

# The relevance of common lands in building cultural landscapes: the case of Cento (Italy)

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## Abstract:

In this paper I will present the outputs of an empirical research I carried out for my Phd thesis in Urban Territorial and Environmental planning. I will examine the case study of Cento and of its Partecipanza placed in the north middle – east of Italy. The Partecipanza is a thousand years old association of citizens which manages some common lands nearby Ferrara and Bologna in a marshy area. Since the beginning of the twentieth century Italian laws try to wind up all the common lands. The Partecipanza and few other associations were saved from this policy thanks to their recognized role in developing their territories.

The long lasting presence of a common management in an area, and in particular in Cento, has a strong role in defining a kind of Cultural Landscape, according to the most accepted and used global definition of it. During the last fifty years an industrial evolution of the area of the North – east of Italy changed the regional landscape. The Partecipanza had a role in making in the past and preserving the today's landscape. In this paper the economic and social evolution of the area of Cento is studied through landscape transformations. The main idea is that space elements, such as the presence of marshes in Cento, has a relevance not just in defining local rules of management of the land resource, but also in defining balances of functions and principles of projecting landscapes.

The questions I will try to answer are:

- How does common management coexists with socio - economic transformation and what kind of outputs can we consider?
- Can we consider that the Cultural Landscape was produced as a way to measure the impact of common management in a global context?
- What relevance should the symbolic elements have in managing and projecting common lands?

**Key words:** *Cultural landscape, common property management, molecular capitalism, land waste*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Aims

The aim of this paper is to read a case study that I considered important for my PHD dissertation in Territorial planning on common property through a description documented by field research. The considerations which I will try to make are only partly related to the purposes of the study done for my thesis. Certainly what is common to these two experiences of research is the object of study, precisely the common property, and the purpose: to highlight the manifold importance of these institutions during their history and try to focus their relevance in the development of

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local territories today. Briefly, you will see the strategic importance of a common property in the definition of local territorial development planning strategies. In this contribution I will put particular attention to the system of relations between the social sphere, the economic and the environmental one. Specifically there will be given special emphasis to the description of those elements for structuring the settlement system and space in general, coherent with the approach and purpose of my personal search path in the territorial planning field. The subject of case study will be a "traditional" common land.

The last aim of this work is to problematize common property as an agent of territorial transformation. In particular it will seek to reason, even in an intuitive way, on about the capabilities that this kind of institution has in generating cultural landscapes. It is the belief of the writer that the common property, as environmental management complex system, when it proves itself sufficiently strong to catch on a particular local context, it contributes to the definition of signs in space that with the forming layers of time acquires a symbolic value that transcends the scope of asset management.

These issues, usually studied by geographers and historians, deserve a deep information for the implications that may have in land use planning today, with particular reference to the need for protection and enhancement of environmental assets. Briefly I will try to provide a description of how the common management has defined a particular form of landscape closely linked to that context and as such a landscape has its specificity as the bearer of cultural identities linked to forms of life of its inhabitants.

It is stressed right now that the importance of the case study is limited to the local municipal level, even though as it will be seen, Partecipanze are spread across the surrounding area. The areas covered by these institutions are not very extended. However, this does not mean that the management model that common property assumes couldn't have relevance in a qualitative sense, i.e. as unique management model to be taken into account in projects and plans for local development in some certain specific circumstances, or even it can also suggest a method of sustainable land use planning.

## **1.2 The research approach**

The research approach that we want to take to the examination of case study is similar to what authors such as Ostrom (1990) and others (Bromley, 1991) exhibit in their texts with reference to the trend of studies called "new institutionalism" (Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). And here I must make a clarification between the possible definitions of institution provided by several authors who have developed the reflection in this area. I think the best definition useful to this kind of study is the Selznick's one (1957 - 1984). He identifies "Institution" as an "organisation" with human history, able to adapt to environmental context in which it is inserted in both physical and political sense, which gives a justification of existence according to a precise ideology, which gives operating rules borrowed from the reports formal and informal internal and external, which draw up their codes and symbolic value. The institutions are therefore complex natural systems that develop mechanisms of self promotion and self defence. In institutional change particular emphasis is given to leadership of a "social entrepreneur" who bears to overcome institutional inertia. From this point of view another author of this new institutional approach which stresses the importance of this aspect is Friedberg (1994).

In the long history of institutions such as the Partecipanza of Cento the biggest changes occurred to face happened in the last century. So I tried with my work on the field to give space and weight to the words of interlocutors that are still living and were witnesses of economic and social changes of '900. I therefore privileged in searching techniques and observation methods of a qualitative nature. The quantitative data are presented according to an intensive purpose, that is useful to emphasize the speech about the institution in its context.

The environmental variables become not only a bond to the folks who populate these areas, but are also the occasion of confrontation and clash on the future development of the lands. They are namely elements of a double game that takes place between environmental protection and enhancement. At the heart of the speech are of course the institutional rules, observed mainly in the processing time and results in territorial and architectural products.

It is therefore not objective of this work to try to think of the common property as a possible forms of management useful to solving problems such as free riding, explaining the conditions that ensure survival. Rather it aims to highlight situations where the common ownership have been an effective solution, although not definitive and therefore problematic, and we will specify when that is serving the common property to local development. In this paper I will try to focus on the single issue of the production of cultural landscapes.

### **1.3 The common property**

The Partecipanza of Cento is a common property. I will use with this term the definitions that some fundamental authors gave in international literature such as Ostrom (1990), Bromley (1991) and McKean et al. (2000).

If we try to define the common property in a few lines, we should do so in connection with at least three elements:

1. the characteristics of the property on which it is exercised,
2. the form of ownership,
3. the system of rights exercisable by users

In relation to the first point, we can find a big distinction between the units flow related to time and the production (e.g. the kilos we can fish, the hectares of cultivable land, the trees to be cut etc.) and the units of stocks (e.g. the full bench of fish, the plain or valley, the forest etc.). The units of flow are exclusive of those who secure them and cannot be used simultaneously. On the contrary the units of stocks are not divisible among multiple users. Time is a variable that buys a weight only in the first of two types of units. It is about using a resource by a user that an institution can act. The rules of appropriation act then indirectly on the stock determining their fate.

As regards the second point, we can identify three different types of ownership: the one individual accomplished by a single person, that one public by the State, the common by a defined group of individuals associated with each other. In literature, especially in the English and in the American one, we can often see considerable confusion around the term "common" or "shared", whereas about the concept of "property" and "ownership" (Bromley, 1991). Greater clarity has been made in recent years when emerged as an independent category of goods the open access ones of which Hardin spoke in his famous essay of 1968 ("The tragedy of commons").

These goods are not subject to any kind of control of rights and duties and therefore are a victim of free riding.

The system of rights exercisable that it follows, we are therefore to the third point, shows three different situations that McKean et al. (2000) have summarised as follows:

	Individual property rights	<b>Common property rights</b>	Public property rights
Rights to flow	Parceled	<b>Parceled</b>	Intact
Rights to stock	Parceled	<b>Intact</b>	Intact

**Table 1 The rights' system**

We can define as common property a social system present in those situations in which the following conditions occur:

- Presence of a group of individuals on the same context;
- Closure of the group boundaries and of the borders of the resource;
- Sharing of the rights of use and possession and not of property rights;
- Control of the presence and of the forms of use of the good;

#### **1.4 The cultural landscape**

As mentioned above we will try to observe the outcomes of the process of settlement of the participants on the local context. I will observe the territorial and spatial outcomes of this process. In particular, it was noted by some experts (Torresani, 1996) that Emilian Partecipanze represent an open-air archive testimony of people who have lived and still live on these areas and their action of land use. The historic character helps to give greater weight to the cultural dimension of the landscape produced.

