVE eco-villages aspire to be realities in where people share everything. The founding principle is that experimenting if, for instance, a new economic model, different from the one proposed by the mainstream society, can be viable for the global society, means firstly to implement it on a small scale, on individual or a few people basis, in order to verify its feasibility. People who have chosen to live in an eco-villages, have intentionally decided to change their lives and to become together "laboratories of social experimentation". The predisposition to change together for a common objective develops strong ties of mutual trust among the members of the eco-villages.

RIVE's commitment to support the existing and growing eco-villages consists mainly in promoting the exchange of information among individuals and groups adhering to the association. The RIVE organizes meetings for sharing ideas, best practices and reflections. Since the incoming of the internet, the communication has notoriously improved and the inter-connection of these experiences has become easier and faster.

The RIVE activities

The RIVE activities are listed in the association's statute (Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici, 2005, *Statuto Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici*):

"Art.3

1.Performing activities of coordination at local and national level of the eco-villages activities and of the similar realities through enabling the exchange of information and knowledge among them and promoting initiatives for the diffusion of the communitarian experiences.

2.Representing a point of reference for the Italian movement of ecological villages and for the corresponding international movements, primarily with the Global Ecovillage Network (GEN)

3.Promoting and developing research studies about ecological, environmental and socioeconomic problems related to the social sphere

4.Carrying out and organizing, autonomously or in conjunction with other entities, in Italy and abroad, meetings, seminars, conferences, debates, cultural events, training

courses, scholarships dealing with communitarian life, ecological, economic, social sustainability, and social issues.

5.Providing to the production, distribution and diffusion, through any distribution channel, of scientific, technical, political, cultural and didactic materials regarding information about the eco-villages' best practices and the eco-villages' relation with the public policy; or material for pursuing the RIVE's social aims.

6.Organizing activities such as travels, cultural exchanges, exhibitions, in order to promote and diffuse the RIVE's social aims

7.Organizing and participating to fairs, exhibition, public events, for fundraising

8.Creating a network to connect people and societies, local, national and international entities and associations, fostering the cooperation among them, and becoming a centre of counseling and exchange for these realities.

9.Realizing conventions and agreements with public and private entities

10.Carrying out commercial activities that are directly or indirectly finalized to reach the Statute's aims."

RIVE diffuses the lifestyle proposed by the eco-villages to those who ignore it and pursues the goal to give a major boost to all forms of solidarity exchange and respect of the environment.

The members

The RIVE's Statute (Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici, 2005, *Statuto Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici*) carefully describes the structure of the association and the members that form it.

"Any physical or legal person believing in the RIVE's Statute purposes can take part to RIVE and participate to the RIVE's activities. […] The association is composed of founding members, ordinary members and supportive members. The founding members are those who have signed up the Constitutive act, contribution to the initial association capital. The ordinary members are the eco-villages, the communities, the associations and any legal or physical entity which leads a project of life in line with the association's founding principles, and their admission application, have been evaluated and accepted by the Governing Council. […]The supportive members are any physical or legal person, entity or organization which annually pay the membership fee established by the Governing Council. The supportives can participate to all the association activities and to the assemblies as auditors."

The association is composed of four corporate bodies: the Members' Assembly, the Governing Council, the president and the treasurer. The charges are renewed every two years.

The Governing Council formulates proposals for the association's members and it is responsible for taking decision whenever the members' interposition is not achievable.

The Council meets five to six times a year and is composed of eight members plus the President (the Statute defines that it shall be composed of an odd number of members): five members are eco-villages' representatives, one is a developing eco-village's representative, one is an eco-village project's representative and the latter is a supportive member.

Economic administration

The association has a treasure who is elected among the Governing Council's members.

The RIVE draws the economic resources for its operations and activities from (Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici, 2005, *Statuto Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici*):

1. initial capital paid by the founding members

2. membership fees

3. inheritance, donations and legacies

4. State, Region, Local administration, Public institutions or entities' financial support to the whole association or to specific association programmes

5. European union and international organizations financial contribution

6. income from the provision of agreed services

7. voluntary members or external' contributions

8. income from promotional initiatives aimed at fundraising

9. income from the supplies of goods and provision of services to members and third parties, included that coming from commercial activities (these activities have to be considered of secondary importance for the association, in fact they are carried out only if they are intended to fulfill the Association's objectives)

10. other income from activities finalized to the compliance of the RIVE's social aims

The eco-villages which are interested in joining the RIVE, choose to contribute with their voluntary commitment to the development and the welfare of the association and its objectives. The annual contribution for the members is at least fifty euros for the eco-villages or the developing eco-villages, and of thirty euros for those planning the development off an eco-village's project and for the supportive members (Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici, 2013). Choosing the life of the eco-village means having a project of life together that entirely affect your daily behaviours, your way of living and interacting with the others. It is a choice that bring into question the way you think, the things you buy, the job you do, the relation you have with the territory… Lots of people have discovered to live in an eco-village since a long time before the RIVE and GEN's definitions have been adopted.

RIVE members meetings

The RIVE organizes five meetings per year. Initially all the five meetings were open to everybody. Then, considering that in the recent years the RIVE has substantially changed, it has hugely enlarged (almost doubled), a great number of new projects have been developed, new supportive members and people from other associations have joined… the organization of the meetings has changed.

The RIVE have differentiated between three kinds of realities that are on the Italian territory: the *eco-villages*, the *developing eco-villages*, the *eco-village's projects*.

The *developing eco-village* is supposed to be made up of a minimum of three individuals not coming from the same household and not having parental bonds among them, who live together somewhere. The group intend to reach in two years at least five members[12] and share common spaces. The group has a common project of sustainability: ecological, economic, social, cultural and for the individual and collective growth.

The *eco-village's project* consists of realities composed of at least three adult people not coming from the same household and not having parental bonds among them, who have a common project on sustainability: ecological, economic, social, cultural and for individual and collective growth, who still have not defined a place for their project or who have not been living together yet.

Two gatherings are reserved to those being part of an eco-village or a developing eco-village.

Other two meetings (one in spring and one in summer) are open to all the association members, it means that the supportive members and those having an eco-village's project can take part. The last one (in September) is for those who intend to develop a project of eco-village and are interested in understanding well this reality.

All the meetings are handled by a facilitator and the decisions are taken with the Consensus method.

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[12]The RIVE's eco-village definition establishes that an eco-village is constituted when at least five individuals, not coming from the same household and not having parental bonds among them, join together. The association considers that this minimum number of members is necessary in order to create the conditions for a stable group of people. The studies of Wonser Robert (Robert Wonser is Professor of Sociology at College of the Canyons, Pierce College, Moorpark College, Antelope Valley College, California State University, Northridge and California Lutheran University) and Menon and Phillips (respectively professors at the Booth School of Business, University of Chicago and at the Columbia Business School, Columbia University) support the this thesis. Standing to Robert Wonser, "a group in which we are closely associated with the other members, such as family and friends, is called *primary group"*. Primary groups usually involve more face-to-face interaction, greater cooperation, and deeper feelings of belonging (this kind of group could well represent the initial eco-village's nucleus of people). Wanser describes the group's dynamics as: the patterns of interaction between groups and individuals. A *dyad*, which is the smallest possible social group, consists of only two members and is fundamentally unstable because of the small size – if one person leaves the group the group no longer exists. A *triad*, a three-person social group, is more stable than a dyad because the addition of a third member means that conflicts between two members can be mediated by the third. As groups grow they become more stable at the cost of intimacy; Menon and Phillips (2011) observes that when the group size reaches four, it can fall into acting more as two dyads than a cohesive and single-minded group, which can result in loss of group identity and consequent power. The authors found that even-sized small groups often experience lower cohesion than odd-sized small groups. (The decisions can be easily taken in a five people's small group rather than in a four people's one).

Considerations about the RIVE association

The RIVE is a small association acting on the national scale; it is based only on the commitment of volunteers. Its small dimensions do not make easy to organize the communication among the members; One of the RIVE's aspirations is to spread its values and to promote the experience of the eco-villages to the whole civil society, but a greater number of people would be needed to easily reach this objective. At present, the organization, after the recent enlargements, is passing through a phase of internal restructuring in order to support the activities of the existing projects.

The Italian eco-villages have, in most of the cases, been established since a little time: they are still not stable. In the first period of life of these realities, a high level of mortality is diffused. They are complex and delicate structures founded on human relationships and shared values. RIVE supports their strengths and diffuses their experiences, but it is a process requiring time and prudence if it would not have a negative impact on the communities. In fact, opening these realities to the whole society means being ready to receive critics, observations, it implies a certain community inner stability. For the eco-villagers would mean to expose their own lives to the worldwide eyes. Visiting an eco-village is not the same as going on holiday in a hotel or on a farm-holiday, it means going in someone's home, or being hosted by a friend. It means entering some people's life. The RIVE's deems necessary that a minimum level of inner stability would be reached before these realities were freely opened. Eco-villagers would like to tell the society their stories because they believe in the alternative choices they have done, for what it concerns agriculture, health, renewable energies etc.. At the same time, opening their communities to the daily passage of curious or scholars would mean being expropriated of an essential dimension of privacy. Francesca Guidotti puts an emphasis on this aspect using the following expression: "an eco-village is open, but it is not public". It is a place that can be visited and observed, but it is a life place, someone's home; it is not a perfect and happy island, it represents the visible expression of the attempt that a group of very normal people have undertaken in order to go toward a new cultural model. They do not attempt to destroy the past and the existing societal model, but they wish to bring consistent adjustments to it. Nobody teaches to eco-villagers how to develop their own communities. They slowly build, through their collective efforts, their own lifestyles. They ask themselves "what do I need to live? How can I provide to my needs without destroying the ecosystem and the human relationships which are surrounding me?

The eco-villages leave a trace for those who are interested in developing their own way towards a sustainable change. The RIVE has the objective to promote and sustain the efforts of the eco-villages, giving them the possibility to exchange their knowledge. The difficulty of this work is in the huge amount of energies it requires. The RIVE is based almost totally on the work of volunteers and this is both a positive and a negative factor. In fact, the presence of many supportive members (they are people who do not live in an eco-village, but who deeply believe in the consistence of RIVE's proposal) makes it possible to organize the meetings (the volunteers offer their practical assistance to the association) and represents a great human resource for the association. From another point of view, it represents a cause of instability for the RIVE because it cannot rely upon a stable presence of people. Developing the network is complex also because the eco-villages in themselves are a complex

reality, and for their representatives it is not always simple to participate to the RIVE's activities. The internet has given a great support to the RIVE's efforts.

The network is fundamental because it gives force to each eco-villagers' strengths, it remind each one of them that they are not alone and isolated, but they are working for a common aim. The eco-villages are placed prevalently in rural areas, isolated from the towns, where being in contact with nature and developing agriculture activities is possible. Many of them tend to be totally self-reliant, even if being 100% self-reliant is impossible. For all these reasons a link with the external society is needed, and the existence of a network is essential. The network is a resource especially for those who are beginning their own project and need logistic and moral support to undertake their attempt. The network gives them an inward force to go on and believe in the consistence of their project. Quoting Francesca Guidotti's words:

"Through the network, you become aware of the fact that other people like you do exists; even if your ideals can be deemed foolish because they are different from the mainstream way of thinking, there are other people that share with you the same aspirations; you stop feeling you are wrong and you realize that you are going somewhere, maybe you aren't going towards the best or the easiest direction, but you know that your struggle has a meaningful sense."

"When you have the possibility to exchange, in a deep and confidential manner, with someone having an experience similar to yours, what you have chosen, what you have done, the mistaken you have made, then you can have a rich conversation, that offers you several insights about the practices you can implement."

"The power of the network makes you realize you are not alone, to know that we can improve our knowledge and propose them to the society we criticize. If you limit your action to your own small garden and you do not give any contribution to empower the whole society, then you cannot contest it."

The final aim of the RIVE is to develop actions that spread the experience of the eco-villages in the rest of the world, in order not to create small "peaceful islands" detached from the global problems.

The concept on which the network is based founds its roots in the idea that an open and rich system is stronger than a poor, close and mono-dimensional one. It is the same in nature, the biodiversity protects the ecosystem from the drastic and violent changes due to the passing of time and the seasons. An open system, composed of several identities can better interact with an higher number of people, it can bring more fruits, can spread an higher quantity of seeds. If the eco-villages were small isolate realities avulse from the others, their action would not be incisive on the territory.

If they put in common their own small successes and develop strategies in a synergic manner they can reach meaningful results.

The RIVE: ideas for the future

Francesca Guidotti thinks that if a network that connects all the proposals of sustainable way of living, such as the transition movement, the movement for the

happy de-growth, the groups of solidarity purchasing, the co-housing movement, the permaculture academies, was created, it could bring a significant change to the actual societal way of living. A strong network could suggest to local administrators sustainable answers for their territories. Connecting the existing movements would mean creating a strong group of individuals, able to delineate operative and articulate proposals with a higher level social credibility.

Nowadays the eco-villages represent primary forms of experimentation, they are laboratories of new models of life that need time to become stable and to learn from their mistakes.

Francesca Guidotti's vision is positive about the present: "I can see a great richness in Italy and abroad today. Even if we are small and a bit dispersed in the territory, we are alive and active". The RIVE has not a formal project for initiating a cooperation with the other existing realities proposing alternative solution to the traditional cultural model (transition towns, g.a.s…). The association has not enough forces to implement it now. Anyway, each eco-village is in relation with the other realities active on its territory and cooperate with them autonomously. The RIVE has still never organized and has never participated to a meeting with the other alternative Italian movements, even if, when the association will be stronger and the Italian eco-villages will be more stable, it could represent a good starting point for developing an Italian coordination of the existing "alternative" realities active on the territory.

2.4 Eco-villages: ecological, economic, social and cultural sustainability

The GEN's definition of eco-village points out four dimensions of sustainability: ecological, economic, social and cultural. Each of these concurs to delineate the complex reality of the eco-villages.

2.4.1 Ecological sustainability

The eco-village communities, as it is stated in the RIVE' Statute (Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici, 2005, Statuto Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici),

"have in common the research of new form of coexistence and participated democracy, and pursue values of solidarity, freedom, peace and ecological awareness"

The RIVE's "Intentions declaration" (Guidotti F., 2013, p. 28) claims:

"the RIVE defines an "eco-villages" as a group of at least five adults inspired by criteria of ecological, spiritual, socio cultural and economic sustainability"

For this reason these communities make use of appropriate eco-friendly technologies to provide their needs. Each eco-village tries to have the lowest environmental impact on the territory: the energy supplying is provided through the use of solar panels, photo-voltaic panels or wind generators, ecological technologies for heating are implemented, green building technologies are developed (Guidotti F., 2013, p. 214). Another practice, diffused among the eco-villages and oriented towards a meaningful reduction of the environmental impacts is the collective use of goods and resources

(cookers, cars, heating systems, tools): utilizing less goods means consuming less energy and reducing the negative externalities on the whole ecosystem.

