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The problems related to planning the territory of the province of Vicenza are coloured with vaguely paradoxical tones: one of the most extraordinarily open economies of our country, in the process of selective integration with global markets, has its feet stuck in a territorial organization which in the space of just a few years shows alarming signs of wear. The basic reason for this is that the exhausting practice of widespread spontaneousness of growth gives rise to phenomena of congestion and paralysis. The history of this economic miracle is wellknown. In historical districts, such as textiles, clothing, leather tanning, gold jewellery, mechanical and ceramics, thousands of small businesses specialized in one stage of the process send one another thousands of vans, transforming roads into the assembly lines of widespread industrialization. All roads are used promiscuously, becoming carriers of urbanization to reduce the costs of parcelling out. The scattered growth of urban sprawl completes the picture of an extensive use of the territory's horizontal dimensions, which moreover has a very dense network of council and local roads, an incentive towards an anthropization which is in turn widespread. Residences and industrial sheds lead to a sort of emptying of the urban dimension, further exacerbated by positioning large shopping centres in rural areas. In years of noteworthy economic decline, with the fall of the export market for the gold, tanning and textile-clothing sectors, the mechanisms of

proliferation of building continue relentlessly, not to meet demand but due to a sort of inflationary growth of the offer: tax incentives, the search for non-depreciable assets, industrial sectors that diversify investments. In the residential sector the demand is however real: the choice of a detached or semidetached house is the expression of a culture of being close to the country and a safe asset for the savings of many families of workers. However, indiscriminate proliferation has a very high price: the 'new' production areas are located without town planning and infrastructural criteria, with extremely low fixed capital investments: often they are not sufficiently accessible and their position obliges articulated vehicles to travel through residential areas in order to reach the main road networks. Condensing of all these levels of intensity of the crisis obliges a response of high political culture, summarized in the planning intentions of the project *Vicenza in the third Millennium*. Research performed within the scope of this project has delivered three messages: respond to the crisis of localism by reinforcing the largest settlement systems than the single commune; govern the change in economy with immaterial infrastructures: training, research, networks and innovation; introduce sustainability as a criteria directed at revalorizing the territory. To respond to the crisis of localism, the main choice of territorial politics consists in involving local authorities by dividing the territory into 'homogeneous intermunicipal districts'. Localism was not only the basis of a specific organization of the territory, but for about thirty years was a model of social regulation, of economic self-organization and of community identity.

Basically, what is proclaimed as a question of ambitious reorganization of town and territorial planning refers to a vaster plan, in which it is included, a true political and economic localization project. The local project is built with tools that are not deduced from the place but from the intentional will to create and operate a public actor for localization. In this case, the difficulty lies in the fact that the public actor capable of regulating conflictual and unsustainable uses of the territory is an objective rather than a reality. The specific precipitate of this entire stage is found in the Preliminary document to the Ptcp which valorizes the whole of the intense path of prior research. The design that takes shape is based on a few benchmarks:

- construction of the intermediate road network grid and connection between the large European infrastructural system and the minor road network;
- actions for productive areas, in order to qualify, and reduce them in number, regulating growth with at least minimal criteria of territorial reorganization;
- a network to protect and connect non-renewable environmental resources by delimiting ecological corridors;
- organization of polycentrism without changing its nature, but also without allowing the most anarchic forms to prevail, by strengthening the most urbanized junctions with services, infrastructures and public transport systems.

The working hypothesis of entrusting the solution of the crisis of the local project to a settlement community covering a vast area able to create a 9 (Appadurai): territorial configurations as a sharing of very dynamic collective identities, with strong incoming and outgoing migratory flows. The new unit of analysis abandons all myths of the self-centred settlement that

grows through radiation and in opposition to rural. Two tools have been outlined in the territorial plan to deal with governance of the project territories. The first consists in identifying some strong and negotiable grids for reorganization of the territory according to requalification and sustainability, with ecological corridors, landscape contexts of the Venetian villas, protective buffers along the infrastructures of higher rank, expansion of productive and commercial areas only in conditions of adequate localization and where all infrastructures can be guaranteed. The second is a conception of the project territories with variable geometries, provided with relative autonomy from settlement environments, in order to identify problem areas with institutionally shared and organized strategic objectives through Pati (intermunicipal territorial layout plans) in which both Province and Region participate. This greater flexibility also allows the regulatory criteria grids to be used without being conceived as restrictions, but adapting them with a strategy of interinstitutional negotiation in the various planning contexts. The risk of excessive pragmatism is greatly reduced by the use of Sea, which prearranges measurement protocols so that negotiation of restrictions is offset by renewable resources and by the decrease in pollution. In this way authorisations are subordinate to accreditation of a positive environmental balance sheet within the context of planning (Pati) taken as a whole.