Not in all Partecipanze the landscape value has a weight as strong as in that of Cento. In fact the influence of culture on the local landscape in other similar situations is contained in the oral sphere, without taking body in architectural objects or areas in space. Using the definition of cultural landscapes which gives UNESCO, the international organization that has the aim to protect the world heritage according to a global convention. This definition is internationally accepted and used by public institutions with the aim of taking measures to protect the heritage<sup>2</sup>:

"Cultural landscapes represent the combined works of nature and of man  
"designated in Article 1 of the Convention. They are illustrative of the evolution of human society and settlement over time, under the influence of the physical constraints and / or opportunities presented by their natural environment and of successive social, economic and cultural forces, both external and internal. "

UNESCO identifies three types of cultural landscapes:

1. The most easily identifiable is the clearly defined landscape designed and created intentionally by man. This embraces garden and parkland landscapes constructed for aesthetic reasons which are often (but not always) associated with religious or

<sup>2</sup> Online source: [whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/](http://whc.unesco.org/en/culturallandscape/)

other monumental buildings and ensembles.

2. The second category is the organically evolved landscape. This results from an initial social, economic, administrative, and / or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. Such landscapes reflect that process of evolution in their form and component features.

They fall into two sub-categories:

- Relict (or fossil) landscape is one in which an evolutionary process came to an end at some time in the past, either abruptly or over a period. Its distinguishing features are significant, however, still visible in material form.

- Continuing landscape is one which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with the traditional way of life, and in which the evolutionary process is still in progress. At the same time it exhibits significant material evidence of its evolution over time.

3. The final category is the associative cultural landscape. The inclusion of such landscapes on the World Heritage List is justifiable by virtue of the powerful religious, artistic or cultural associations of the natural element rather than material cultural evidence, which may be insignificant or even absent.

As we will observe, maybe the closest type of landscape to put on Cento's situation is the organic continuing one. Of course, it is not in the intention of the writer to think about this case study as a well one that could fall on the list of world heritages in order to be saved. The definition of cultural landscapes used by UNESCO is written here with the aim to carry out a descriptive exercise, in order to have a key reading of the phenomenon and so that witnesses will be displayed in the next few lines. In Florence (2000)<sup>3</sup> the European Council defined a common strategy all over Europe. In this convention landscape is defined as:

(Art. 1 a) an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors;

There it is recognized that:

the landscape has an important public interest role in the cultural, ecological, environmental and social fields, and constitutes a resource favourable to economic activity and whose protection, management and planning can contribute to job creation;

Aware that the landscape contributes to the formation of local cultures and that it is a basic component of the European natural and cultural heritage, contributing to human well-being and consolidation of the European identity;

Acknowledging that the landscape is an important part of the quality of life for people everywhere: in urban areas and in the countryside, in degraded areas as well as in areas of high quality, in areas recognised as being of outstanding beauty as well as everyday areas;

In a nutshell we can say that the choice of Partecipanze as a case study is motivated by the fact that in Italy Emilian plain is one of the few areas on which a number of

<sup>3</sup> Online source: [conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm](http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/Html/176.htm)

similar institutions as those ones are simultaneously present in more than a single unit. This suggests an influence of common management in structuring local context or, at least, it can be considered the expression of a culture able to express itself through collective solutions. So we can see in this character the relevance of cultural elements in defining that landscape. In addition, the placement in agriculture, rather than in mountainous or hilly area, as more often known by literature, allows us to highlight the specific relations with the city and the urban world. Finally, a third reason, is that the Partecipanze, a nearly thousand years old institutions, being placed in a heavily urbanized, offer me a considerable amount of data and information. They especially give us space and territorial traces of collective management.

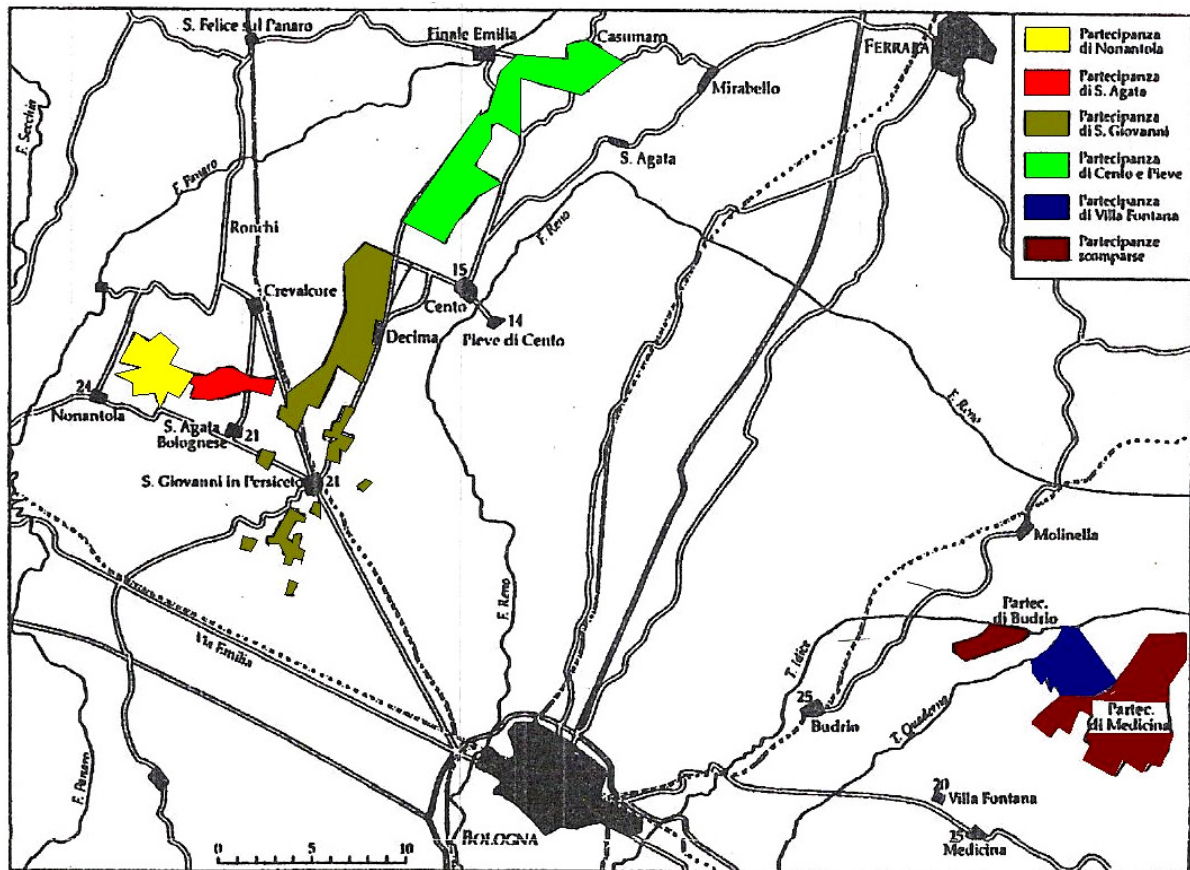
## **2. THE AGRARIAN PARTECIPANZE OF EMILIA ROMAGNA**

### **2.1 The territorial organization**

The Agrarian Partecipanze are a particular form of association of workers. In the Middle Ages an Italian geographer Sereni (1961) identified as a significant part in the construction of the agrarian Italian landscape the birth of numerous and various neighbourhood associations made up by different social groups, including the servants. The Agrarian Partecipanze are a result of this process which has propagated over the centuries until today. They are expression of a fusion of two different ways of thinking land use: the Romanic and the Nordic one. This is a core theme: in the Emilian plain, thanks to its location, two different systems of laws met each other. I won't deal with this subject because of space (Grossi, 1977). In this section we'll read the history of Emilian Partecipanze providing essential information resources.

In Italy can see many examples of similar common properties: famous in this regard are the Rules of Alpine mountains (i.e. Magnifica Comunità di Fiemme, Rule of Spinale and Manez, Laudi Ampezzani, Rule of Cadore). We cannot forget also the Agricultural University of Lazio, the Lombard "vicinie" in Brescia and others such as over the Appennines mountainis "comunalie" or the consortium of men from Massenzatica, taking a different name according to the territorial location. Common to all these experiences is being common property within the meaning we have given above. Each of these realities is an expression of their own history in which the common denominator is the sharing internal rights to a defined group of individuals who take part in the association. Expression of the human rights system is the statute that governs the conduct of use of managed resource.