The sociologist Debbie Van Schyndel Kasper[13] (Kasper Debbie Van Schyndel, 2008, p. 13) has interpreted the Eco-villages research of ecological redesigning in the Latour's perspective. Latour argued that for ecologisation is required seeing quasi-objects (anything existent on the globe that is not a human being) no longer as mere means, but as ends in their own right. This implies not only a new way of thinking that recognizes other entities as ends in themselves, and not just means to human ends, but also a new way of doing: developing eco-friendly technologies is a direct consequence of this new vision of the relationship nature-society. In his work "Redefining Community in the Ecovillage", Kasper associates the eco-villages' approach to nature to Aldo Leopold's concept of "land ethic". The author had defined the "land ethic" as the enlargement of the boundaries of community to include soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively: the land. This means entirely rejecting the current ways of viewing the land, solely through the lens of economic interests, and at the opposite, recognizing the interdependence of all human beings. For Leopold (Kasper Debbie Van Schyndel, 2008, p. 13), this ethic was both an "evolutionary possibility and an ecological necessity".

As Kasper (Kasper Debbie Van Schyndel, 2008, p. 22) has evidenced in her work, eco-village's relation with the nature is very well described by Leopold definition of "land ethic". In fact, eco-villagers' ecologist approach is inspired by a conception of strong interdependence between all the living beings.

"I argue, rather, that there is a broader sense in which eco-villagers think about their home in a way that implicitly recognizes that home as shared with countless others: people, and a largely unknown variety of plants, animals, and microorganisms. "Place," for them, is not just a house, a town, or a state. Rather, it is a living system within other systems, a process within processes.".

The "place" is a living system and then is demanding for care, the eco-villagers answer to the earth's demand of care, acting for the maintenance of the ecosystem' health.

2.4.2 Economic sustainability

The economic sustainability refers to the eco-villagers' research for a new economy, that is more ethical and based on the real needs of the men and of the environmental carrying capacity. The capitalist economy and the consumerism culture are dramatically far from the essential human needs and are embedded in a logic of exploitation of human and natural resources.

In the actual economic system the supply of goods never coincides with the real demand. The distribution of resources and services follows an absurd logic. In the richest countries there is a daily extra production of goods that is regularly wasted,

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[13] Debbie V.S. Kasper is Assistant Professor in the Department of Sociology at Sweet Briar. She teaches courses in environmental sociology, social theory, introduction to sociology, community, stratification, sociology of religion, American culture, and urban sociology.. Currently, her research involves the study of socio-ecological problems and solutions, and the investigation of "sustainable communities."

while in the poorest countries huge portions of population are starving because the supply of goods is not enough to satisfy the population needs.

This insane logic on which the global economy is based has to be re-designed, this is the challenge that drives the eco-villages initiatives. Most of these realities create innovative strategies to overcome the traditional economic organization. Their main goal is to develop economic models, ethical, and not abusing of human beings and nature. Some eco-villages tend to be self-reliant, developing appropriate technologies for the energy provision, the production of food, the heating and cooking systems etc. Others, as for example the Bagnaia eco-village in the Siena province (Italy), have developed interesting systems for common money management. In Bagnaia (Guidotti F., 2013, p. 38), each member of the village puts his/her economic incomes in a common fund that is used for the eco-village's expenses. The money is used together, the private property does not exist anymore. Each community member monthly receives two hundred euros for his/her private expenses. For all the rest, the expenses are equally shared. The underlining idea is that if everybody is equally owner of the goods and the utilities of the community, everybody is equally responsible for their maintenance. To implement this economy a deep relation of mutual trust among the members of the community is fundamental. Bagnaia model of sharing economy is only one of the many different example of alternative solidarity models that have been experimenting by the eco-villages.

"The eco-villages are social and educational experimentation's laboratories for a better world" (Rete Italiana Villaggi Ecologici, 2005)

All the experiments aspire to promote an alternative, fair way of exchange among the human beings.

The eco-villages' research of ethical strategies for re-organizing the societal way of living is intended to be linked in local territory's networks, in fact (Kasper Debbie Van Schyndel, 2008, p. 13)

"Though some degree of energy and resource independence is desirable, eco-villages do not aspire to be completely self-sufficient, nor are they meant to be isolated communities of escape. Rather, eco-villages are intended to be linked in networks of social, economic, and political ties, and the eco-village movement has been steadily working toward that goal."

The economic alternatives proposed by the eco-villagers gain a real value only if they are accessible to those living outside the eco-villages, the external society. Only by this perspective, the choice of the eco-villages' inhabitants can be really meaningful: in order to give an alternative way of interpreting the reality.

2.4.3 Social and Cultural sustainability

The third and fourth sustainability dimensions that are mentioned in the GEN's definition regard the social and cultural aspect. The eco-villages movement originated from the conjunction of many factors, among these the necessity to find a model of existence based on values of solidarity and respect for the dignity of each creature, that was slower, in the sense that would has offered a minimum level of quality of life to all.

From here, the aspiration of many eco-villages to propose models of life that are inclusive of each element that is necessary for living well. Eco-villages totally reject the individualistic thought promoted by the mainstream culture; they promote, on the opposite, a social and collective vision of the world; the earth is a common and human beings have to collective dispose of it. It can be said, that eco-villagers literally take Aristotelian reflections about the man (Jowett B., 1916, p. 29).

"the individual, when isolated, is not self-sufficing; and therefore he is like a part in relation to the whole. But he who is unable to live in society, or who has no need because he is sufficient for himself, must be either a beast or a god: he is no part of a state. A social instinct is implanted in all men by nature […]".

Man is unavoidably related to the other living beings, for this reason the ecological communities believe that it is essential to adopt solidarity lifestyles in order to peacefully and fruitfully live the human condition.

Trust relationships between the members of the communities are considered necessary to sustainably live the social dimension of the eco-village. In order to come to a shared management of the commons and to establish deep relations of trust and reciprocity, the eco-village realities have developed appropriate decisional mechanisms. Elinor Ostrom' s studies about the commons , anticipated and theorized what the eco-villages have put into practice. Ostrom (Ostrom E., 2006, p. 134) observed in her book "Governing the commons" (1990) that it is important matching rules governing use of common goods to local needs and conditions, and, of primary importance for an efficient and fair managing of the commons it should be ensured that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules.

In the eco-villages each member's active participation to decision making is supposed to be essential in order to reach a really shared and efficient managing of the collective resources and utilities. Many eco-villages use the "consensus" method, a decision making tool based on the decisional unanimity. In case of conflicts among the members use of various methods for conflict resolutions, such as the deep democracy, the mediation of counselors or facilitators, the dragon dreaming, the ecological communication, are implemented. Also this aspect, had been evidenced by Elinor Ostrom's studies, in fact she theorized that low-cost means for dispute resolution are deemed very useful in order to reach an efficient system for managing the commons.

The structure modelled by most of the eco-villages has its fulcrum in the concepts of co-deciding and mutual trust: the alternative lifestyle proposed by the eco-villages have the primary aim to improve the sense of solidarity among peoples and to develop by this way an existence that is socially sustainable.

The ecological communities' approach, does not only develop a new social model based on reciprocity relations, but it aims to bring substantial changes to the mainstream cultural model. The cultural transformation which most of the eco-villages launch, aspire to radically modify the values on which the traditional society is based. The societal diffused principles such as: individualism, consumerism, competitiveness, "the strongest wins" principle, homogenization of the cultures, are substituted by others more equal and respectful of each living being. New values are proposed, the main idea is that the earth has enough resources for anyone to live

well, human beings have only to share the common goods and to fairly dispose of them. To the concept of homogenization of the cultures is substituted the principle of enhancement of local cultural tradition and heritage. Each eco-village aims to give new life to the territory on which it is placed, to enhance its social, natural, historical and cultural wealth by promoting sustainable and peaceful relation with any local stakeholders and by enhancing local natural environment.

The philosophical thinking of enhancing any small and local potentiality comprehends a process of empowerment of the human resources. In fact, it does not only mean revaluing the territory's aesthetical conditions, but it implies an enhancement of any human potentiality within and outside the eco-village. In this sense the eco-villages are laboratories of human culture: an important value is given to any human skill; the underlining belief is that if human beings find a viable route to express their potentialities and escaping from the alienating dimension of the work, all the community will be enhanced. Empowering anyone's need to express its talent means enriching the whole community and improving the people quality of life.

Eco-villages approach met Richardson's *biocentric* vision of the human condition (Baker S., Young S., Kousis M., Richardson D., 1997, p. 45). In fact, the pursuit of wealth is not considered as a goal in itself and the non-material dimension of the human experience is enhanced.

"There is emphasis on the quality of life as distinct from the quantity of material possessions, on feeling and values, on the inner rather than on the outer self. Partly this is a question of recognizing the wholeness of the self (material and non-material) as well as the wholeness of the planet.".

Some eco-villages find it fundamental to add a spiritual dimension to their community in order to give complete expression to their community identity. Some others become centres of promotion of cultural initiatives for the territory, in any case they do not only offer eco-friendly way of living, but also a social and cultural sustainable approach to reality.

"in many cases the common has become a space of meeting for citizens' groups, territory committees, and for those who have the need to find a place of aggregation and sharing to exchange proposals, ideas, projects about alternative forms of civil co-existence" (Anitori R., 2012, p. 41)

In conclusions, the ultimate object of the eco-villages' ecological design is the human way of thinking, quoting Orr (in Kasper, Debbie Van Schyndel, 2008, p. 13):

"What's the organization of a society that is capable of doing ecological design? What does such a society look like?... And what's the point, the ultimate object, of ecological design? It's not just about houses or water or any particular system. It has to be about how we think. The ultimate object of ecological design is the human mind.".

3. Sustainability's experiments in two areas of the Tuscan – Emilian Apennines

The study is focused on two realities which have been established in the provinces of Reggio Emilia and Parma within the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, the mountain chains that, starting at Cisa Pass, turns further to the southeast to cross the peninsula along the border between the Emilia Romagna and Tuscany regions. Both the case-studies analysed are not currently members of the RIVE, but they have been part of the network in the past years.

The first reality, "Cà Morosini", in Montalto, Municipality of Vezzano sul Crostolo, (Reggio Emilia province) represents a concluded experiment of eco-village. The second one, "Granara", in Branzone, the Municipality of Valmozzola (Parma province) is still inhabited and promotes several cultural activities and courses.

3.1 A geographical overview: choice of the case studies

Cà Morosini and Granara are situated respectively in the mountainous areas of the Reggio Emilia and Parma province; as it will be demonstrated the two territories on which the case studies are located, present many similarities. A brief analysis of the geographical, social and economic condition of the two areas is provided in the following paragraphs.

3.1.1 Cà Morosini

Cà Morosini is located in Montalto, a village placed between the municipalities of Vezzano sul Crostolo (4.214 residents) and Casina (4.534 residents), in the province of Reggio Emilia[14].

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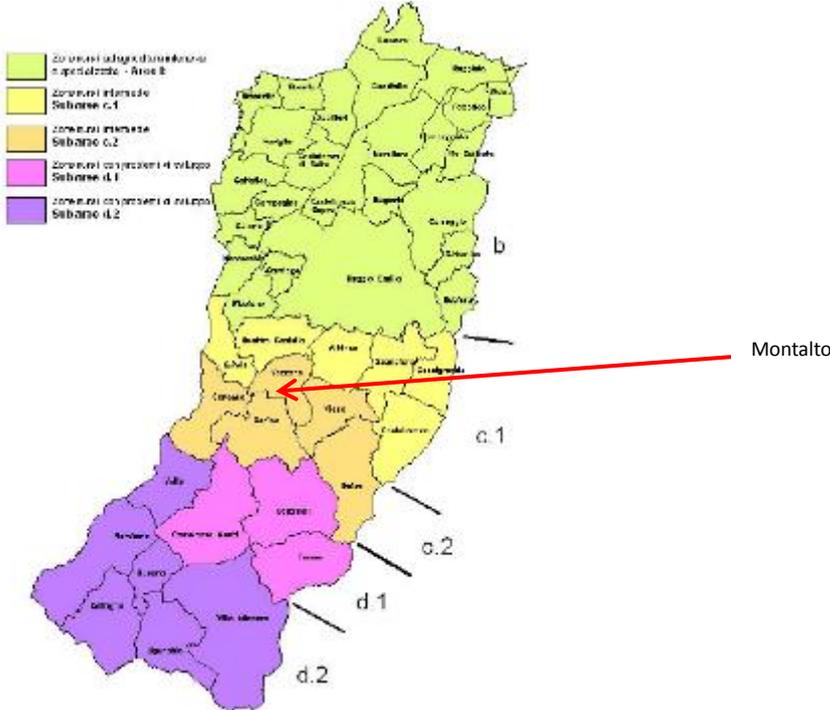
[14] Data taken from 2011 Population and housing census

The territories of Casina and Vezzano sul Crostolo are considered as "disadvantaged" ones among all other territories of the province because of their specific physical conformation.

Since the second half of the twentieth century, this area has been subjected to a process of depopulation, but In the last few years, the demographic decline has been compensated by the arrival of new immigrants.

	1951	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2009	2010	30 giugno 2011
Crinale	19.610	17.015	11.962	10.546	9.317	8.977	8.569	8.473	8.481
Montagna media	26.836	23.919	19.973	19.681	19.653	20.393	21.398	21.526	21.477
Montagna bassa	21.622	17.504	13.694	13.062	13.288	14.047	15.216	15.244	15.260
Com. Montana RE	68.068	58.438	45.629	43.289	42.258	43.417	45.183	45.243	45.218
Prov. Reggio Emilia	390.131	379.688	392.696	413.396	419.062	453.892	525.297	530.343	531.764

(Osservatorio Appennino Reggiano, 2011)

Economically relevant sectors

The mountainous and hilly conformation of the territory have determined specific productive peculiarities. The agriculture is one of the most relevant sectors, and it is mainly centred on the production of the "Parmigiano Reggiano" cheese and the "Lambrusco" wine. In particular, the "Parmigiano Reggiano" production and all the activities to which is directly connected, such as the cattle's fodder cultivation and the cattle farming, are of primary importance. From 1990 to 2000, the depopulation process has caused a gradual diminishment in the number of farms, whereas this trend has partially changed in the recent period (2002-2006), as in the territory of Vezzano sul Crostolo and Casina, thirty new agricultural activities have been started by young farmers.

Tourism has received a major boost in the last few years, also through the contributions of the European community and the Mountain Community Institution, which have promoted projects to enhance wine and typical food production activities, in order to revalue the local traditions and improve the economy of the overall area (Regione Emilia Romagna, Comunità Montana dell' Appennino Reggiano, Provincia di Reggio Emilia, 25/01/2005), (promotion of niche products such as organic and natural products). The projects' scopes were: supporting the development of farms in the territory in order to diversify the local production and adding to the traditional sheep and goats pastures, intensive meat farming and horse farming; to provide a better management of the overall territory.

Currently, the presence of tourism activities is still scarce and further improvement would be needed in this sector. Many semi-abandoned rural villages are present in the territory of Vezzano sul Crostolo and Casina, as well as in the mountainous and hilly Apennine of Reggio Emilia in general. At the present time, actions for the restoration and touristic and cultural promotion of these areas have been implementing by Local and European Institutions (Provincia di Reggio Emilia, Comunità Montana dell'Appennino Reggiano, *Programma Rurale Integrato Provinciale 2007-2013*).

Geomorphology of the territory

The territorial geomorphological conformation had relevant consequences on the development of this geographical area. The agriculture lands, often characterized by steep slopes or soil erosion problems (a great part of the hilly and mountainous territory is subject to landslides) have been mostly abandoned in the course of the last years. The reduced human presence have had negative consequences also on the hydrogeological assessment, causing great transformations of the agricultural landscape. In the last two decades, the abandoned agriculture fields have been rapidly covered by spontaneous vegetation. Between 1997 and 2005 the forested area has increased to 116,4 Km2 (5,1% more than the overall province's increase).

3.1.2 Granara

Granara is placed in Branzone, a village placed in the Municipality of Valmozzola (567 residents)[15], within Parma province.

Fig. 1 - Le zone rurali
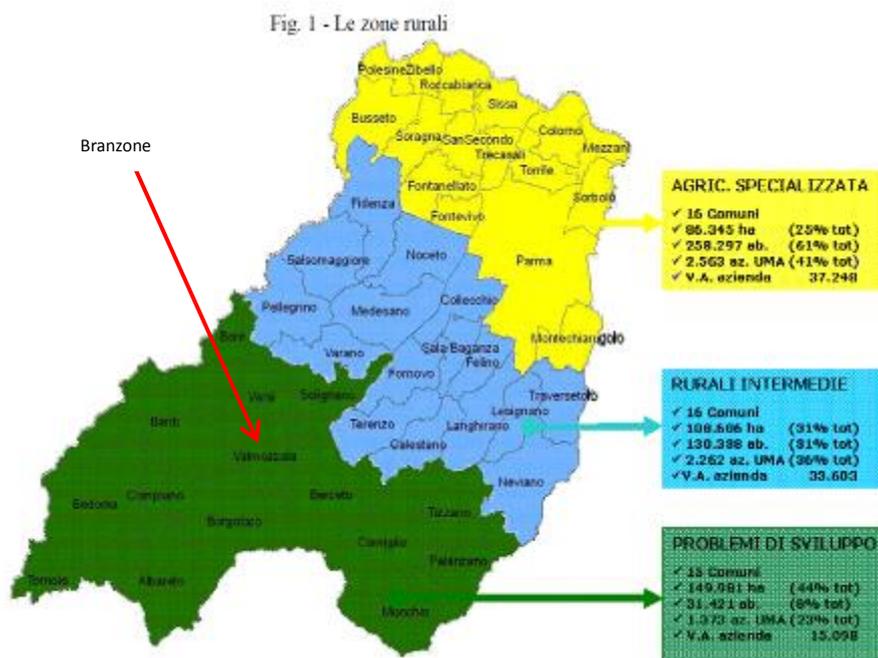
Valmozzola is defined as one of those "rural areas having development problems". Those territories are mostly covered by forests (around 78%) while the rest is composed of agriculture fields (19,5%) and small dispersed villages (2,5%). From the post-war period until the 1990's, a great population decline has characterized all the mountainous and hilly areas in the province of Parma. Most of its inhabitants abandoned the territory and moved to cities. Currently the aging of population and the labor shortage are the main causes of the territorial development stagnation. Both

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[15] Data taken from 2011 Population and housing census

the promotion of tourism and the commerce of local niche products would contribute to the territory's economic recovery.

Economically relevant sectors

The hilly and mountainous territory of the Parma province includes 107.750 hectares of forests. The fuel wood and the mushroom represent the two most important wood products. Tourism activities or any other kind of activities for the enhancement of the local territory from historical or cultural point of views are absent or scarcely developed. The forested areas present bad transport connections and few infrastructures. The wood industry is characterized by labor shortage and lack of adequate facilities, for the wood processing and storage.

The "mountain's potato" is a famous local agriculture product and represents a relevant source of income for many small farms. Since the middle of the 1970's, the abandonment of many agricultural lands have caused a further expansion of the forests. In these areas the agriculture and zoo-technical sectors have proved to be weak and fragile.

Geomorphology of the territory

The geomorphological conformation of the territory is characterized by steep slopes and by soil erosion (landslides are frequent), both the factors discourage the agricultural activities. The bad accessibility of many marginal lands and the low demographical density have left space to vast natural uncontaminated areas characterized by wide forests and meadows, especially in proximity of the ridge. The national Park of the Tuscan-Emilian Apennine, the Regional Park "Cento Laghi" and the European Network Nature 2000 have ensured the protection of these areas. Except for the forests included in the High Valleys of the Taro river, where an intense collective management of the forests is implemented, the forests management is highly fragmented because of the lack of agreements between the private properties owners. The abandonment of the pastures and the agriculture lands has developed a process of progressive homogenization of the landscape, that should be opposed by promoting tourism and local empowerment projects (Provincia di Parma, Comunità Montana delle Valli del Taro e del Ceno, Comunità Montana Appennino Parma Est, *Il Programma Rurale Integrato Provinciale 2007-2013*).

3.2 Case Study Analysis

Two sustainable development experimentations have been realized in the two Apennine's territories previously analysed. Both the realities have been put in place by people willing to establish an environmentally responsible solution to the local and global societal problems. The following analysis attempts to highlight the main characters of these two experiences.

3.2.1 The concluded experiment of the Cà Morosini eco-village (Montalto, Reggio Emilia)

The experience of Cà Morosini, was born from the dream of a man, whose name is Paride Allegri (1920- 2012), to create a healthy and liveable place, where people could live in peace and taking care of the earth. Paride had long story, he fought as a

partisan during the second world war and he had been hidden in the Reggio Emilia Apennine's forests with many other youth who decided to fight against the fascist regime and for the Italian freedom. When the war just ended, he understood that it was not time to feast yet (Allegri P., 2006, p. 137). That historical moment, at the opposite, would has become the beginning of a new struggle for the creation of a future of peace and solidarity among the human beings and the earth.

"At that time I was 25 years old, I had had many years of war upon my shoulders, I would have been free to enjoy my time, but I thought that a deep commitment to provide a new future to anything that had been destroyed, would have been necessary." (Allegri P., 2006, p. 137)

After the end of the war he worked for the ANPI in Reggio Emilia (Italian Partisans National Association) and he actively participated to the post-war reconstruction. With the ANPI, he inaugurated several cooperatives with the aim of offering jobs to those who were unemployed because of the war. In 1945, on ANPI's commission, Paride Allegri organized the boarding school "Rinascita" in order to offer to former partisans the possibility to take training courses and finding job. He worked there until 1949, when he was engaged by the Communist Party and by the Cooperatives Federation for constituting the Consortium of Agricultural Machinery aimed at giving support to those farmers that had started working the land since the war was ended. He worked for the Communist Party's agricultural policies until the beginning of the 1950's. In 1951, he was offered a place in the Italian Air Force and then he was in charge of managing the Cagliari's airport' activities for three years. In 1954, he resigned and went back to Reggio Emilia. After a further job for the Communist Party and the Cooperatives Federation, in 1955 he took distance from the party because he disagreed with its internal policies.

"Everybody are organized in a vertical structure and not horizontally, as we deemed necessary since 1945 to avoid the political movement's degeneration, in fact, the basis protect the internal democracy of any political party. When the horizontal democracy does not work, everything falls under the control of a minority …" (Allegri P., 2006, p. 169).

His deep personal commitments to democracy and fairness, took him away from the job's proposals coming from the Communist party. In 1958, he began working as Head Gardener for the Municipality of Reggio Emilia and then as responsible of the Green Public Areas. Until 1978, he took care of the green areas of the town and created the Municipal Greenhouse, during his charge he greened any empty piece of land of the town, and he developed a sighted green plan for the Municipality. It is in that period that he has started interesting in the biodynamic and organic agriculture.

Since 1974, Paride rented a small house in a rural area in the hills upon Reggio Emilia (Cà Casino) where he started cultivating the land with the method of the natural agriculture. In Cà Casino he had wheat and he bred cows. There, he formed a first community of people (six or seven) willing to live together, sharing democratic principles. The community was called "Comunità una via, una vita, per la vita" (that stands for "Community: a road, a life, for the life"). He dreamt to create a place where people could live in harmony with the earth and all the living beings, and where the values in which he believed could have been diffused. In 1978, he bought the house of Cà Morosini. The property was in the village of Montalto, in Reggio Emilia's

Appennines, in the same forests where many partisans have lost their lives for the foolish and senseless violence of war. There, he began with a second community.

"I decided to leave the city because I see my land perishing day after day, damaged by industries, pollution and abandoned by the peasantry. The right choice is not the one taken by the most of people, we have to go towards the right direction: towards the countryside." (from an interview to Paride Allegri , Gazzetta di Reggio, 11/02/2010)

"Since I was young I have seen the progressive degradation of my land, I have felt it was being damaged. The farmers had reclaimed the rural areas and the industrialization were destroying it. During the 1950's everybody had left the countryside to work in the ceramic industries. Then I decided an abandoned estate with a land and a house; I wanted it to build something that was the fruit of my hand's labour." (from an interview to Paride Allegri, Giorgi C., 01/11/2003)

3.2.1.1 The community

Cà Morosini was an abandoned farmhouse placed on the top of a hill in the Vezzano sul Crostolo's countryside. The land was bare and arid, there were few vegetation.

Paride Allegri started restoring the building by himself and greening the area[16]. Then other people sharing his ideals supported his work and joined his efforts. His project was to create a place where human beings and nature had an harmonious relation. His wish was to recreate a rich natural ecosystem, he used to say: "if I lift my arm up I can pick a fruit".

The first year he worked hard, and with the support of his sons he planted around three thousand trees. He planted them in many concentric circles all around the house in order to create a barrier against the cold winds and provide a habitat to many animals. One hundred and forty-four sequoias were planted, and disposed in twelve concentric circles; each circle was composed of twelve trees; one hundred and forty-four different pendulous essences were planted.

Around the house, wheat, rye, barley, oats were sowed and grown with the biodynamic agriculture's method. The crop cultivations followed the concentric circles disposition. Paride Allegri's words explain this choice: "I created a concentric system all around the house, such as the cultivation that is closer to the centre is the one giving the earliest harvest. It is a sort of living calendar, it represents a cycle that is modelled on the nature's rhythms" (from an interview to Paride Allegri, Giorgi C., 01/11/2003).

"The hedges protected from the winds coming from east and west […] The trust relationship with the earth is a necessary condition here; if we do not respect the earth we will not be able to respect any other human beings "(from an interview made by Bindi. G, 2003)

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[16] Information gathered by the interview to Giovanni Boiardi (04/10/2014).

Allegri built three small rainwater lakes, in order to provide a regular water supply for the irrigation. They were dug in the highest point of the hill, over the cultivations, such as it would have been possible to exploit the hydraulic force for the creation of electric energy and the slope would have favored the irrigation. Paride was aware of the fact that the water environment represented the habitat for many animals and plants, and this would have contributed to the creation of a rich ecosystem at Cà Morosini.[17]

At the foot of the hill, under Cà Morosini, a vineyard was planted. Even its disposition was not at random, in fact looking to the vines rows from the top of the hill it could be clearly distinguished the written "NO WAR".

Giovanna Boiardi, co-author of the book "Paride Allegri, *Il viaggio di un resistente: per un mondo fraterno senza armi e rispettoso del creato*", and close Allegri's friend thinks that the most important messages left by Paride Allegri and by Cà Morosini consisted in leading a frugal life, that is exactly the opposite to the consumerist model we are subjected to. Leading a frugal life does not mean a miserable life, but it is, on the contrary, an essential life, and not superficial. Living well, but sparingly. The funding principle was to take from the nature only what you need to live. Then, it meant living only with you really need, nothing more, and respecting the nature, being aware of the fact that the humans are only a part of it. The dominant model, what it is taught at school, puts the man on the top of the development pyramid. The Cà Morosini philosophy aimed at overturning this conception supporting the idea that the man is only a part of the whole nature.

Paride Allegri opened Cà Morosini to anybody believed in these principles. In fact, he believed that living without endangering the earth and its resources, promoting values of peace and non-violence was fundamental in order to offer to the society a sustainable model both for the present and the future. His ecological sensitiveness and his democratic and nonviolent values posed the bases for what it became Cà Morosini.

"The community of Cà Morosini was open and welcoming; its objective was to diffuse its model of respect for the environment. It was open to all, to anyone would like to join." [18]

Cà Morosini became a place where people lived, took care of the earth, studied new agriculture methods and sustainable way of living. After 1978, many people joined Paride's initiative. Some of them decided to live with him in Cà Morosini, others passed from there and took part to singular events, or stayed only for brief periods.

The property of the estate was of Paride Allegri, but he has always offered his house for free to all, "He would have been outraged by someone who had though he was

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[17] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari (16/09/2014), who lived in Cà Morosini more than once, in 1989 for the first time.

[18] Information gathered by the interview to Alberto Grasselli (23/07/2014), who lived in Cà Morosini in the years 1988 - 1990.

the sole owner of the house or if someone had asked for permission to do something. Cà Morosini was a common"[19].

At Cà Morosini, people leaded a simple lifestyle that was modelled on the nature's rhythms. Initially cows, sheep, goats, horses and donkeys were farmed (Allegri P., 2006, p. 183).

Between 1979 and 1985, a great number of young people visited Cà Morosini, and stayed there for some period. In those years, Paride Allegri have hosted many youth who had refused the military service and have decided to do a year of alternative civilian service. These people have taken part to the Cà Morosini's activities for a while; they experimented the biodynamic agriculture, implemented research studies regarding the local territory in order to find new practices of sustainable development and took part in non-violent initiatives. The charismatic figure Paride Allegri had always represented the glue of these communitarian experiences, his ideals join together the different people who met in Cà Morosini and experienced periods of communitarian life.