The term Partecipanze is used in order to identify under the same legal hat very different aspects of both historical and territorial ones. In the picture are represented the six Partecipanze. We are on the plain between Bologna, Ferrara and Modena. The Partecipanze are in the northern part of all the towns on which they are settled.



**Figura 1 The Agrarian Partecipanze in the Emilian plain**

Most partecipanze still active are located in the West in the municipalities of Nonantola, S. Agata Bolognese, S. Giovanni in Persiceto, Cento and Pieve di Cento. The only one dead in 1807 is in Crevalcore. We were not able to find the land extensions. A witness to the presence of a partecipanza in this town is the presence of a hamlet called "Common goods." In the East side instead of the three existing partecipanze Medicina, Budrio and Villa Fontana, hamlet of the same town of Medicina. Only the last one of them has survived. The partecipanza of Medicina disappeared in 1890, while that of Budrio in 1931. The map shown above is quite true, although some information defects are present especially regarding the reality of two Partecipanze of Pieve and of Cento.

Some of the territorial elements shared by the Partecipanze are determined by the fact that they are ready along the contour line of 25 metres above sea level, with gradients of land equal to zero. The soil is mainly clay and is made up of debris from the close Apennines. The partecipanze are all included between rivers Panaro and Sillaro. The river divides historically Emilia by Romagna, travelled to internally by the river Rhine and the torrent Idice. The instability of watercourses has been remarkable over the centuries. The lands have always been subject to frequent flooding since placed at a level slightly lower than that of streams. The territories of Partecipanze are as depressions in which the watercourses will represent the watershed. The story of the inhabitants of these areas often coincides with the history of reclamation and secular struggles against the forces of these waters. Until the mid of '800 there are evidences of this territorial instability. Only with the advent of draining pump the situation has gradually stabilized and the area has taken the

shape we know today.

## **2.2 Historical, legal and legislative aspects**

It is common to western Partecipanze to derive from emphyteutic grant. The emphyteusis is a "right to enjoy for at least twenty years of a fund of others, with the obligation to make improvements and to pay a regular fee." The main proponent of these emphyteusis was the Abbot of Nonantola between XI and XIV centuries. The eastern Partecipanze have in contrast the different origin: they are grants of Frederick the Barbarossa (year 1155) for Medicine and Villa Fontana, while in the case of Budrio assets are municipal commons of the city of Bologna. In this land there was no obligation to improve the conditions of funds. Some scholars have suggested, not yet substantiated by historical documents, that all of Partecipanze land concessions were made by Matilde di Canossa (XI century).

Moreover, the original relationship with the Municipality appears significant and meaningful for all Partecipanze. It's true for example in Cento, until the birth of the Town, but especially for those eastern this affiliation appears more long-lasting and incisive than Westerners. Overall, the Eastern Partecipanze are characterized by a low settlement in the span of their history and represent marginal land compared to Bologna and compared to the Municipality itself. Over the centuries they were sometimes managed as unitary land heritage. This has made them particularly weak during periods of reform at the end of '800 and the first two decades of '900, until the death of two of the three existing. Among the origins of their disappearance it was also indicated in literature that they were hardly assimilable to small farms, as happened for Western Partecipanze.

Similar differences can be recognize between eastern and western partecipanze in the process of closing the lists of those entitled to the subdivision of land. In fact, and with every different depending on the internal regulations and customs, possessions are divided among those eligible subscribers to the respective registers. Through the closure of rolls the right to the enjoyment becomes perennial for those descendants of the original families who were the leaders of extensive land reclamation projects: it is still a privilege only for male descendants and womenfolk are excluded from any subdivision.

In some Partecipanze as in Cento, the most rooted in the Emilian territory, there is also the obligation of abode: a person must live for at least five years before the subdivision year on the Partecipanza's land. This practice comes from a pact signed with the bishop of Bologna e the Abbot of Nonantola. For Western Partecipanze the process of closing the lists is between the eighteenth and nineteenth century, while those in the eastern occurred between the fifteenth and sixteenth century. Before this process there was a substantial overlap between Partecipanze and Municipality where they settled.

In addition to closing the rolls, through regulations and statutes it was possible to govern agricultural and settlement works on the heritage of partecipanze. These tools evolved over the centuries and took place between the '400 and '500. We will investigate more closely the statute of Partecipanza of Cento.

Beyond the individual stories of each Partecipanza, on which there is a considerable literature and that we cannot call here for reasons of space, we should focus our attention on key episodes in their history, who have questioned their existence.

Already Napoleon in 1804 with the Cispadana republic had abolished the Partecipanze in favor of Commons. In 1814 the restoration had reconstituted them. The law of August 4, 1894 No. 397 about the system of collective domains in the



provinces of the ex Church State establishes that Partecipanze and some other associations are considered as corporations.

This law assigned a moral status to Partecipanze and it was granted them to be governed by legitimate statutes confronted with the State. These statutes should have been guided by the principles of the cooperative movement. This law defined so that all the common domain was inalienable, indivisible, not acquirable by prescription, i. e. that could not ever be bought by individuals through the mere possession for an extended period of time. What is certain is that partecipanze were considered public entities, although later it was acknowledged them a private character. And it was precisely this that saved Partecipanze by the law of reform of 1927 that abolished civic rights of use promiscuous on common lands of Italy. It was the intervention of then Minister Martelli in 1929 to report that the measure could not be applied to Partecipanze.

Indeed, the biggest risk for agricultural partecipanze has always been to be associated in the law to the territories subject to civic use. The latter, as we know, are publicly-entitled land on which residents have the right to firewood and other similar rights.

The Emilian Agrarian Partecipanze, and with reference to the law of 1884, especially with the subsequent Act of June 16, 1927 No 1766 approved by fascism precisely that abolished civic house, sought to highlight their substantial difference compared with common lands regimes: Partecipanze juridical status is assimilable to private law. Those institutions have improvements purposes of the land they manage. The royal decree also requires institutions such as Partecipanze to reinvest the profits produced by the work of other land in buying land and improving those owned. Today therefore the agricultural partecipanze are associated to non-profit associations.

Environmentally talking Law No 431 of 1985 (known as Galasso's Act) integrates these laws and stated that all the common lands such those of Partecipanze have a historical witness value and they have to be protected by Regions.

### **2.3 Settlement characters of the area**

These comments show that the Agrarian Partecipanze, sharing as well as the territorial setting and legal status, have in common the fact that:

- they are institutions closed to a narrow circle of people and family groups;
- they divide their land among participants with a cadence set;
- they require residents to live in the territory and they are controlled by the other participants

The Torresani (1998), from which it resumed the table below, describes a synthetic landscape elements in common between the different partecipanze. The Partecipanze of Cento and Pieve di Cento together constitute a single system insist on the same land. Together with Partecipanza of S. Giovanni in Persiceto they differ from the other ones:

- For the extension of the area affected by the phenomenon of Partecipanza: over 2,000 hectares
- By the number of buildings: extremely high it indicates a strong pressure on the rural settlement;
- By the number of parts: Cento added to Pieve di Cento and St. John Persiceto exceed 2000;
- For the types of crops: plantation instead of fit for seed

	<b>NONATO LA</b>	<b>S. AGATA</b>	<b>S.GIOVA NNI IN PERSICE TO</b>	<b>CENTO</b>	<b>PIEVE DI CENTO</b>	<b>VILLA FONTAN A</b>
Participan ts with right of inheritanc e	All the participan ts househol d member	The (male) head of the family	Male legal descenda nts of participan t families	Male legal descenda nts of participan t families	Male legal descenda nts of participan t families	Male and female participan ts been of age
N. of participant s	3450	239	945	3084	1870	314
Year last partition	1973	Year 1993	Year 1995	Year 1979	Year 1979	Year 1990
length of partition	Until 1973 9 years – today 18 years	Until 1975 9 years – today 18 years	Variable length until 1975 – today 9 years	Variable length until 1975 – today 20 years	Variable length until 1975 – today 20 years	Variable length until 1975 – today 18 years
Area. (ha) 1905	768	471	1999	1616	487	840
Area. (ha) 1936	768	458	1999	1616	487	878
Area. (ha) 1973	776	542	2300	1645	680	862
Area (ha) 1995	765	530	2450	1732	819	854
Area (ha) divided for plantation	666	404	<b>2092</b>	<b>1560</b>	<b>630</b>	806
N. of parts	3450	325	<b>1180</b>	<b>2331</b>	<b>826</b>	328
Singole part size (mq)	1.900/2.0 00	11.000/11 .600	17.700 (media)	5.800/966 6	5.300/7.0 00	24.460
N. of Building	3	13	<b>&gt; 2.000</b>	<b>1.700 circa</b>	<b>282</b> (in rural area)	12
% participant s who till the soil	10%	30%	60%	42%	11% right Reno/37 % in left	40%

**Table 2 Quantitative description of participants and Partecipanze's heritage**

There is also a substantial difference that exists between the territories on which stand the Partecipanze of Pieve di Cento and of Cento compared to those on which is that of S. Giovanni determined by more Participants: Cento and Pieve participants enrolled in the electoral rolls are double and triple of those of S Giovanni.