"He was a catalytic leader", standing to Alberto Grasselli's Paride description. "He was not as the current leaders, he has always taken care of the thought of all. He was interested in expressing and developing his own ideals, but he has never overridden the others' opinion. He deeply believed in the value of each member of his team, he knew the importance of his mates".[20]

Giovanna Boiardi remembers when talking with Paride Allegri, she understood his deep faith in the values in which he believed: "Sometimes I told him: How is it possible to create something if there is not a group? And him answered me: even one man, by himself, can do something! And he has always demonstrated this."

"One of the last times we talked[21], we debated about the future. He reminded me a Berlinguer's discourse pronounced at the beginning of the 1980's when Berlinguer had launched the concept of "austerity". At that time, nobody did understand him, nor his party, nor the trade unions. With the concept of austerity he intended that making use only of what is needed was necessary. Today we consume too much, even the goods we do not really need. *Berlinguer had understood*, he told me, *the consumption is the impoverishment. Our fathers have always taught us to avoid wasting and to spare, […]can you understand me? It means not to threw away anything, to use everything until it can give you nothing…conserve…because all can be useful tomorrow..*"(Allegri P., 2006, p. 209)

"If we do not proceed towards this direction.. it will be a complete disaster[…] we must stop talking about competitiveness, but instead of cooperation and collaboration, stopping the race of the strongest, but joining the ideas and producing perfect goods and longlasting…" (Allegri P.,2006, pag. 208)

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[19] Information gathered by the interview to Alberto Grasselli.

[20] Information gathered by the interview to Alberto Grasselli.

[21] Information gathered by the interview to Giovanna Boiardi

He told me, when I was nineteen: "the sole solution is cooperating and supporting each other"[22]

"Paride was a radical man, but its radicalness was a model for all."[23] Giovanna Boiardi asked to Paride if the collective propriety of the goods was not an utopian idea; he answered:

"It is the sole solution the men have. Despite all, no human beings own anything. Does the elephant own a piece of land? Does the lion own anything? Does a mosquito own anything? They have everything! We can dispose of everything we need, not as a possession, but only for using it. " (Allegri P.,2006, pag. 208)

Cà Morosini has always been a place where many different people have passed. Some people have stably lived there for a long time, but others only for brief periods of time. For a certain period of time a group of people have lived in a tepee in the Cà Morosini's garden[24] (Marcelle, a guys among them, supported Paride in the management of the agriculture activity, during his staying). Identifying a defined Cà Morosini's community is not possible. The following paragraphs will offer a description of what Cà Morosini have represented to some of the people who have lived there for a while, or who have joined some of the Cà Morosini initiatives.

Means of communication

Cà Morosini was born in the era were communicating was not immediate as in current times. People get to know of this reality through the so called "Radio fante" (that stands for "foot soldier Radio"). It consisted in the rapid passage of the information by telling each other; many youth arrived to Cà Morosini only because have listened to someone telling about it. Many of them would like to know the biodynamic agriculture techniques, others were interested in the non-violence initiatives. All of them, anyway, were searching for something, or aspired to something different from what the society proposed. Youth from abroad arrived, the information were passed in the youth meetings of the 1980's (Allegri P., 2006, p. 183). The mails were another fundamental mean of communication in those years, and some alternative magazines. Sabrina Ferrari[25] remembers the importance that had the magazine Aam Terranuova in connecting people interested in these experience: "it was the mean of communication for all those searching for these things, it was provided of a section for the announces where it was possible publishing news, and information… "

"Paride used telling me about all the youth that had passed by Cà Morosini…sometimes they came from abroad…they had their backpack… Cà Morosini had become an international centre, of communitarian life, where people

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[22] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari

[23] Information gathered by the interview to Giovanna Boiardi

[24] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari

[25] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari

had started debating of biodynamic agriculture…Where did people talk about biodynamics at those times? nowhere…"

Cà Morosini's principles

The people who stably decided to live in Cà Morosini wrote a number of principles on which the community should have be based.

The founding principles of the community were the following:

"Founding principles for a development model that respects the Creation, which comprehends the seven original Genesis's elements, Light, Air, Water, Earth, Plants, Animals, Men, and which leads the humanity to the Universal Love, source of any good.

Managing the land in a manner that permanently restores the living part of the soil, that sustains the balance of the biosphere through: the conservation of the organic substances (humus) by the implementation of appropriate cultivations; the addition of substances characterized by a low solubility in the soil; the adoption of varieties of seeds which are resistant to the main pests and diseases, which produces balanced harvests, assuring an adequate supply of proteins, vitamins and mineral salts ecc.., with a high biological quality, that are tasty and can offset the negative effects of an improper alimentation.

Transforming the available area (12 hectares) in order to realize what it follows:

-The self-sufficiency (for the human beings permanently living in the estate and for the animals) for which it concerns: food production, seeds supply, substances for the protection against diseases;

- a balanced distribution of the territory among forests, meadows, cultivated lands and grazing lands;

- hedges and officinal plants, creating favourable conditions to wide fauna

In order to reach the previously described objectives, the following DESIRES are of primary importance for those living at Cà Morosini:

1) Living simply and being modest

2) Practicing a vegetarian diet and making use of locally grown food

3) Respecting all the living beings

4) Do not cut trees

5) Increasing the green areas and cultivating without any kind of pesticides, herbicides, crop protection chemicals or synthetic fertilizers (implementing the biodynamic and organic methods)

6) Furnishing the house only with natural materials

7) Using clothes made with natural materials

8) Implementing wood heating and cooking systems, using only fallen or pruned wood; reducing at the minimum level the energy used for heating and cooking by minimizing its consumption, providing an adequate thermal insulation of the house (by using natural materials).

9) Using only clean and renewable energy

10) Reintroducing in the area plant species at risk of extinction (especially fruit trees, vines, ancient and local corn varieties)

11) Protecting the water quality

- by using only natural soaps and cinder for washing tissues, dishes and for personal hygiene

- by using treated wastewater for irrigation

12) Burying non recyclable wastes ensuring that their disposal does not cause pollution

13) Handling with care any object in order to ensure its well conservation and reducing the consumptions

15) Acting according to the nature and world's architectural plan to which the human beings are part of, respecting the universal laws of life.

Bringing to life to small communitarian units, made up of people willing to reach the previously described objectives, is what the humanity needs for initiating a path of redemption." (Allegri P., 2006, p. 272)

Decisional mechanisms

The community has usually taken the decision together, but there were not fixed moment for talking about the things. Usually at the lunch time, proposals about the activities to be developed were made, but there were not official moments.

"We discussed about the hospitality, we did not want establishing a fee for those who arrived and stayed for small periods… but sometimes, someone had arrived and had not offer its supports in the daily activities, it was a problem for us, then we decided that we would have asked a donation.. in order to cover the costs… "[26]

"Often Paride proposed his ideas, then we talked each other and debated about them. There were not established rules. We shared ideals. Everything that was not against those ideals was accepted…once, we debated about the vegetarianism and the veganism, I thought they were fundamental. Paride, instead, who had a rural

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[26] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari

cultural background, thought that eggs, milk and cheese were necessary for a good diet …" [27]

3.2.1.2 Social and cultural sustainability

Political commitment: environmentalism, non-violence, education

The Community of Cà Morosini was politically committed, its members participated to many manifestation or initiatives; two major issues were the focus of the community's struggles: environmentalism and non-violence. Standing to Alberto Grasselli's recollections, Paride Allegri has always searched for the truth. He believed that telling all the truth to politician was very important. Searching for the truth and doing everything necessary to pursue it was his daily commitment.

"He used telling me if you can do something, you shall do it; and he has always done exactly like this…I was more cautios than him, and I was 25, he was 70…"[28]

In 1987 Paride Allegri founded a group called "Resistenza verde" to which took part the members of the community and other friends of Paride, they did many actions in Reggio Emilia. The "Resistenza Verde"'s main scope was stopping the overbuilding due to the urban sprawl and greening any urban space. Resistenza Verde's activists planted trees everywhere in Reggio Emilia; once they ripped away seven hundred quintals of asphalt from the area close to the "former Caserma Zucchi" (where there was an asphalted square, in front of the former military station) in Reggio Emilia by using picks and shovels; then the planted bushes and trees there.

Sabrina Ferrari recollects when the group opposed the construction of a big building in a street in the centre of Reggio Emilia. "We went there and we planted some trees". Other times, she observes, they planted trees in the town's circumvallation. "Once, it was the Christmas day, we went in Massenzatico [29], in a piece of land without any tree. Paride told us that we should create a small forest for the children of the neighbourood, because they needed a space for enjoying themselves… and then we planted many trees there, we were not been allowed to do that, but we did it …then we ate together some "polenta", because we wanted to boycott rich and abundant Christmas lunch. This was because we were against the commercialization of religious festivities. We invited some poor people to eat with us since we were used to share everything we had."

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[27] Information gathered by the interview to Alberto Grasselli

[28] Information gathered by the interview to Alberto Grasselli

[29] A village placed in the first countryside of Reggio Emilia

The second important ideal in which the community deeply believed was non-violence. Paride had experienced the war, he was against the use of the weapons and any military operation. Pursuing pacifist ideals, Cà Morosini offers hospitality to those youth refusing the military service. Paride Allegri refused paying the taxes for the military expenses; for this reason once the financial police seized the Cà Morosini "solar oven" (1997) (Allegri P., 2006, p. 242). "Paride wanted to trigger a protest movement, he was an innovator, we wanted to fight all national military expenses." [30]

Stone at the entry of Cà Morosini, with a poem about peace, 2014

Activities in collaboration with the "Pax Christi" movement, the Italian "Movimento non violento" (nonviolent movement), the M.I.R. (Italian reconciliation movement) were undertaken. In 1999, the association "Centro per la Riconciliazione tra i Popoli, il Disarmo Universale, la Difesa del Creato" (Centre for the riconciliation among peoples, the universal disarmament, the creation's protection) was founded. Paride Allegri was the president and the legal office of the association was at Cà Morosini. The Association aimed at creating there a place that was uncontaminated and harmonious. It proposed seminars and meetings regarding the global peace's issue and the solidarity among people. In 2001, this association promoted a non-violent action in the centre of Reggio Emilia, school classes and all the children were invited

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[30] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrar

to burn their game weapons in front of the municipal building, in order to oppose war[31].

Banner for Nonviolent action

Sabrina Ferrari recollects the importance of the concept of education at Cà Morosini.

"We have often talked about the education of the sons , Paride deeply believed that the children have the right to dirty themselves …to play freely and getting in touch with the nature. The children should have had the right to use the tools for making handicraft, for building objects with recycled materials, for doing…doing should have been the most important thing…taking care of the garden, creating something by themselves …he opposed videogames"

"He provided me information that I have successively found in the Stainer[32]'s theories. He thought that the adults have to represent a model for the children, they have to be authoritative, but they have to consider the children as springs from which important information arise, and they are not sole wells, from which we can put knowledge and get gratitude. Paride hosted several times Cesare Zavalloni at Cà morosini. Zavalloni has come and interviewed Paride, then he founded a movement for the children's rights. He was the founder of the *didactic farms* in Italy".

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[31] Information gathered by the interview to Giovanna Boiardi

[32] Rudolf Joseph Lorenz Steiner was an Austrian philosopher, social reformer, architect, and esotericist. He get important acknowledgments for his theories regarding education and biodynamic agriculture

Link with the territory and the overall society

The community committed to the sustainable development of local territory. People had different opinions about the activities promoted at Cà Morosini.

Sabrina Ferrari recollects that: "The people living in the close municipality of Vezzano sul Crostolo had not a positive opinion about the community, they thought we were doped, instead, we oppose any kind of drug…they thought we were foolish… On the contrary, we had a good relation with the people of the close village of Montalto, they were always ready to support us whenever we needed something. We had not the agriculture machineries, they borrow us their tractors …they were very gentle and kind with us. I remember that when my daughter was a little child I went to the houses of our close neighbours to meet them…they were old and liked my visits... some of the neighbours came to Cà Morosini sometimes…I would have liked to create a project for some former toxic guys that lived in a therapeutic community close to the Montalto church, some of them came to Cà Morosini sometimes… Paride used to tell them his past stories, about the resistance, the partisans…they were enthusiast of Paride's story, he gave them new hope for their future .. he invited them to invent something new for their lives, to take choices…but then, we did not start the project"[33]

Parties were organised at Cà morosini, to which all the people living in the Montalto valley were invited to participate, but a lot of people came from Reggio Emilia too.

3.2.1.3 The environmental sustainability

Energy at Cà Morosini was provided through the so called "appropriate technologies": photovoltaic panels, solar panels, wind turbines, hydroelectric turbines. Paride Allegri was a pioneer of the renewable energies. In the 1980's few examples of "alternatives energies were present" in the Italian territory. Wood heating and cooking systems were implemented. The electric energy was provided through the solar panels, and wind turbine, that were placed on the roof. The water falling from the three rainy lakes produced electric energy as well. Everything in the community was provided without using carbon fossil fuels.

"Paride was considered a foolish, we were among the firsts implementers of the solar energy…we had very small bulbs, because the solar technologies were not advanced at those times… the light were very smooth but we were satisfied, we wanted to be able to live with the bare essentials, for heating the house, for lighting …in order to challenge ourselves and to live with the bare essential."[34]

The water was heated by using solar thermal collectors, they were placed on the roof upon the entrance of the house. The house was heated with fuel wood.

"The solar thermal collector can be built with recycled materials. It must be black because it has to attract the heath. Inside it is provided of a coil of pipes where the

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[33] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari

[34] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari

water is contained and heated. We did some courses for teaching how to build a solar thermal collector"[35]

Cà Morosini had a thermo-kitchen. It consisted in a low energy consumption kitchen, in fact it consumed few fuel wood and at the same time it heated the room. Over the stove, a copper coil served for bringing heat to all the rooms of the house. A small boiler upon the stove contained ten liters of warm water, they were used for cooking and washing the dishes. The stove of the thermo kitchen had also the oven. In the kitchen- room there was a wood oven. It was used for cooking the bread. In case of emergencies, there was a gas oven provided of gas cylinder, but it has almost never been used. In the bathroom, a wood boiler heated the water of the shower. The washing machine was alimented by using a bicycle, this device had been invented by Marcelle, a french guy who lived at Cà Morosini for a while.

"The bike washing machine was fantastic. It was very simple, Marcelle had taken an old washing machine, and he had connected the washing machine drum to the wheel of a bike. When you rode the bike, the pedaling motion caused the drum of the washing machine to rotate, and at the same time, you washed the clothes. We called Cà Morosini the "eco-gym". We invited people to come to Cà Morosini instead of going to normal gyms to get fit."[36]

In a second time, the washing machine was alimented by using the energy provided by the photovoltaic panels.