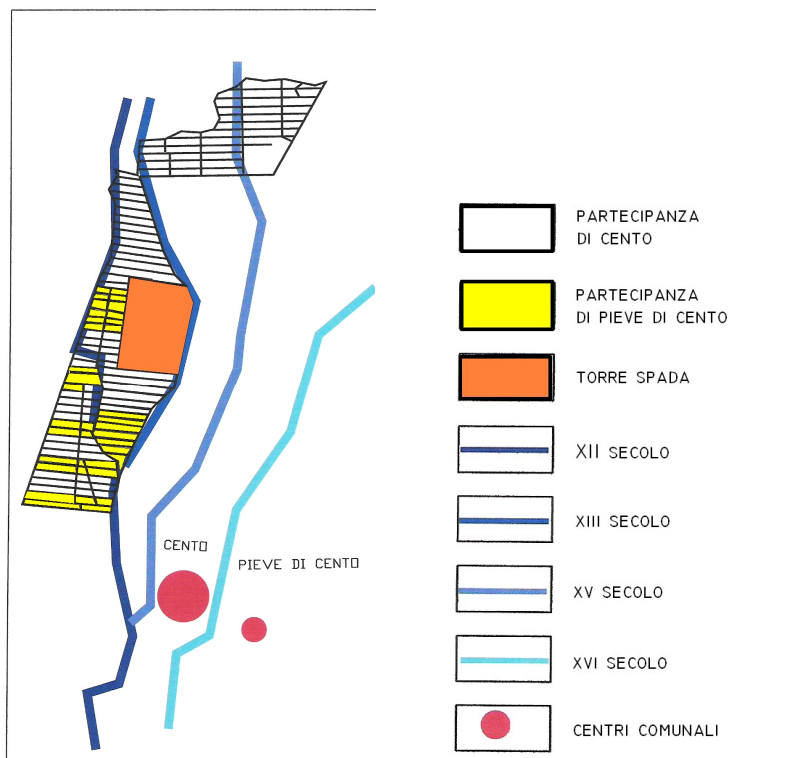
It follows that among all those Partecipanze more rooted in the territory who have had a major impact on the settlement system are those of Cento and Pieve di Cento. A partial confirmation of this is also the fact that in the town of Cento Partecipanze lands occupy about one third of the surface, while that of S. Giovanni stops to one fifth.

	Municipality of Cento	S. Giovanni in Persiceto
Partecipanza size	17,32 kmq (Cento) 3,01 kmq (Pieve di Cento)	24,50 kmq
Municipality size	64,7 kmq	114,4 kmq
Ratio coverage	31%	21%

This analysis emphasizes the different weight of common management lands system of the institution of Partecipanza in leaving a mark on settlement system. Thanks to these data we can presume in Pieve di Cento and in Cento the Partecipanza has strongly rooted in the territory and it was a structural factor of territorial development. And this is the reason that has prompted me to choose the Partecipanza of Cento as a case study.

#### **2.4 History of the Partecipanze of Cento and of Pieve di Cento**

Over the town of Cento today insist two Partecipanze: one of Cento and the other one of Pieve di Cento, a village. They both possess land outside the town of Cento. The story of these two Partecipanze began when the Bishop of Bologna, who had dominion over the land between the River Rhine, which flows between the two municipalities of Cento and Pieve di Cento, and the river Panaro, located to the west, granted in the twelfth century in emphyteusis some of these lands to the people of Cento. The reasons were connected by the need to protect the territory in the event of war and especially reclaim those marshy lands for the purpose of cultivation. To characterize the whole area was in fact the instability of the river Rhine as can be seen from the figure below.



**Figure 2 The river Rhine riverbed fluctuation over the centuries**

The territories of Partecipanze originally were not divided between the two communities of Cento and Pieve, but were united. The first significant concession came in 1252 and in 1312 and went to be the most southern heritage, near the town of Cento. The emphyteusis had to be renewed every 29 years mandatory. 90 families were involved in the distribution of land. The lands were chosen by lot. This area was nicknamed "Malafitto" due to the lean gain that the Bishop of Bologna collected: Lire. 500. The lands of Malafitto are those on which the possessions of Partecipanza of Pieve stand. It was estimated that they would in total measure about 1000 tornature, approximately 826 ha.

In 1358, more than a century later, the Abbot of Nonantola made over his ground called Casumaro, located further north than Malafitto, to the Bishop of Bologna with the obligation to give in emphyteusis to those residents in Cento with periodic renewal of 20 years for the price of 20 guilders gold. The area of Casumaro was about 789 ha. Altogether, the inhabitants of Cento had 1616 hectares of land available to be remediated. The Partecipanza was instituted as we know it today. This body was identified with entirely the City of Cento. Then took place a first closure of 90 families from the so-called "fumanti", namely those who arrived on these lands later. It was established that the subdivisions should occur every 20, in even years over Casumaro, in odd years over Malafitto. This custom was maintained until the twentieth century.

Hence the first conflicts started between the participants who had sat right to land in the municipality and immigrants, which would continue throughout the '400. In 1438 it was ruled by the Bishop of Bologna that the division of Casumaro had not to be made periodically, but was perpetual. That decision was revoked 20 years later, in 1458. In 1460 the Bishop of Bologna sold the lands of Malafitto to inhabitants of Cento, reserving a fourth party to himself. The number of families, or rather of "capisti", namely those who were entitled to the head of land, had risen to 497.

These lands, passed from hand to hand, later became the estate of a noble family named Torre Spada. With the obtained money and the retained land was possible to build a castle that is now abandoned. As we will see the Torre Spada estate is important today for the implementation of municipal development strategies. In this property changeover some men poured the entire sum due to the bishop, others gave only half or one quarter. Today these shares are still retained in the division of land. The bishop decided to sell to individuals and not to Partecipanza and also distinguished between people from Cento and people from Pieve. Thus the two Partecipanze of Pieve and of Cento were born. What both participants didn't like was that the division in favour of the individual was perpetual.

The disputes within the partecipanza and especially against immigrants worsened. A legato of the Bishop of Bologna, Monsignor Bresciani, intervened acting as arbitrator. He defined that the division would remain perpetual in the course of time and that the reference division was the last of 1459. In addition, he stated that the participants who had sold their part to fumanti immigrants gave up their right to them. The decisions of Bresciani run to a revolt and the participants killed him; then, in 1484, it was stored the original division of twenty years: it was an arbitrator award of the bishop of Bologna Giuliano della Rovere. The insistences of immigrants were rejected. The desire to become an active part of the municipal institution and the access to public office remained frustrated until 1754, when Cento was elevated to the rank of city.

A second critical moment in the history of the Partecipanza of Cento was under the government of Napoleon: in 1807 the prefect of the Rhine Plain took over the Municipality Partecipanza's lands. Seven years later the Restoration returned lands to the participants. To buy in a definitive way Casumaro land, we had to wait until 1863.

A third critical moment came at the turn of the '900. With the law of 1894, mentioned above, the land of Partecipanze were treated as all the other common lands, so they had to be sold out and had to be opened to all residents of a municipality and not only to a restricted circle of individuals. The advantages of this law, however, which made this legal simplification, were to assign to the Partecipanza a legal status on the national level. About thirty years later fascism was ordered to put the issue of common enjoyment of lands: once again the Partecipanze were considered lands of civic use and, like these ones, had to disappear. They had to be sold and allocated to private individuals as defined law no. 1766 of 1927. It was a decree of 1929 that saved the Partecipanze from the process of dismantling their heritage.

In 1932 the Partecipanza of Cento defined a new statute which confirmed the possibility of having a head of allocated land to the male descendant of each participating family and that the division had to be always of twenty years. It also deleted the medieval custom of breaking land Malafitto and Casumaro in different years. From 1939, assignments proceeded with regularity until 1999, the year of the last allocation. By now the original 90 families were reduced in numbers regarding surnames, but the number of heads had risen to 2498. Today they exceed 3,000 units. The 1939 inaugurated a series of reforms of the statute that defined the sale of common areas and other small lands. The money derived from the sale of these lands were used in the purchase of other land more profitable not overlooking those owned, but placed in other municipalities.

## **2.5 Major statutory changes from 1611 nowadays**

We could try to identify key points of regulatory proceeding through a threefold

partition, as suggested by the literature and Ostrom (1990) in particular. The latter, taken up again by other authors, identifies three levels of regulation:

- Operational rules relating to ownership, supply, resource monitoring;
- Rules on common decisions relating to policy, management and the allocation of resources;
- Constitutional Rules relating to the formulation, government, adjustment choices about resource management;

The current statute is the one of 1979. You will still need some clarification through the reading of the oldest statutes of '800 up to 1611. Useful rules for granting lots are part of the first group. The plots of land, called "headlands" (capi), are assigned by lot to those entitled: "headland owners" (capisti). The Partecipanza of Cento, as well as the Pieve one, still assign only to sons the right of having a granted allotment. But the holder participant of the headland should be deceased at the time of grant so that the children could access the granting with its own lot. Viceversa, in other words, if the death occurred after the award, children must share out the only headland assigned. In the absence of children, widows are allowed to continue to use the land, which returned to Partecipanza for the next subdivision. Under the current regulation may participate in the subdivision only who lives at least 5 years on the land owned by Partecipanza, in the municipality of Cento or in the Borgo S. Luca in Ferrara. This rule was instituted after some ups and downs in ancient times under the House of Este before the lands become assets of Partecipanza. The obligation to live there was repeatedly under strain, but today it is survived.

The headlands are assigned by lottery. The ceremony, that has been handed down almost for a millennium provides, that "infant hands" are used for the first extraction of which area will be divided (Casumaro and Malafitto) and then it's the turn of allotment of the six ancient towns or "chances" (ventura): Buonacompra, Corporeno, di Mezz, da Dimani, da Sera, Malgrato. According to estimates made by experts the rite proceeds to the division of land Partecipanza to each headland owners. To facilitate the subdivision lots have been split in length with extreme regularity. What varies is the width and quality of the soil. So, depending on the quality of soil, allocation of the head can range from a minimum of 5,800 square meters (first class) to a mean value of 7733 square meters (second class) up to 9666 square meters (third class). The headlands are not necessarily close each other. Since 1939 the lands of Partecipanza of Cento is divided during the same year. From '400 until today, the partition is twenty years.

Participants who have a owned house on land may request the assignment of the same lot. This rule has been disregarded especially in recent years, when the disaffection for the cultivation of land has increased. It was relevant in a past era when Partecipanza governed the possibility of building homes. I will return to this point in the next few lines. For those who have a right to a headland where there are retting - pits there is an obligation to clean drain pipelines, ditches and so on.

Furthermore, part of this first area of operational rules are for example those which define the excavation of the land aimed at realization of buildings. Those rules already defined in Regulation of 1611, were redefined in 1865, following the reform of 1894 mentioned above. In some common areas along the "stradelli", unsurfaced dividing roads of lands, you could find brick kilns used in part to build houses, in part to the sale of bricks. In this first group have reason to be also the rules regarding the management of trees and shrubs: the cutting down of trees is normally prohibited during the five years preceding the division. This is because the new trees planted have to achieve adequate maturity . Some plants can be cut only for the provision of

houses. The fruit plants and other plants are granted by beneficial owner receiving area, which must pay predecessor. A participant has the right to ask to have assigned back to himself the headland on those in the plantation land has a certain annuity.

We also place in this first group the rules governing the monitoring of daily life. Interviews showed that participants themselves have control over land and over dishonest behaviour of participants. But there are workers salaried by Partecipanza called "messengers" who have the specific task of controlling all aspects of everyday life and for the effective management of compliance with certain constraints such as the residence on the land, such as not cutting down of trees, not to build new houses prior consent of the council, in the management of the land "to good standard of agriculture." The activity of the cursor was governed by the Statute of 1885.

There are also a number of obligations of an economic nature: the participants must pay to the Partecipanza a sum of money called "Common tax": from interviews was reported to be modest, but we have not learned the exact amount. Fees and municipal taxes and whatever serves to agricultural activities have to be paid obviously by them. In addition, there are a number of fees imposed as a result of transgressions. An interesting rule of punishment, that survived until 1800 tells that, when a participant damaged his headland to build a house, he was obliged to keep his lot for another twenty years.

As regards the second set of rules, those that may have an impact on collective choices, as we note in recent years, starting from 1939, some changes were introduced in management policy aimed at heritage extension: the first related to the fact that in those possessions that are not classified as agricultural from the current land, plan use is granted to the participants to purchase the courtyards. The inalienability of the land was revised in a modern way: the proceeds of the land sale are reinvested in the acquisition of new lands in other municipalities. In this way the value of heritage remains intact. In addition, the sale of the courtyard housing areas has produced in some cases the emergence of independent small farms. Some participants were in fact associates each other to increase the cultivation in order to stay on the agricultural market.

The policy of capital increase is more evident, however, in Partecipanza of Pieve di Cento, who has worked more on the market in recent years, selling building sites for purchasing some other agricultural ones. Overall, as Federzoni and Torresani (Fregna, 1980) underline, Partecipanza of Pieve introduced more incisive changes on its statute on the core theme. The institution also agreed that contiguous lots are assigned to participants who join the consortium in order to reach the size of 15 - 18 hectares plot. Something similar happens to participants that are brothers.

Partecipanza of Pieve try to overcome the inborn individualism of the participants, providing them, for instance, machineries. The results of this type of policy can be seen in the table below, where it is noted that its capital has doubled. The authors cited all of the reasons for the greater dynamism of Partecipanza of Pieve under the weight that it has towards its participants: it is shaped as a farm, and, in the case of the Cento, Partecipanza has the appearance of a "condominium administrator."

	<b>CENTO</b>	<b>PIEVE DI CENTO</b>
Area tot. (ha) 1905	1616	487
Area tot. (ha) 1936	1616	487
Area tot. (ha) 1973	1645	680
Area tot. (ha) 1995	1732	819

% participants who cultivate directly the soil	42%	11% right river Rhine 37% left river Rhine
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**Table 3 The increment of Partecipanza's tenure over the last century**

Among the reforms in the common rules can also be noticed that the Partecipanza of Cento provides the possibility of renting lots to third persons without losing the right to the subdivision. This initiative was taken following the observation that many participants no longer cultivate the land, because they have other income. Many participants do not live on the Partecipanza's land any longer. In the past this has always been a point of major conflict. Indeed the poorest participants gave up their lands to richer ones. Some landowners became oligopolists. In the 1611 statute it was prohibited the sale of lots up to five years after the division, punished by the return of the headlands to the community. Today many lots are not cultivated or even assigned.