In the winter of 1990, as it recollects Sabrina, Paride decided to live without using the heating system.

"That winter there was only Paride and me…he did not want using the stove, he would experiment heating himself only by making physical activities during the day (by working in the garden), and during the night by covering well himself…at that time I was twenty and was an enthusiast deep environmentalist, so I decided to challenge myself, I would improve my survival skills. I was very cold that winter, during the day we sowed, planted trees, digging the land and it was fine, we were not cold, but during the night it was harder. Before going bed we turned on the stove for a while, so I put some bricks in the stove and then, before going to sleep I disposed them all around my bed…by this way I could sleep well"[37]

At Cà Morosini, even the cookery had the minimum environmental impact. In fact there was a wood cooking system and solar ovens. The community experimented many kinds of diets, even the raw food cookery was tried, because it used a minor quantity of energy. The washing-up of dishes was done using cinder, that substituted normal detergents. The house could be reached only by foot (it took twenty minutes from the asphalted road to Cà Morosini) because the road was ruined and unviable for the cars.

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[35] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari

[36] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari

[37] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari

"I was the responsible for the kitchen, my daughter was still a child therefore I often had to stay at home; I could not go outside to work in the garden.. so I usually cooked. I loved our solar oven, I had to take care of the cooking all time long, to move the oven and follow the sun… it did not consume any energy and we could cook everything, it was fantastic. I have cooked with solar oven even in winter, and in cloudy days… I had to organize my dishes on the base of the weather, I have to look at the sun and then decide what to prepare for the lunch. We did not waste anything, we preserved the food by curing it in salt as we had no fridge"

Cà Morosini solar oven


Coil of pipe for heating water

Cà Morosini, 2014

Cà Morosini, 1978
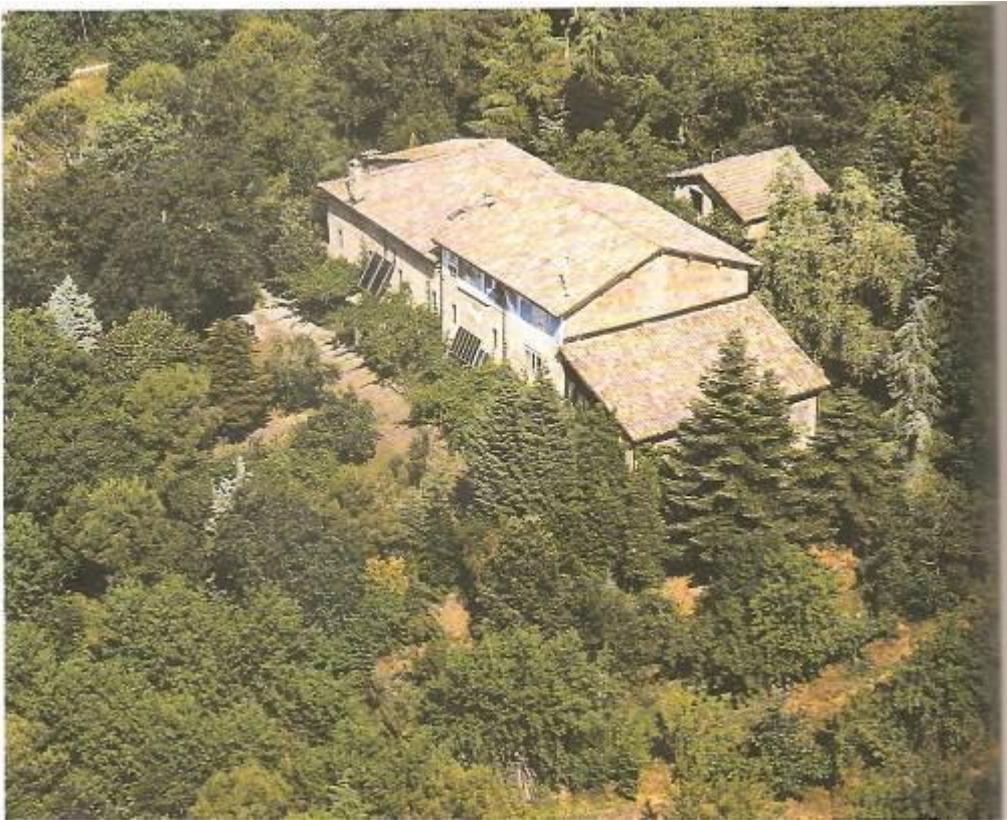
Cà Morosini, 2000

Agriculture and sustainable development studies

Several environmentally friendly practices were experimented there and lots of courses were organized and offered to those who visited Cà Morosini: biodynamic agriculture, organic agriculture, basketry, permaculture activities, vegetarianism cookery, officinal herbs and many more. Young people hosted were employed in agriculture activities, but also involved in the personal and collective formation which were fundamental to Cà Morosini. People studied together in order to find new solutions for sustainably developing the territory. Masanobu Fukuoka[38] was hosted in Cà Morosini, and participated to the biodynamic agriculture debates regarding how to better cultivating without exceeding the ecosystem carrying capacity. The community of Cà Morosini was mainly composed of vegetarians.

Sabrina explains that "We were vegetarians because we would respect our brothers, even the animals are living beings…Then we ate many wide plants…there are a lot of wide plants that many people do not know…"

Courses for the identification of woody plants were proposed, and courses about the therapeutic functions of the plants.

"We started doing courses at Cà Morosini; many people came. In the morning we went in the wood and pick up plants, then we ate them together. In the afternoon we usually taught how to identify officinal plants…"

3.2.1.4 The economic sustainability

One of the aims of Cà Morosini was to reach the self-sufficiency being therefore independent from the market. This objective was only partially reached as Sabrina explains:

"The total self-sufficiency was an utopia. Yes, we had a lot of fruit, Paride had planted many fruit trees, we had the vegetables, we had the wheat and we could produce our own bread, we had corns and chestnut flour that we exchanged it with the Elfi[39]…but we could not say to be totally autonomous"

The house was self-sufficient as far as energy provision was concerned. Drinking water came from the Cà Morosini well, close to the house. The bread was regularly cooked in the wood oven or in the solar oven. As it is explained by Sabrina's words the community experienced forms of sharing economy. If they needed something they could not produce by themselves, they obtained it from friends or people living in the Italian eco-villages by exchanging it with something they had. They exchanged their fruits with the chestnut flour, the olive oil (it came from their friends of Verona). The swap economy depended on the quantity of crops which have been harvested each year, if there were abundance they could do many exchanges.

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[38] Masanobu Fukuoka was a Japanese farmer and philosopher who started the discipline of the "Natural farming". He wrote the book "La rivoluzione del filo di paglia"

[39] The Elfi were the people living in the Tuscan eco-village "Il popolo degli Elfi"

"The sole thing we found it difficult to have were sweets, we had only the fruits …sometimes we prepared an apple-pie, or the chestnut flour pie…, but we did not use honey, because we were almost vegan"

People living at Cà Morosini were mainly vegetarians. For this reason the diet had to contain a great variety of cereals, vitamins and vegetal proteins. The seitan (also called "wheat meat") could not be made by using the Cà Morosini flour. For this reason, sometimes the fruits were exchanged with particular species of wheat (soft wheat of Manitoba is required for making seitan). Seeds provision was another obstacle to self-sufficiency. Cà Morosini's people have tried to grow their own seeds, but it has not always been simple. Seeds had often to be bought.

"Once, we cultivated alfalfa, because we wanted to exchange the alfalfa seeds, we picked the seeds one by one, it was very hard because the alfalfa seeds are microscopic."[40]

The community has tried to live without selling their crops, they exchange them or they offered them for free.

"The harvest is for our self-subsistence , the surplus is offered to whom is willing to pick it up. We do not want enter in to the market" (from an interview to Paride Allegri, Giorgi C., 01/11/2003).

The harvest job was one of the sole remunerative job they did; they went to farmers among their friends and earned some money. In fact, standing to Sabrina explanation, they needed health cares, she needed the dentist for example, and she had to paid some money for it. This was one of the reason for which they have never become totally self-sufficient. Once a year they have participated to a small fair of producers organized by the "Mag6"[41] of Reggio Emilia. For the event, they usually sold their crops. The fair has always represented a big source of income for Cà Morosini, the revenue served to satisfy the members' exigencies. In the last times, those stably living in Cà Morosini bought a car, (initially Paride allegri opposed any kind of fossil fuel transports). It was a collective good and was used by all the community's members.

Further to the good exchanges, those living at Cà morosini developed the so called R.E.L. (Rete Economia Locale), that stands for Local Economy Network. It consisted in a first form of Time bank, through which people could exchange services, instead of paying money for them. They were one of the first groups of people implementing this kind of sharing economy in Italy.[42]

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[40] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari

[41] Mutual auto-organization group of Reggio Emilia

[42] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari

3.2.1.5 Visions for the future

As long as Paride grew old and got sick, activities diminished. The community ended between 2003 and 2004, but Paride continued to be active until the end of his life, in 2012. Single individuals lived at Cà Morosini also during the period of Paride's illness, but the communitarian project has already died. Little information is nowadays available regarding the end of Cà Morosini and further investigations would be required to better understand what it happened. At present, data are difficultly findable because people is dispersed or involved in other activities. Certainly, many different factors have contributed to the gradual perishing of Ca Morosini. The opinions about it are variegate and multiple, some of the people left the community for job reasons, others because of their family. Sabrina, for example, needed a place closer to public services and to the school that her daughter attended.

In Sabrina's opinion the problems came also from the organization of the Cà Morosini community. "We shared everything, there were not spaces for the privacy, this had caused relational problems among people. We all had been grown in an individualist society, our families had taught us to pursue our own interests, we had not been used to support each other. I think that the solution is the eco-village. In an eco-village everybody has their own space, their own kitchen and their own room where to stay on their own or with their family; then, there are common spaces where eating together, and chatting together…but private spaces are needed."

Alberto thinks that the re-birth of Cà Morosini is not possible, he has lived there for a while (1988-1990) "Currently, there is nobody interested in restarting with the community or proposing something similar"

"Many times we had posed ourselves the question: what will we do if we will have a family? How will we organize when we will have some sons?…then, it was as we had forecasted, families and couples slowly left the community and settled in other places… they continued believing in the ideals of Cà Morosini, but they have done it on their own."

"I believe that something could rebirth, but in another manner, modelled on the current society… my personal thought is that people today is unable to make radical choices…they are frightened and dispersed among thousands proposal offered by the society…I cannot see the spirit of mutual support among people that had guided us at that time"[43]

Paride Allegri was the owner of Cà Morosini's estate and, now the property is of his sons. At present, the house and the property are semi-abandoned, Francesco Allegri (one of the Paride's sons), takes care of the garden and of the area around the house, he planted several olive trees. Giovanna Boiardi thinks that only if six or seven people decided to live there, something could restart." A group of people should take care of the house, but currently there is not any group. If a family lived there, and had some external incomes, Cà Morosini could restart. The problems arise also from the lack of comforts and the distance from the services."

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[43] Information gathered by the interview to Alberto Grasselli

The association "Centro per la Riconciliazione tra i Popoli, il Disarmo Universale, la Difesa del Creato" founded by Paride Allegri in 1999, is still active. It consists of seven or eight people, that had known him or have lived at Cà Morosini. They regularly meet and promote environmentally sensitive actions. Every year they organise a meeting at Cà Morosini, open to all the interested people.

"We had a weakness, told me Paride, we criticize the system, but we have not a global project to change it. We lack of a global reflection" (from an interview to Paride Allegri, Giorgi C., 01/11/2003).

3.2.2 The ecological village of Granara

The village of Granara was born from the dream of a group of people, coming from Milan, who joined together and decided to restore an abandoned village in Parma Apennine. Granara is placed beside the small village of Branzone, in the Municipality of Valmozzola and when they found it, was totally abandoned. The village is at 600 metres above sea level and it consists of 55 hectares of hilly territory.

Granara, 2014

A group of guys aged from 17 to 24, living in the North-Western area of Milan (Giambellino neighbourhood) constituted the "Centro Arti e Mestieri Libertari" (Libertarian arts and crafts's Centre). The association lived from 1989-90 to 1992-93. The youth participating to the Centre's activities had different backgrounds, some of them had experienced volunteering activities in the scout association, (among them, many had been active in the neighbourhood and they had organized a so called "popular school" for people who had not completed the compulsory education), others came from a student union of a local high school. The "Centro Arti e Mestieri Libertari'" was constituted by almost forty guys, they were the generation of the sons of who had done the year of the great protests in the 1970's. The Centre political orientation was anarchic. The members of the group committed themselves to implement volunteering social activities in the neighbourhood, such as animating the social life, repairing bicycles for the neighbourhood children and more else. Then they regularly met together in order to discuss about ecological, social , political and problem-development issues. One group study was focused mainly on ecologic and underdevelopment issues. They studied Murray Bookchin and Wolfgang Sachs's theories. And from these studies arose the idea of moving and searching for a rural place to live.

"We wanted developing theories and putting into practice our ideals at the same time. We really wanted to commit ourselves in our daily lives to do something important.

Our mission was:

-getting involved and moving from theory to practice

-ecology, which meant searching for more environmentally friendly lifestyles"[44]

Those who joined the proposal and left town were young. There were engineers, political scientists and experts of international cooperation. No one had job experience yet, but they shared the desire of taking themselves seriously. They were bored of abstract political declamations, they wanted to put into practice their ideals.

3.2.2.1 The community and its principles

The group searched for a place for two years, then in 1992, they found out Granara, an abandoned rural village, dispersed in Parma's Apennine. In 1994, eight of them bought the houses for twenty millions lires each in "Granara di Sopra", a land of 54 hectares (Cooperativa ALEKOS, 1997).

At the same time the "Centro Arti e Mestieri Libertari" was transformed; an attempt of creating a federation which could include all the groups and the activities of the Centre was developed. The federation would have included Granara (that committed to develop sustainable ways of living, environmental responsibility and agricultural activities), a cooperative of social services in Milan (that would have developed social activities and would have financed the federation), a centre for natural medicine in Milan (that have been founded by a member of "Centro Arti e Mestieri Libertari"), a social centre (the Torchiera social centre in Milan) and a solidarity based purchasing group (founded by Gaetano Testini, a member of Granara). The federative project lasted a little time, in fact, even if the various groups continued believing in the same values, they soon performed their activities autonomously.

The group of Granara proceeded with its project. Dario Sabbadini, one of the founders of the Granara project explains that:

"When we found out the place, we were totally unexperienced …we needed a carpenter…we started with the idea to find a place which could make us breathing, imaging and dreaming; and could offer us the possibility to invent our new ecological life. At that time, there were not yet the current huge environmental problems, we could only perceive their firsts signs."