Alongside these we can see rules relating to the management of housing assets. Until the late 800's and before first and fundamental laws of town planning there has been a gradual process of urbanization and anthropization of lands, without this process evolved in housing merger. However, the statute of 1611 highlights the dramatic nature of the issue: the visible process was that the participants built unauthorized houses in order to take the right of assignment. The '600 regulation prohibits this kind of initiatives and rule the building according precise distance between buildings, size of the house and so on. During '900 there were introduced significant changes: it is the Municipality that has gradually supplanted and undermined the statute authority and the definition of building permits. Today this is a matter of absolute importance in the discussions between Partecipanza and Municipality. The old houses have been gradually transformed into apartments for the children and grandchildren of participants. However, as we can see today, there hasn't been created environmental conditions aimed at ensuring a minimum health. There are no sewers and mud floats out of the housing channels not cleaned anymore.

Finally, a potentially explosive issue for Partecipanza is the access of women to partition process. Interviews showed that the question, if it was not already answered in 1999, now appears in all its consistency to the eyes of the new president. But for now, there weren't proposed changes in the allocation of lots.

In the third and final set of constitutional rules we can place what might affect more strongly on all collective decisions and operational ones: the custom. This rule operates on many levels: from an operational point of view it has always been a source of certainty that the assets are maintained undamaged and intact. Furthermore, the custom makes participants defending partitions, repeatedly questioned, so they are guaranteed and protected from external attack. From the point of view of common rules it notes that the custom often acts as a disincentive to the modernisation of the entity. Custom provides protection and tradition to face the tasks of the present.

What remains a constitutional rule so far is freedom of the individual to cultivate the land as they believe. The Partecipanza offers no indications of any kind in this regard. This does not mean that we have not generated a prevailing culture: that one of hemp. Today prevalent crops are those of fruit and beet.



Another constituent rule is represented by the possibility of alteration to the articles of the Statute; the newly elected president suggested me during an interview the need for a review in the short period. Plus we can put in this set the assignment of urban assets restriction. In addition to those landscapes defined by the landscape plan by the Emilia Romagna region, the area of Malafitto, at the end of the '80s, was identified as an agricultural park. From interviews conducted it seems that this planning constrain is intended to be amended.

## 2.6 Relevance of Partecipanza on socioeconomic system

In the literature of historians and local lawyers who have examined the case study of Partecipanza of Cento is invoked in a systematic way the main characteristic of the lands of Partecipanza. They were very populated, much more than the rest of the town countryside and clearly more than the nearest towns' areas. In the table below, we focused the periods of greatest economic expansion in the history of Cento. The table shows how the lands of Partecipanza were populated by a double absolute value compared to other non-urban areas. The areas of Partecipanza are therefore as urban countryside. This gap has been intensifying in this period because the strength to the city center has halved the farming population, while similar phenomenon has a smaller force on the land of Partecipanza, although the tendency to contraction and abandonment of farmland is still a fact also on common lands of Partecipanza.

Year	1947	1951	1961
Partecipanza's lands	475	515	494
Other rural areas (town area excluded)	207	134	110

**Table 4 Population density in Cento's rural lands (inhab/kmq)**

What emerges from the reading of all authors is that high density depends on the rules of sharing lands every twenty years. In fact, the certainty of having a small piece of land to be cultivated in past centuries was a guarantee of survival. This attracted over many immigrants whom were improperly rented apartments and crops by the participants themselves. Also within the system of Partecipanza it was configured a single system family, because the death of the head chief guaranteed to the many male heirs to receive more lots to farm as regulation stated. In interviews I conducted the Deputy Mayor of Cento, participant of Pieve, defined Partecipanza as an "orphans' daughter." Each family participant was then in a position to be virtually self-sufficient. The pattern of soil cultivation was therefore very intensive.

The effects of this way of managing the land, however, are not limited to demographic aspects, but also can be extended to social issues. An analysis of the documents found by the Land Registry of 1752, shows us the spreading trend of a model of medium – small land properties in clear opposition to the model of large Bolognese farm in the hands of the nobles. The only large area on the Cento's municipality was the Torre Spada family's one. Also from land register is shown that the values of the land was average medium - high, higher than those still property of the that aristocratic family. The property of Curch was also significant. The Jewish community living in the ghetto was excluded from any form of landed property,

including the Partecipanza one, the Jewish community living in the ghetto. This community carved out a niche for itself in the activities of financial and commercial matters.

In the contemporary era the twenty - year subdivision on the one hand led to the alleviation of migratory phenomena which in the rest of Italy know well and on the other led, unlike what was happening in the context of Bologna, to discourage or even prevented the emergence of a labouring class. The effects of this trend can still be seen today: from the political point of view, in fact, the town council is now governed by the Right party in absolute contrast with the municipal, provincial and regional trends.

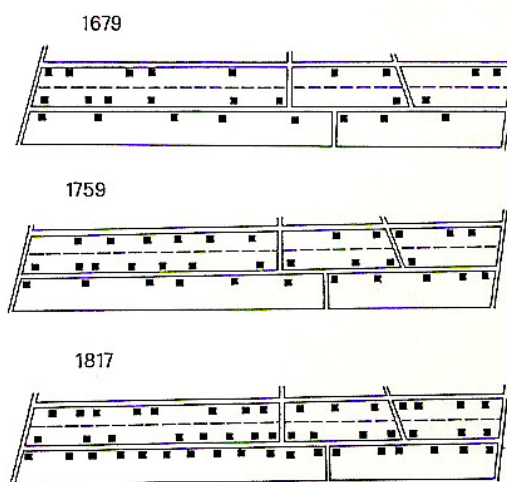
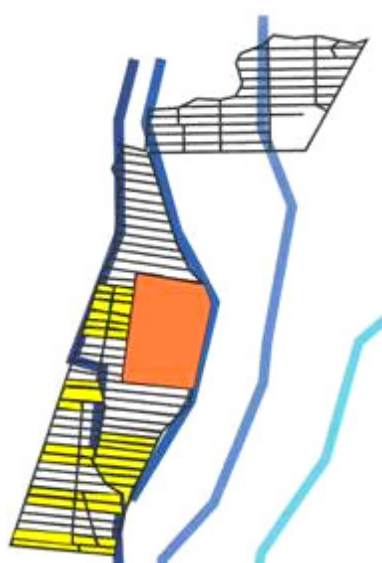
And one final structural effect induced by the presence of temporary defined land partition has fostered in the postwar period, especially in the '50s, the conversion of the production base. The trend that we could observe was that the participants not only dedicated themselves to agricultural activities, that ensured them the sustenance but did not provide economic welfare. The remaining time of those lucky people was indeed used in small craft. Some of these, particularly related to mechanical compartment, were a huge success and became veritable industrial activities. They are excellent examples: e.g. the participant family of Lamborghini, or families Vancini and Marelli today that produced the famous VM engines for large international companies such as Audi and General Motor and we can do many other examples. The transforming of local base in the First World War was supported by the presence on the territory of the professional school of Taddia brothers, also participants. The training model that went to create these lands was taken for example for the birth of industrial technical institutes across the country.

In the nineteenth century there was therefore an epochal transformation in the history of these territories: the participants were transformed from consumers into producers. Gradually the cultivation of hemp, which had ruled unchallenged for centuries because of its perfect adapt to the environmental conditions of the local areas, because of its ability to integrate perfectly in terms of yield and in terms of timing with the cultivation of cereals, thanks to its manufacturing and marketing of the product just in time without too many steps, was lacking because of its scarce ability to stand mechanization processes. Agriculture itself lost considerable importance and today, with the move of base production, it has no more weight on economic grounds. The progressive alienation from the cultivation of land today means that incomes from agricultural activities are added to those obtained much more substantial from other activities. What emerges as a dominant over industriousness is the strong entrepreneurship, industry and ingenuity of the population.

Today the reality is local economic stagnation although Cento continues to exercise a power of attraction towards closer small towns, because of the manufactures that are present here: 30,000 inhabitants has indeed gone in a few years to 33,000 units. Some choices have limited infrastructure system of Cento and had a weight on local production. Think about the highway of the Brenner: instead of logically joint to Bologna passing through Cento it was decided to reach Modena through Carpi. Another example is the removal of the railway line occurred in the immediate post war period. Today, the mechanical sector is predominant and essential in the life of the city, but it has difficulty to innovate.