"In those years, others have started leaving the urban areas to go to the countryside, we read it in the magazine Aam Terranuova; other people, like us, were founding communities which were way different from the "commons" created before the 1990's"[45]

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[44] Information gathered by the interview to Dario Sabbadini (18/08/2014), resident in Granara

[45] Information gathered by the interview to Dario Sabbadini

At the beginning they were eight, then the sons were born, and arrived other people.

"I think that eight was the minimum required number to do something; a smaller group could be enough to create a group of friends willing to live together. However, in order to create a community able to interact with the local territory and establishing a relevant network of social relations, at least eight people were required."[46]

The group wrote a chart, the "Magna Charta" which contained the Granara project guidelines. It was written in 1993, few months before Granara was acquired. The founding group consisted of three smaller unit: two couples with their own houses and three single members who lived in a "common".

The document stated:

"We share the common will to create at least a place in the countryside where the productive paradigm is not to make profit and the social paradigm not to make competitiveness. Our collective project (it is distinct from the individual ones) is not to become a great utopia, it is only a small step towards the realization of a village where the human relations of proximity are possible and where cultivating without using pesticides is part of the vital cycle." (Cooperativa ALEKOS, 1997, p. 4)

The chart could be changed by an unanimous decision. It established that the community would have cultivated the land by using organic farming agriculture. The wastes should have been disposed by avoiding any pollution.

The decision were taken together, by the assembly. "Any permanent changes to the rural estate, which has not been planned together shall be approved by unanimity.[…] Any other changes shall be approved by the majority."

The chart established that each family unit had its own house; the land instead was administrated in co-ownership among the group members. For which it concerned the agriculture and its incomes, who farmed the field was not required to share its incomes with the others. Even if, the community considered it fair that who gained profit from the land contributed to improve the overall estate by using a part of them. The new members were allowed to access the community after a time for getting to know the community members and by approving the Magna Charta principles.

The initial Granara project purposed to develop a research centre about renewables energies and appropriate technologies, to develop environmental education programmes for the schools and to open an organic agriculture and zootechnical farm.

Even if it was not explicitly made reference to the concept of sustainability, this latter was one of the initial founding principles.

"The initial Granara project has not been realized, it has been better for us it went like this, we has discovered that the real life is more complex than what we could had imagined. There are two causes for this to happen: the first is that, with the passing

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[46] Information gathered by the interview to Dario Sabbadini

of the time we have understood that we did not have the same ideas about how Granara should have been developed. The second one is that some new ideas have added later, along the path." [47]

"Some of us had thought we would have come to live here, in Granara. But something different has happened"

"We had expected something different, we had imagined that our project would have been developed by the collective decision of the groups, and that everything which would have been created, it would have been decided together. Instead, Granara has developed as it grows a tree, it did not take a planned shape, but it was modeled by many changes, by the intervention of new people along its path. Like a tree Granara has many branches, each of them represent a facet of the village."

The people who participates to the life and the activities of the village are almost fifty right now, the majority lives and works elsewhere, and join together in Granara during the summer period or for the events. Currently, the village property is partitioned among twenty-two owners (with the passing of the time other pieces of land have been bought, currently the village is composed of "Granara di sopra" and "Granara di sotto" with an overall superficies of 100 hectares and total of 12 houses). Seven people stably live in Granara (two families and a single person). Other three people are resident in Granara, but they work outside the village; they are often in Granara, but not all the yearlong. Five other families have the house in Granara, but they are in Granara for the weekends and during the summer.

The Granara structure

The Granara village is not constituted by a real community, like the one it can be imagined while thinking to a common. Granara can be defined a small rural settlement, where people normally live and join together for taking decision about the village.

"The Granara community is to be intended as a red line, tying people together: is constituted by all those who desire taking care of the village. They like Granara. The majority of the people coming here, have a sense of attraction towards this place and its people in general. " [48]

Granara is composed of many groups. Each group takes care of a specific sector. There are temporary (those groups constituted for doing brief projects) and permanent groups.

The permanent groups are the following:

1. "Centopassi": it develops environmental education courses (about green building technologies, appropriate technologies and social ecology) and promotes them to schools, summer camps and groups.

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[47] Information gathered by the interview to Dario Sabbadini

[48] Information gathered by the interview to Dario Sabbadini

2."G.eco": it elaborates studies and seminars about ecology and non-violence (ecologic communication and facilitation courses). It develops appropriate technologies for the energy provision, the thermal insulation, the green building structures in Granara and diffusing these practices.

3."Theatre": it proposes cultural events and art initiatives. Since 2000, during the summer time it promotes the Granara festival.

4."Granaio": it manages the village accommodation activity.

5."Granera": it takes care of the agriculture and the animals (cows, horses..) farming. It has agriculture tractors and machineries that are used also for transporting the village's fuel-wood. It organizes ecological holidays at Granara, which are open to those interested people.

6."G.att": it administrates the agriculture machinery and the village's tools. It takes care of the forest paths and the houses maintenance.

Each group has its own organization. All the groups, excepted for the "G.att", are legally constituted associations.

Decisional mechanisms

Initially the decisional mechanism was based on the unanimity, it has been established by the Magna Charta, but with the passing of time many things have changed.

Dario Sabbadini observes that:

"The unanimity has slowed the decisions for many years. It was an absurd mechanism, then we have realised that it impeded people to do what they desired. It was negative for the village, in fact the Magna Charta stated that the houses were private and the territory was a common. By these principles, people worked well only in their private properties, but no one took care of the common property. We are all sons of the capitalist mentality. The concept of exploiting the public for our own interests, and neglecting it when it is a cost is embedded in our way of thinking. We would like rights, but not duties."

"We have discovered that we had different ideas, even if we had thought they were the same. We asked ourselves: what does sustainability mean? For example, someone though that cutting the trees and then selling the fuel wood was not sustainable, others instead though yes. Then we understood that we had different opinion about the of sustainability. Granara has highlighted our differences, we have understood that nothing was to be taken for granted. We had many slogans, but they had to be substituted by our many different point of views. Thinking to the ecology, the difference is the source of life. We are used to think that a project can arise only by the equality, by common ideals. Gradually, we have understood that we could have survived only by accepting our own differences. The globalization of the differences, it was a Bookchin's principle, the unity in the difference."

His reference to Bookchin can be better understood by quoting the author: "If nature itself shows the need for diverse species to coexist within any particular environment, then we humans should also understand the imperative of unity through diversity." (Bookchin M., Foreman D., 1991, p. 6)

The Granara group has evolved by facing daily debates about the property administration, the environmentally appropriate technologies, the promotion of the village activities and anything regarding the life in Granara.

Since 2011, the Magna Charta has been substituted by a new Granara constitution (Carta Costituente Villaggio Ecologico di Granara, 2011).

The new document established that the decision would have been taken by two bodies: the Village Circle (Cerchio del Villaggio) and the Spokesmen Council (Consiglio dei Portavoce).

The Circle is constituted by all those having a long term investment at Granara (owners, residents or those who are more involved in the village groups and associations). When the Circle was constituted, the people who had the right to participate to the body were twenty-seven. The Circle has not bureaucratic functions. It is an advisory body, it offers to people the possibility to meet each other and express their vision about the village projects. During the Circle meeting, people can propose new ideas and debate about the negative and the positive aspects of the village. The issues which are systematically addressed by the Circle are the following:

1) Territory management (new anthropizations, agriculture projects implementation, forestall management, environmental protection, intervention on the municipal assets such as municipal roads, aqueducts… in order to coordinate the activities with the Municipality and improving the relation with it)

2) Activities checking

3) Relational issues (within the village and outside the village)

4) Propositional activity (depth study about ecological and cultural issues, both practical and theoretical

The Circle does not take decisions about activities and projects, but it checks their coherency with the village ideals. The Circle decisional mechanism aims to reach the assembly consensus. The proposals are approved by the majority, but the minorities can oppose the decisions. If the assembly accept the opposing motion, the proposal is newly discussed in order to reach an higher consensus. The Circle meets three times a year (summer, spring and fall) at Granara, in the common room (it was the living room of the former common, then the building has been split: currently Dario Sabbadini lives at the first floor and the ground floor is used for the village reunions), in the meadows or under the big oak. The Circle has no more the decisional power, the meetings are the place for proposing new ideas, confronting each other and assessing the village situation.

The Spokesmen Council (Activities Coordination Committee) is constituted by the associations spokesmen or by those external people willing to propose a project to the village of Granara. The groups, the associations and the cooperatives represented by the Council shall present their intention declarations to the Council and the Circle that have to approve them. The spokesmen are delegated by their association for taking decisions. The decisions regard the activities to be developed, the proposals, the properties and the Granara relationships with the outside world. Before taking important decisions, they have to consult their groups.

The Council meets once a month (sometimes less). A facilitator leads the spokesmen reunions (the facilitator is one among the spokesmen). All the reunions are verbalised.

The Circle and the Council are interdependent, they reciprocally influence each other. The groups or the Council take decision about the Granara collective spaces.

There are many different opinions about the efficiency of the new decisional mechanisms.

"The decisional change has been discussed. The most debated point is about how to consider the voice of those who do not live in Granara. Have their opinion the same weight of the residents' ones? We lack of a decisional arena where those are part of the groups and those who are not, can meet each other and discuss. We have tried to create a decisional structure where the dissent was enhanced. We did not want the unanimity, we did not want a majoritarian democracy where the minorities were ignored. We have elaborated this method, it is oriented to find a general consensus. First it analyses all the different voices, then it combines them in order to come to a shared decision."[49]

"Our reality has always been too unbalanced towards the town. Those who do not reside in Granara have unavoidably less power of those living here. Even if, it would be an unviable option that every owner came to live here."[50]

Standing to Giovanni Pacchiani's[51] opinion, the Circle is still the most important body, because it involves all the village, those who have a project and those who have not.

Gaetano Testini[52] thinks that the Spokesmen Council has not resolved the decisional problems. In his opinion, the great turning point has been represented by the properties partitioning.

"In fact, two or three years after the beginning (1997), the houses property was legally partitioned among the groups members. Then three years ago (in 2011) we

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[49] Information gathered by the interview to Stefano Guizzi, (14/09/2014), resident in Granara

[50] Information gathered by the interview to Gaetano Testini

[51] Giovanni Pacchiani have lived in granara since 2012. The information were gathered by interviewing him. (19/08/2014)

[52] Gaetano Testini has an house in Granara. He was one of the founders in 1993. The information were gathered by interviewing him. (19/08/2014)

partitioned the lands (they ended the co-ownership). I think that that change has determined the current higher decisional efficiency"

3.2.2.2 The environmental sustainability

Granara electricity and thermal energy is provided through renewable energies. The solar and photovoltaic village panels are grid-connected, then the excessive energy is transferred to the utility grid.

In 2008, two firsts small photovoltaic panels were installed, then in 2009 other photovoltaic panels were installed on the Granaio roof. In the following years until 2014 other four solar plants (on three houses roofs and on the Granara laboratory roof) were installed. At the current moment, the quantity of electric energy produced is higher than the required, the village is energetically self-sufficient.

14,1kw Laboratory   1,02kw   1,08kw Common

1,6kw   1,645kw   2,88kw Granaio

6 photovoltaic plants	27455	Kwh annual production
9 consumers	12958	Kwh annual consumption
Energy surplus	14497	Kwh per year

(Granara website, Sabbadini D., 13/4/2013)

All the houses are almost totally heated with fuel wood, some villagers use also the thermal solar energy. The water is heated with the solar thermal energy (solar panels). The cooking energy is not renewable. All the kitchens have a gas cooker.

The transports are the major problem. In fact, Granara is distant from the public services, there are not public transports to go to the village and the road is not asphalted. In order to have the lowest environmental impact Granara people have chosen to buy natural gas vehicles. Currently almost all of them has natural gas cars. The closest railway station is Berceto, then a car is required for reaching Granara. By foot or by bike the road is long, especially during the cold seasons. In 2014, a project for developing a bike-path between Granara and the Berceto railway station has been elaborated, the idea is still in progress. Dario Sabbadini (member of the G.eco

group) highlights the fact that the transport sector still needs major improvements to sustainability.

An accurate measurement of Granara impact on the territory is difficultly calculable. Dario Sabbadini takes the Wolfagang Sachs's theoretical elaborations in order to provide an analysis of the human pressure exercised on the Granara territory. Sachs divided the territory in four macro areas. One shall be dedicated to the wideness (the habitat of biodiversity), one to the energy provision (the forest), one to the food provision (agriculture cultivations) and one for the goods provision (places for transforming the raw material in finished goods).

Granara purposes to reach the Sachs's model, at current time it has a great portion of wide territory (there is a vast uncontaminated forested area around the village). Then, there is an area for the energy provision (portions of the forest provide the fuel-wood).

The third and fourth areas are still not present. The agriculture fields are not producing any crop for the village and the carbon fueled tractors are the principal agriculture machineries. Standing to Dario Sabbadini's words, reaching a really sustainable carbon free agriculture is one of the Granara challenges. Then, the village depends from the outside economy for any other good provision.

The village has been restored by using green building technologies and with a particular attention to the local ancient architectural styles. Initially, the group studied the village old architectonic plans, then the restoring plan was actuated. At the beginning they asked for some local carpenter's support, then they restored the houses by their own. In the first times, traditional building technologies were also used (energivorous materials as the cement), then the green building technologies have almost totally substituted them. The technologies used included raw earth technique and straw and earth technique.

The houses are not all restored with green building technologies, some of them have been restored on the base of their old structures by using the old local raw material or the ancient fallen houses bricks and stones. Initially, the group established some sustainability guidelines for the houses restoration, then each member decided the technologies who would have used.

Three buildings have been built totally by new. The first one is the village library, it is a passive building, in fact it requires little energy for space heating or cooling and it produces more energy than the quantity it requires. The second one is the village laboratory, its roof is totally adorned by solar panels. The third one is a shipping container home, in fact the main structure consists in a shipping container; currently the building has being thermally insulated with straw and earth.

Two houses have the composting toilet, it is a dry toilet that uses a predominantly aerobic processing system that treats excreta, typically with no water or small volumes of flush water, via composting or managed aerobic decomposition.[53] Then there are other outdoor composting toilets, used mainly for the village events and

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[53] Information taken from Wikipedia

during the summer festival. The rest of the houses have ordinary toilets provided of septic tanks. The two houses provided with composting toilets have a lagoon water purification system, home flows through a pipe to a lagoon, where physical, biological, and chemical processes provide treatment.

The drinking water is provided by the municipal aqueduct. Currently they do not have any rainwater collection system for recycling water.

Lagoon for the water purification and Granara library

Earth oven

The former Common

Granara Laboratory

The shipping container home

3.2.2.3 The economic sustainability

The initial Granara project aimed at employing at least eight people living in the village by ten years after 1994. Then, the project was not realized. At the current time the villagers work outside Granara. Only two members live and work almost totally in Granara. Giovanni Pacchiani produces bread and sell it at small producers fairs. Rossana sells processed food produced with Granara vegetables and fruits.

The village economy consists in the Granara associations activities at the village. The associations little incomes are managed by the groups, which use them for paying the organizational costs and promoting further activities in the village.

 1. "Centopassi": the association organizes environmental education courses at the villages. It establishes by its own the salaries of the educators and the costs of the courses.

2."G.eco": the association organises courses about ecological issues and non-violence and decides the costs of the trainings.

3."Theatre": the principal association activity is the organization of the summer festival. The festival consists in a week of theatre, dance, music and art courses (it can include also activities of environmental sensitization proposed by the other associations) during the summer season. The guests can camp in the village during the festival, experiencing the composting toilets, participating to the courses and the exhibitions to which are invited artists of national and international relevance. The festival tickets finance the association expenses.

4."Granaio": the Granaio is the building that is used for the accommodation activity. The property of the building is of a Granara member (Stefano Guizzi) who has legally licensed the Granara associations to use the stable for their activities for a long time. The building is provided with kitchen, toilets, living-room and bedrooms (20 beds). The incomes of the Granaio derive from the associations activities (courses, seminars..). The accommodations are still mainly reserved to the courses participants, the hosting activity is not open to tourists and occasional visitors.

5."Granera": the association incomes derive from the environmental holidays organization.

Since a few years, the Granara groups have started thinking how the revenues coming from the associations could have been used in order to benefit the overall village. One of the Granara future purposes is to elaborate an accurate project in order to ask for national, regional, local or European funds for it. Until now, Granara has never received any kind of fund from institutions.

Further to the monetary economy, Granara has a time bank. Granara groups and people can exchange services among them through the time bank. It means that, instead of paying for something they need, they exchange it with the others by offering something they have.

3.2.2.4 Social and cultural sustainability

The original Granara project aimed at improving the group members' quality of life and at proposing a social and cultural sustainable model to whom would have gotten in touch with the village.

The Magna Charta stated:

"Granara promotes activities aimed at diffusing cultural proposals and aspiring at improving the human beings' quality of life." (Cooperativa ALEKOS, 1997, p. 23)

Initially the idea was to create in Granara a permanent centre for environmental and health education. This aim was developed through the environmental education courses and activities proposed by the village. Then, the things have evolved and the art and the theatre have become important parts of Granara.

Granara garden and houses

Cultural commitment

Art and theatre expressive languages have been proposed by the "Centro Arti e Mestieri Libertari" in Milan, but the Granara project did not make reference to these kind of disciplines. In the first period, some cultural exhibitions have been promoted at Granara, but the first big event in which the theatre played an important role was in 2000, when the first Granara festival was organized.

Since 2000, many festivals have been organized. The entertainments proposed, have focused on various issues: society, health, politics (in 2004 the festival was about the Genova G8), real life stories, job conditions, individual and political crisis ...

and others; the themes have always had a look to the present, encouraging young inexperienced artists or denouncing themes of social relevance.

The theatre group takes the decisions regarding the cultural proposals with the rest of the village. The group is constituted by five people, who live in the village or have known Granara for a long time. The festival preparation represents one of its principal activities, and its organization has usually started in the fall season. In the course of the years Granara has hosted great artists such as Cesar Brie, Dario Manfredini, Marco Paolini, Ascanio Celestini and many young independent actors.

The festivals are attended by thousands of people, usually they last one week, in which the guest artists taught to the participants theatre discipline, art, dance, music.

The Festival Circus

Granara theatre has always chosen low energy consuming entertainments. Once, the village has hosted a troupe which performed nature-theatre, the Granara open meadows and natural landscape were particularly suited for that kind of performance. Since the firsts festivals, Granara theatre exhibitions have consumed little energy. The performances use led lighting and one hundred watt projectors. Since 2012 the festivals have had a more then a zero impact, they have produced more energy than they had consumed.

The following data describes the energetic impact of the 2014 festival:

Festival 2014, findings:

	Consumed energy (kWh)	Renewable energy produced (kWh)	Final balance (kWh)	
All the village	407	644	**237**	positive
Festival areas (circus, obelix, granaio's veranda)	224	518	**294**	positive

"The theatre and the festival are the channel trough which Granara is close to the outside society. One of the Granara founding principles was that it was not an island detached from the world, but that was an experimentation laboratory continuously crossed by the town. We feel that hosting artists and actors is socially and relationally ecological. We believe that the theatre has an higher relational quality compared to the cinema or the television. We think that sitting down and telling stories is ecologic. The theatre is low tech, we do not host high technology and energy consuming entertainments. We believe in low technologies performances centred on the human ability to relate with the audience and to entertain it."[54]

Link with the territory and the overall society

Granara has little relationships with local institutions, in several years few partnerships have been undertaken. The relations with local villagers (Valmozzola and Branzone) are variegate. Initially, Granara was seen as a place of hippy people.

"They were sceptic and frightened by our projects, we wanted to propose something different to farm the fields and breeding animals. We proposed cultural activities and more else…"[55]

Then the local population has better understood the proposal that Granara was bringing to the territory. In the course of the years, some local schools have collaborated with the Granara associations participating to environmental courses or camps at the village. The major appreciations arrived from the town, where people have proved to be more sensitive to this kind of alternative proposals.

"When we arrived, the area lacked of cultural and social proposals, currently the situation is quite improved, some old retired people have gotten to know us. We have brought a little life here, since we have arrived. The prejudices come and go away, then come back again…they depend from what we propose."[56]

The problem, according to Giovanni Pacchiani's opinion, is that the village is seen from the locals as a closed group of people. Sometimes Granara has tried to involve locals in the village activities, some local artists have participated to Granara events. Then, people has usually come for the festivals.

Giovanni Pacchiani, who lives in Granara, observes that the relationships with the neighbours are good. "They exchange with us agriculture tools and support each other in the farming."

When he arrived, in 2012, he had listened to some voices from who lived in the local territory. The Granara group was considered "the Milan's citizens that came for doing the holidays in the countryside". Then, since he has lived in Granara he has gotten to know the locals, "they are mountain people, I am similar to them because I am from

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[54] Information gathered by the interview to Stefano Guizzi

[55] Information gathered by the interview to Dario Sabbadini

[56] Information gathered by the interview to Dario Sabbadini

the Apennine too. Firstly they attack you, in order to defend themselves, then, after they have understood that you are fine, they trust you."

3.2.2.5 Granara and the current crisis

The current economic crisis impacts the whole society, even the Granara village. Dario Sabbadini thinks that the current crisis brought those who work in the village or take part to the associations job, to imagine Granara as a place which is real, is possible. Granara represents for them a safe harbour where they could stay if any economic activities failed. It is a place where they could survive by farming their fields; but this hypothesis would be unviable; in fact, states Dario Sabbadini, if any Granara owners decided to come and stay in the village, Granara could not economically and environmentally sustain them all. The village would implode. He thinks that the crisis urges people to change lifestyle, to walk towards de-growth, it represent a call for new sustainable proposals, but if really everything failed, Granara would not be able to offer an adequate solution, not yet.

The Granara cultural proposals aimed at creating a revenue for the village, have been negatively impacted by the crisis. The number of the festivals participants, the people attending the seminars and the ecological holidays proposed by the Granera group has diminished. In 2013, the Granaio, that lives mainly by hosting the courses participants, had more costs than incomes. At the opposite, the environmental courses and camps have been proceeding well.

Thinking about the individual and societal current crisis, the village represents a place of change and possible alternative life for many people aspiring to something new, to an higher quality of life. Many e-mails daily arrive to the Granara inbox, observes Dario Sabbadini, coming from people interested in the life of the village, in new sustainable way of life. Granara cannot offer a real answer to those people, it does not represent a place where people can come and stay. What Granara can suggest is to start walking towards the change, to do, putting in practice the ideals.

3.2.2.6 Visions for the future

The village of Granara consists in about fifty people who regularly participate to the village projects and actively contribute to its life. Dario Sabbadini thinks that being many is a source of richness for Granara. "This reality will continue, the second generation has started now to participate to the village organisation"

Granara has many dreams for the future, "Many ecological adjustment could be imagined. There are many unsustainable aspects, such as the food provision, the water provision system, the transports: I would like to improve them all", explains Dario Sabbadini.

"From the decisional and administrative point of views still we have many disagreements, we should find a solution to better understand each other"[57]

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[57] Information gathered by the interview to Dario Sabbadini

The theatre group dream is to periodically host theatre troupes at Granara. The idea would consist in offering them the place for studying, and preparing their performances; supporting them in diffusing their art and organizing the festivals with them. The project, he observes, could be possible if some funds was found out.

The Granera group has been working to a great project; the forecasted activities include a wheat organic cultivation, the flour and bread making. The wheat will be milled into flour in Granara and used for the bread making. The group plans to use local ancient seeds of wheat, in order to have high quality crops, produced from fertile seeds (not sterile hybrids). The second Granera intention is to producing cheese and meat. The Granera products will be purchased at small producers fairs. The idea is to create an economic activity that creates jobs for the Granera group members.

The Granaio group has the project to create an accommodation structure where hosting the village tourists and visitors. In the last few years the association has been working in order to fulfil the legal requirements necessary for starting the activity. The idea would ensure a minimum economic stability to the association. Further to the creation of accommodations, the group aims at promoting periodical cultural initiatives at the Granaio, such as meetings, small producers and handicraft fairs, moments of exchange open to the external people.

Many projects have been developing for providing a minimum economic self-sufficiency to Granara. Giovanni Pacchiani would like to create a village that is autonomous and hosts all the Granara people. He states "Granara has a great potential, if the project was well developed, we would be able to live all here. There are 100 hectares of land and there would be enough space for everybody of us. Many times the people told me that they would like to come and live here, but they cannot. They have too many external things, (job, relations) which keep them away. We should find out a way to create a stable income from the village activities."

4. Conclusions

This brief excursus has started from the definition of sustainability and its relation with the concept of development. The term "sustainability" is apt for many interpretations. Different entities can approach differently to it, depending to the identity, collective or individual, institutional or autonomous, they are characterized by. Quoting Redclift (Redclift, 1991, in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 194), sustainable development "means different things to different people". It has not an unequivocal sense, lots of approaches can be defined sustainable. Three main elements (in Bagliani M., Dansero E., 2011, p. 191) are supposed to be the object of the sustainability: ecosystem integrity, economic efficiency, and social equity. After an introduction about the sustainable policies that local, national and international institutions have adopted in the course of the time, this study has focused its attention on a peculiar form of sustainability experimentation: the eco-village. The study has attempted to show if this kind of social phenomenon can be defined sustainable from a social, economic and environmental perspective and can be a positive cultural resource for the whole civil society. In the last thirty years of the twentieth century, the global awareness about the environmental problems and social inequalities has gradually increased: sustainably developing the society has proved to be the only solution. Since the Stockholm Conference (1972), the necessity to promote a responsible use of resources, in order to protect the environment and the future generations has been highlighted. A change was required, and it should be pursued with great caution, to avoid disruption of biodiversity and the regenerative capacity of nature, both locally and globally (Lafferty M., Meadowcroft J., 2000, p. 19). The 1992 Rio Global Forum urged the world to undertake a change that was not aimed to benefit only the richest countries, but which enhanced the peoples cultural differences. The eco-villages are one of the multiple initiatives that arose from the need to go towards a better future, without endangering the ecosystem. The eco-villages pose themselves the objective to develop an integrated approach to sustainability, the Global Eco-village Network define them:

"a human-scale settlement consciously designed through participatory processes to secure long-term sustainability. All four dimensions (the economic, ecological, social and cultural) are seen as mutually reinforcing." (Global Ecovillage Network Europe website)

The analysis of two among these experiences has relieved interesting findings. The following paragraphs will provide a brief description of their structure, their principles and their social organization on the territory.

4.1 Cà Morosini

Cà Morosini, started a little differently from an "ordinary" eco-village. It does not started, as a traditional RIVE eco-village, from a group of people who shared ideals and intentions and decided to live together in order to put into practice their own project together and shape their lives consistently with their beliefs. In fact, the community became real thanks to the initial impulse of a charismatic leader, Paride Allegri. His passionate personality gave the imprint to the community of Cà Morosini. Since then, many people were involved in the community life and participated to its initiatives. The reality lasted almost twenty-five years, a long time during which various phases have succeeded. The community of people residing at Cà Morosini

leaded a radical and frugal lifestyle, that would have appeared impossible to the majority of people. The community aimed at realizing the self-sufficiency, one of its principles stated:

-to realize the self-sufficiency (for the human beings permanently living in the estate and for the animals) for which it concerns: food production, seeds supply, substances for the protection against diseases;

Their experience can be interpreted in the perspective of Schneidewind and Zahrnt as oriented to the *sufficiency*. The concept of *sufficiency* "is about having enough to meet one's needs – while thinking not only about material needs."

"So a change of course towards sufficiency means correcting the balance. It is not about abandoning the impressive historical gains in productivity, but about a new communion of productive progress and frugality." (Schneidewind U., Zahrnt A., 2014)

The life at Cà Morosini was hard, recollects Sabrina Ferrari, especially for the women. The majority of people would have never liked such kind of hardship. Even if, the community have appeared distant from the civilized world to the majority, noble principles have guided its choices (non-violence, ecologic responsibility, respect for any living being). The community principles were based on the respect of any living being: humans, animals, plants; The introduction of the Cà Morosini principles stated:

"Founding principles for a development model that respects the Creation, which comprehends the seven original Genesis elements, Light, Air, Water, Earth, Plants, Animals, Men, and which leads the humanity to the Universal Love, source of any good."

Their approach to the ecosystem could be defined by Richardson as biocentric:

"this is a question of recognizing the wholeness of the self (material and non-material) as well as the wholeness of the planet." (Baker S., Young S., Kousis M., Richardson D., 1997)

The fundamental mission of Cà Morosini was not to be a dispersed island in an enchanted garden, on the opposite it has always cried its S.O.S. to the world urging it for an environmental and social change.

The analysis of the Cà Morosini case study found out some positive features and success factors:

-For which it concerns the *environmental sustainability*, interesting achievements were reached in the field of environmentally friendly technologies. At Cà Morosini were installed the first prototypical renewable energy plants in the Italian territory. Moreover, Cà Morosini commitment to biodynamic agriculture studies attracted many scientists and agronomists from all over the world, contributing to the diffusion of the experience and to the improvement of the studies. The community took care of its territory and enhanced its biodiversity.