## **2.7 Settlement design**

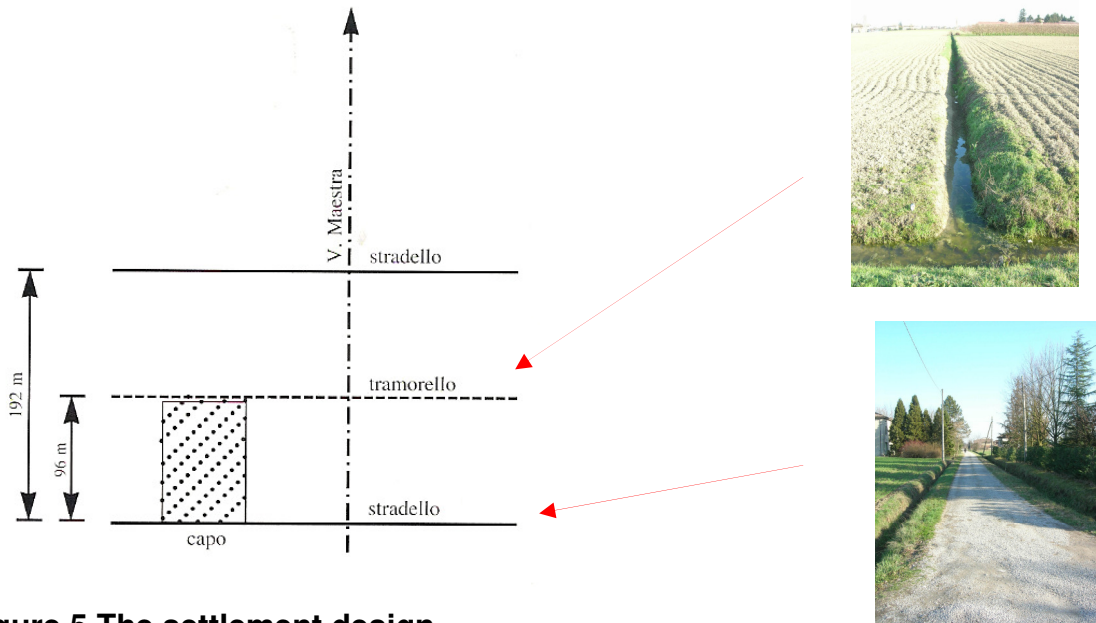
In the structure of the area, as illustrated elsewhere, fluctuations of the river Rhine have undoubtedly had a significant weight. The instability of these waters is sometimes associated with the same transformations that happened inside the Partecipanza. There are not breaking of the banks from the '600, now when the river moved to East dividing Cento from Pieve and had acquired its current location. As can be seen from the contribution of Giacomelli (1994) fluctuations of the river are sometimes associated with synchrony to statutory changes and leave them on tracks: note the roads and borders of Partecipanza in figure 3 below. The river tells us a lot about the history of Cento: observing the boundaries of Partecipanza you can tell that they are two ancient river beds of twelfth and thirteenth century. Its gradual move towards East and its position between the two towns of Pieve and Cento marks the division of the two Partecipanze referred as we have been said above. Moreover stability on lands acquired through hydraulic changes realized by participants has produced from '600 a proliferation of housing as attested by figure 4.



**Figure 3 River Rhine fluctuations in the countryside**

**Figure 4 The process of urbanization in the countryside**

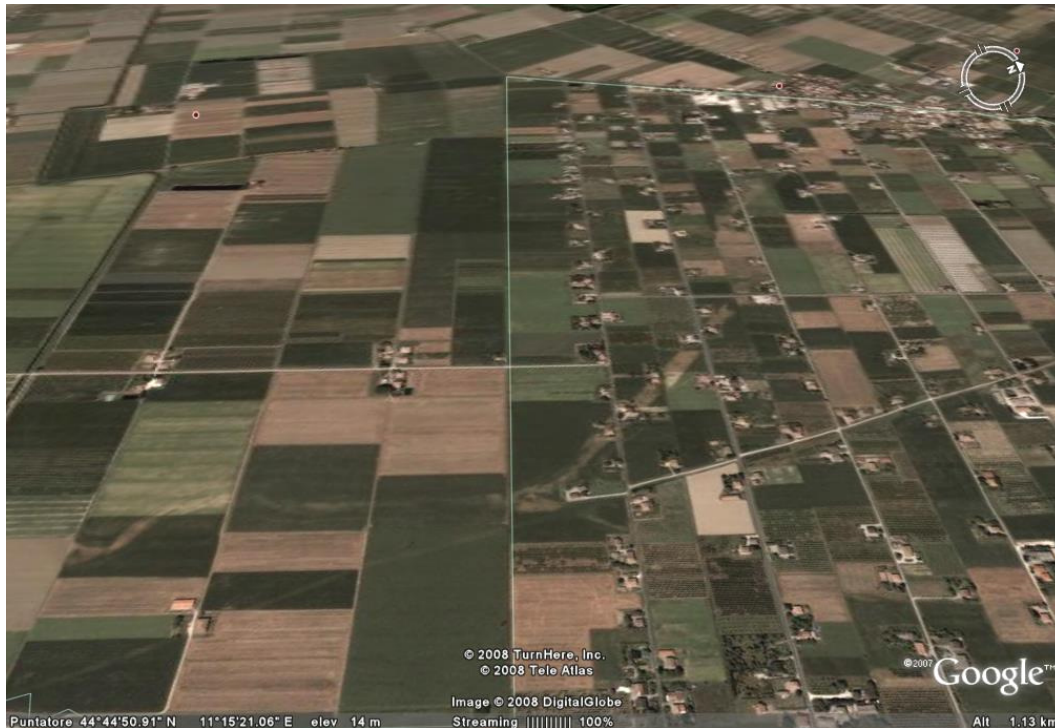
Since the regulation of 1611, it is considered appropriate to rule aspects concerning house building. Before this regulations there were many abusive occupations built by participants in order to receive the headland to farm. They agreed that the participant had the right to build his home on the lot assigned prior permission of the Partecipanza's Council and respecting some limits: the distance between other houses were at least 15 pertiche i.e. 65 metres. Thus, as pointed out above, a stabilization of assignments started leading to a gradual saturation of spaces. The resulting landscape is today under the eyes of all those who go to these places and is represented by satellite surveys, one of which shows the net difference between partecipanza's common lands and those placed outside. This is an unusual rural landscape. It stands out clearly from that one of neighbouring campaign which is more sparse, but at the same time it doesn't present a continuity that can be defined as a concentrated landscape. It's an urbanized countryside. See figures below.



**Figure 5 The settlement design**

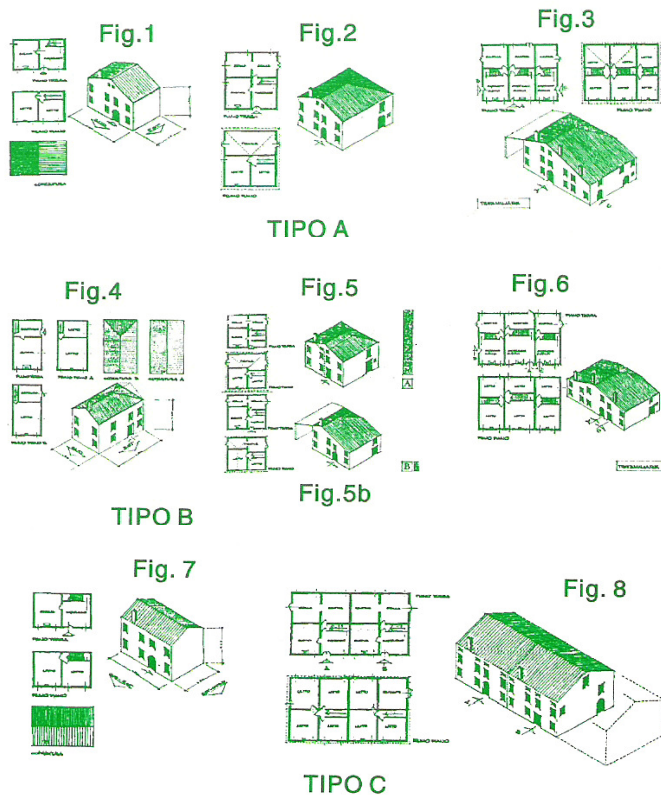


**Figure 6 The urbanized countryside**



**Figure 7 Renazzo hamlet: the southern border line of Partecipanza's common lands**

The division of heads led to the formation of families that tend to be mononuclear. Each headland owner was allowed to create his own house. Houses were built with "raw" bricks using traditional methods. The typical form that can be detected is that of a house not too large with two floors and with a characteristic irregular roof's tail. The images below show the following types of houses identified with their expansions that have defined the shape that we can now observe. All houses are placed nearby small unsurfaced lanes, called "stradelli", with the entrance turned to the south. The less noble premises, as the barn and as the cowshed, were always placed in the north. Today, most of these homes is not to connected the sewerage system. It is planned to solve this problem with the allocation of phytodepuration pools.