-From the *social sustainability perspective*, the political and social commitment to the nonviolent issues created a dynamic movement of people around Cà Morosini. In fact, the community hosted many young people who had chosen the objection to the military service, their presence represented a resource for the community because they offered their support in the field cultivation and brought new energies and ideas to reality. The environmentalist actions increased local people awareness about the ecological risk and called the ecologist movements attention from abroad.

-For which it concern the *economic sustainability*, the community experimented valid alternatives to the hyper-consumeristic societal model. The wideness of the Cà Morosini estate and the sustainable management of the territory made it possible to create a high biodiversity level and a great variety of cultivations; the community reached an almost total food self-sufficiency. The Cà Morosini community had well defined principles and deeply trusted its ideals, but it was characterized by a great openness towards the outside world: anyone could find accommodation at Cà Morosini. Even if these two aspects could contrast each other, they provide a clear image of the community. The rooted ideals did not mean closure to the outside world, radicalism and exclusiveness, but they represented the major attractiveness of the community. The interviewed people who lived in the community have all described the coming and going of people to which Cà Morosini has always been subjected.

Around 2004, after many years of political and social activity, Cà Morosini ferment has gradually diminished. The reasons were many. Not all of them depended on the community organization, some people went away for personal reasons.

The following major findings highlight the negative features and probable reasons for the experience to have an end:

Flexibility and openness other sides of the coin consist in lack of stability, clear decisional mechanisms and intimacy. All these factors probably influenced the gradual decaying of the Cà Morosini experience. The community was not stable, many people arrived and stayed for a little time creating a continuous change of people. The lack of fixed decisional rules may have concentrated the decisional power in the hands of the most charismatic members of the group and reduced the minorities influence. These are all hypotheses and they are aimed at providing a description of the communitarian dynamics which Cà Morosini could have been subjected to. Sabrina Ferrari's opinion highlights the fact that lacked intimacy, living at Cà Morosini meant sharing everything, spaces, time, goods. The only place where the single individual could stay on his/her own was the bedroom. "The lack of privacy caused relational problems", she recollects.

In Alberto Grasselli's opinion, the fact that the property was of Paride Allegri had a great influence on the evolution of the Cà Morosini story. In fact, when Paride Allegri got sick people started to leave the community also because he was the owner and they had not rights on the property; his family has never been involved in the community life and with the end of the Paride's activities at Cà Morosini, the life of the community stopped. If the property of the estate had been collective, or if it had been partitioned among the community's members, things probably would have gone differently. Nobody had any kind of property at Cà Morosini.

Gradually the number of people reduced and consequently other difficulties intervened (a reduced number of people meant an increased difficulty in the territory and cultivations management). Every experience has a beginning and an end, sometimes there are not causes to be found, the question is worthy of further consideration. Once, Paride Allegri expressed his worries for the future of Cà Morosini: he was well aware of the fact that they had not developed a viable and clear alternative to the global system. He felt that something was missing, the elaboration of a real sustainable alternative to the consumeristic society still needed improvements.

4.2 Granara

The Granara village story presents more similarities with a traditional RIVE eco-village. The community has started from a group of people willing to live together in the same place and proposing themselves a sustainability project for their future. The first imprint was not given by a single individual, but by a group of eight people.

The following findings highlight the strengths of the Granara experience:

-For which it concerns the *environmental sustainability* the ecological achievements of the village are worthy of consideration. Granara has reached the energy self-sufficiency and produces more energy than it requires. The village of Granara has large rural spaces and biodiversity richness, the community has committed to take care of its territory and not endangering it.

-One of the aspect of the *social sustainability* of Granana consists in its openness to the public and its commitment to promote environmental respect, non-violence and social responsibility principles. The wide meadows and the place physical characteristics offer the possibility to organize cultural festivals and attract many people to Granara. The village has always been open towards the outside world. The openness to the public contributes to promote the village mission and diffuse its values. In the course of the years the large numbers of people who have been involved in the village activities have brought new proposals and energies to Granara. At present almost fifty people collaborate to the village projects, in Dario Sabbadini's opinion this large number will ensure a future to Granara. Openness to the outside word and deeply rooted beliefs, as well for the Cà Morosini community, have always gone hand in hand at Granara. The collective and participated decisional mechanisms contribute to create a *socially sustainable* relational model at Granara.

-The village aptitude to change has represented one of the most important Granara success factor. In fact the project has been transformed and adapted to the village changes and people's needs. Initially, the rural estate was in co-ownership among the group members, then the property was partitioned. Firstly, the houses where divided among the households, successively also the land was partitioned. This change has represented a great revolution for Granara, Gaetano Testini thinks that the division of the property has brought meaningful improvements to the village. The activities have increased, because people have felt themselves more free to act and decide on their own property. In Dario Sabbadini opinion, the industrial capitalist mentality have unavoidably influenced any member of the current society; as a result, Granara people always aspired to make profit, if the common did not offer them any

kind of direct benefit, they had no interest in well maintaining it, because they perceived it as a mere cost. These dynamics negatively impacted the village community. In Dario's vision, for a long time the village potentialities have been hampered by the estate co-ownership and the decisional mechanism based on the assembly consensus. He thinks that these two factors went hand in hand. Granara situation has positively changed when the group has understood the importance of enhancing the group internal differences. The consensus based decisional mechanism was modified and property was portioned. In Gaetano Testini's opinion the members' economic participation to the property would have increased their personal commitment to well manage the territory. Certainly, the administrative change represented a great renewal and an important moment of exchange for the Granara villagers. Granara flexibility and aptitude to change have kept it alive, although its transformations.

-from the *economic sustainability* perspective, the presence of revenues external to the village (the majority of people work outside) could have contributed to preserve the Granara ideological potential; the absence of the economic dimension has left space for the socio-political and cultural experimentations. The village has a time bank for the exchange of services among the members.

On the base of the members opinions, some village weaknesses have been put in evidence:

-For which it concerns the *economic sustainability* the village has not developed adequate economic activities for the self-sufficiency of the village. One of the village weaknesses is its dependency from the town. In fact the absence of economic activities within the village has forced people to look for jobs outside Granara.

-From the *environmental sustainability* perspective a second point of weakness is represented by the low number of resident at Granara. The households have been hampered by the village remoteness from the public utilities, to move towards the town. In fact the village still lacks of a sustainable transport system to reach it easily. The village has not yet a sustainable water provision system. Only a reduced number of houses have the composting toilets.

-From the *social sustainability* perspective the decisional mechanism has some weakness. The decisional mechanism elaborated by the 2011 Granara Constitution, has brought relevant changes. Someone retains that the bureaucratic transformation has positively improved the Granara administrative system, some else, at the opposite, think that it has diminished the democracy of the system. In fact, by transferring the decisional power to the Spokesmen Council, the decision about the village are handled by few delegates.

-Another element of *social unsustainability* is represented by the relations with the outside world: Granara has always committed to create positive and creative relationship with the local institution and the local territory; this achievement has not been reached yet, probably because of the low number of permanent residents in the village. A more stable permanence may improve the collaboration with the locals.

4.3 Case studies comparison

The original aim of this thesis was to show if it is possible to conduct a lifestyle that is sustainable and communitarian from a social, economic and ecological perspective in the current society. The case studies analysis have highlighted some main aspects.

The two communitarian realities have obtained interesting results from the environmental sustainability point of view. Granara and Cà Morosini ecological experimentations are worthy of consideration, also because their common intention aimed at increasing the global awareness about the environmental issues. Their ecological commitment can be well described by the Leopold's "land ethic" (Kasper Debbie Van Schyndel, 2008, p. 13). In fact, standing to their principle statutes, they reject the current ways of viewing the land, solely through the lens of economic interests. On the opposite, soils, waters, plants, and animals, or collectively, the land are considered as fundamental elements of their communities, and consequently shall be respected and protected. The villages are placed on two territories having similar physical characteristics and natural resources availability. Their privileged locations have offered them wide and uncontaminated natural spaces and biodiversity richness. Their projects equally aim at taking care of the natural heritage present around their villages and enhance it.

The two realities have represented vibrant centres of promotion of social, cultural and political initiatives. The presence of deep ideological values is an important point in common they have. Their deeply rooted beliefs represent one of their strength characters, in fact they have driven them and supported their efforts in the most fragile situations, then the rootedness of these experiences has represented a factor of attraction for many external people. Both the realities have always benefitted from the incoming of new members during their life cycle. The openness to the outside world is a fundamental trait of Cà Morosini and Granara. The solidarity principle and the efforts aimed at diffusing an inclusive and non-violent societal model characterize both the realities. According to Serge Latouche (Latouche S., 2005, p. 82), they have researched methods for collective self-realization and improvement of the quality of life that would have not promoted a material welfare that destroys the environment and the social ties. Their final aim has been to put into practice their values, in order to better communicate to everybody their beliefs. By quoting Orr (in Kasper, Debbie Van Schyndel, 2008, p. 13), the ultimate object of their ecological design has been the human mind.

Granara and Cà Morosini have become at the same way laboratories of sharing economy. The time bank has represented a point in common of their research. The economic sustainability has certainly been the most complex aspect of these two realities. The economic self-sufficiency has not been completely reached by both the villages. The collective resources management systems they have developed describe their different approaches to the concept of property.

After a period of running, Cà Morosini and Granara arrived at a turning point, in which something had to be changed in order to re-establish a balance. In the case of Granara the turning point has been represented by the debates about the property administration and the decisional mechanisms. The village have decided to take the direction of the property portioning and the reduction of the collectivistic management of the Granara estate. This decision interpreted the Bookchin idea of "unity in

diversity" by enhancing the multiplicity of the Granara reality. The area has become a little territorial entity, where people take decision together about the common goods, but each villager has his/her own freedom and privacy. The ideological values have remained the redline that ties together all the Granara members. The "libertarian" choice of Granara is probably the success factor of its story, in fact although it actuated a radical mutation of the original project, it kept the village alive. The presence of a rooted and clear initial community that has been involved (also economically) to the village project since the beginning of the experience probably was determining in the crisis moment. In the case of Cà Morosini, the community resulted less resilient to the transformations than the Granara one. In a moment of fragility, when the charismatic leader Paride Allegri got sick, the Cà Morosini community had not enough resources (social and human capital) to react to the change and renovate itself. Thus, the internal and constitutive weaknesses got bigger. The number of the community members diminishment resulted in an increased difficulty in the management of the all Cà Morosini estate; consequently, the lack of self-sufficiency became more evident; the events chain resulted in a gradual total abandonment of Cà Morosini. Perhaps, the lack of established decisional mechanisms among the members and the absence of the community clear boundaries (there were not a fixed number of members, the community was extremely open) influenced the course of events. The lack of a relevant investment and economic involvement to the property (which is one of the major Cà Morosini difference with Granara) probably affected the events.

In her study "Governing the commons", Elinor Ostrom pointed out a series of requirements for managing the commons. Among these she included the necessity to ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules (Ostrom E., 2006, p. 138)

In the case of Cà Morosini, what may have determined the diminishment of people involvement was the fact that the people did not feel themselves legitimate to participate to the management of the property anymore. The property had not been partitioned among them, nor it was co-owned by them and finally it resulted in a general disengagement to the well maintenance of the territory.

Granara decision towards the partition of the property meant providing everybody the possibility to feel themselves involved into the management of the territory. They felt to have the possibility to change the rules, to do something to improve their property, to benefit themselves and the whole community.

4.4 Final considerations

This thesis original purpose was to investigate about the communitarian sustainable realities, in order to test the viability and relevance of their experimentations. In particular the study has focused on the ecological villages of Granara and Cà Morosini.

The study demonstrates that the sustainable proposals they have elaborated and experienced represent meaningful social, cultural and environmental realizations. Granara and Cà Morosini can be considered models of social and environmental sustainability. Their social, cultural and ecological commitment is to be taken as example by the current society; in a certain sense they embody the four Wolfgang

Sachs's "Lessens": "Slower, less, better, finer" (in Schneidewind U., Zahrnt A., 2014, p. 14). They are small communities, aspiring to reduce the speed of the current societal lifestyle (reducing their consumptions, respecting the ecosystem carrying capacity, increasing the time for their human relationships) in order to live well and promote an higher quality of life for everybody.

The economic models they propose presents some complexities. Their original aim was to distance the capitalist economic model and substitute it with more collective management methods. Successively, as Sabrina Ferrari (Cà Morosini) and Dario Sabbadini (Granara) express, they understood that totally cancelling the individual mentality from their own lives was too complex.

"The unanimity has slowed the decisions for many years. It was an absurd mechanism, then we have realized that it impeded people to do what they desired. It was negative for the village, in fact the Magna Charta stated that the houses were private and the territory was a common. By these principles, people worked well only in their private properties, but no one took care of the common property. We are all sons of the capitalist mentality. The concept of exploiting the public for our own interests, and neglecting it when it is a cost is embedded in our way of thinking. We would like rights, but not duties."[58]

"We shared everything, there were not spaces for the privacy, this had caused relational problems among people. We all had been grown up in an individualist society, our families had taught us to pursue our own interests, we had not been used to support each other. I think that the solution is the eco-village. In an eco-village everybody has their own space, their own kitchen and their own room where they can stay on their own or with their family; then, there are common spaces where eating together, and chatting together…but private spaces are needed."[59]

The firsts Cà Morosini and Granara economic and administrative alternatives to the traditional economic model, have proved to be too radical. They had not taken into account the fact that the individualist mentality is deeply rooted in anyone way of living and acting. The idea to completely distance the industrial system principles in order to live in a place where the private property is completely absent have proved to be unviable and too far from the societal model. Cà Morosini did not undertake any change from its initial radical proposal and for many reasons, gradually died. Granara has oriented its model towards a mediation between the ideology and the people real lives. It has not meant abandoning the values, but according them with the needs of the community.

Cà Morosini and Granara efforts towards a better society represent fundamental example of sustainability: deeply rooted ideologies and openness to the outside world are their major strengths.

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[58] Information gathered by the interview to Dario Sabbadini

[59] Information gathered by the interview to Sabrina Ferrari

The case study analysis points out that as long these sustainability experiences remain enchanted gardens, distant from the societal language and paradigms, they lose their capacity to communicate to the world.

It is important that these kind of experiences do not close their social and cultural heritage to the outsiders; as a result, they have to mediate between the utopian values and the reality. As long as the ecological villages represent only a radical choice of a few crazy visionaries they cannot communicate anything to the world. If their utopian beliefs get closer to the people mentality and their proposals are stable, they can better interact with the society and realize some changes.

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