**Figure 8 Living units typology**

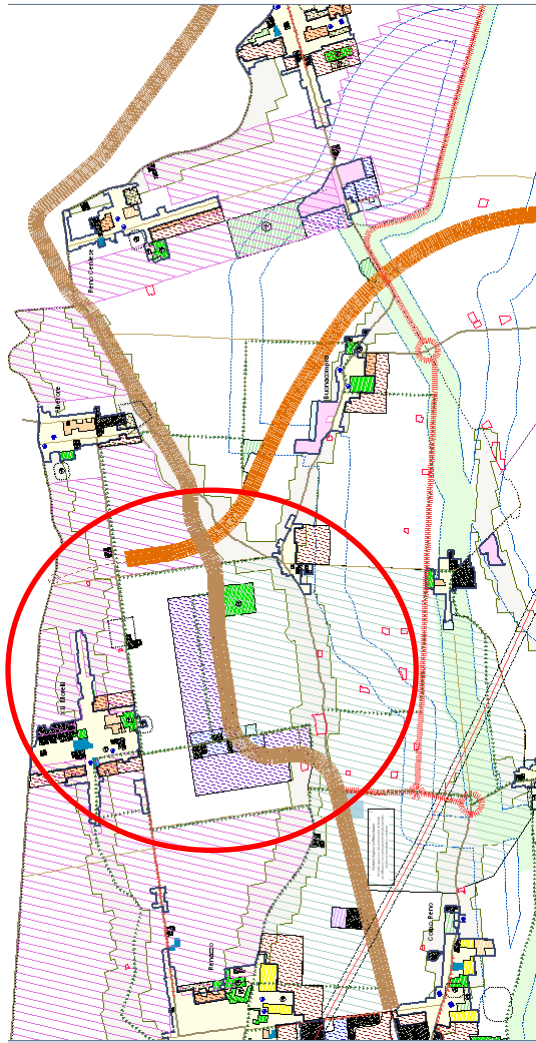
### 2.8 The present development projects

I'd like to close this description talking about present development projects standing on Partecipanza's lands. According to regional indications a territorial development agreement was signed on the Upper Rhine between the municipalities of Bondeno, Cento, S. Augustine, Mirabello, Vigarano Mainarda, and the administration of Poggio Renatico in the province of Ferrara. They associated themselves and wrote a Structural Plan, a new planning tool used to define common strategies on the basis of which structural municipal plans will be carried out. There are five points on which this document focuses:

- A) the infrastructural system at national and regional level;
- B) the optimization of routes to benefit from landscape;
- C) the industrial production sector areas;
- D) the system of historical goods;
- E) the network of environmental and natural emergencies.

The most important project that invests the territories of Partecipanza is the realization of the Cispadana Highway, already approved by Region Emilia Romagna, which will connect Ferrara to Modena and Parma. The route planned will cut the two territories of Malafitto and Casumaro separating residents further north from the town of Cento. According to the chairman of Partecipanza this project will encourage the abandonment of campaigns in favour of Finale Emilia, a middle town in the north west. It's also planned the construction of a road connecting the highway on which will rise an important industrial site. The area on which these changes will take place is that of Torre Spada, an old point of infiltration of the large property of Bologna on Cento's territories. The debate is still under way and it does not make sense to continue further in the discussion of the project. As a preliminary project Partecipanza still has a chance to intervene dealing with design partially. Relations with the administration have always been the best because the Partecipanza is a great repository of votes. But few months ago town council changed and new relations must be built. The biggest concern for the local government is to settle sewage in accordance with law. The situation is intolerable in the opinion also of the same Partecipanza. Moreover, as it has been said in the interviews, the goal is the concentration of transformations. Thus, the abandonment of campaigns is not seen as a significant problem. Indeed the Partecipanza is seen itself as a problem to be solved rather than a resource to be exploited. Some areas will be acquired by town administration thanks to urban equalisation. These areas can fill a gap of equipment services; only a small part of them will take place in hamlets.

Strategic plan also decided to enhance areas of historical and of natural value, such as Partecipanza's one and like some others placed around, through the expansion of enjoying the use of landscape and trough the preservation of the historical evidence. Indeed, what has emerged from surveys and interviews is that the area of partecipanze has not yet developed fully its historic - witnesses potential. Recently it was in fact achieved a major restoration of an old farmhouse. This building has not been used by anyone and is simply empty. The chairman has initiated a series of contacts with schools to organize tours to the territory. Also Partecipanza of Pieve promotes agrarian culture. It has promoted the establishment of a protected area named "the Gorghì" and it has launched some initiatives in schools so as not to lose the memory brick building with boys and girls as it was once.



**Figure 9 Strategic plan**

### **3 CONCLUSIONS**

After this description we can make some concluding thoughts designed to reorder the many questions that an example of this sort arise.

A first consideration has to be done concerning the structural role of Partecipanza in the local context. While in the past, until the beginning of '900, it spurred local economy through the cultivation of hemp and subsequently contributed substantially to the transformation of local production base due to the fact that in second World war it has guaranteed subsistence to a good part of the population, today, with the gradual loss of importance of agriculture in the local and national economy, local actors and the same members of Partecipanza feel the need to find a new way to stay on its territory, in order to counteract the gradual depopulation of rural areas. However, from interviews conducted with local administrators, it is clear that the ideas now under discussion, which are drawn within the instrument of strategic territorial development plan, fail to outline a satisfactory and sustainable solution for the same players involved. The solutions suggested, in fact, on the one hand tend to underestimate the historic significance of the presence of this kind of institution in the territory and the delicate settlement balances that it has generated: we refer in particular to the planned construction of a highway promoted by the Region. Dealing with this point it should be pointed out that in Italy the matter of protecting landscape



is precisely responsibility of the Regions. This transformation is now approved and necessary to ensure a future development to manufactories although painful in the eyes of participants.

On the other hand projects submitted tend to emphasize the cumbersome presence of Partecipanza in terms of area occupied and historical landscape constraints. The Partecipanza isn't a malleable institution in the short period even in operational rules. From this point of view, since the land is inalienable it's difficult to apply equalizing mechanisms for the implementation of services and public utilities works. This fact brings local administration in difficulty as regards the realization of equipment and services to be supplied to citizenship.

It therefore seems likely that the weight of the protection of landscape produced over the centuries by these people is not included in the plans of local government, municipal, provincial or regional as a priority on which to focus for the development of the area. The enhancement of the landscape passes through the implementation of smaller detailed actions. Think on cycle routes, for example: these projects have little weight on the strategies of the overall reorganization plan. Yet it is undeniable and pressing the need to find an economic meaning to these areas which already have some characters of backwardness that must be made up as soon as possible. One on all: hygienically and healthy talking the condition of pipelines drainage is unacceptable.

The Partecipanza's landscape has certainly distinguishing features entirely unique: think of the regular mesh of lots, think about some architectural aspects, think about an urbanized countryside. Of course this type of landscape can be seen as an absolute rarity globally. Until the members of Partecipanza coincided with those of the Municipality, around the fifteenth century, one can recognize an organic sign of use of soil, which sees the campaign as part of integrated functions and life of the city (Samaritani, 1998). This example of land use, however, now has little appreciation because wasted spaces and territorial dispersion of cities in North-Eastern part of Italy and the Po Valley in general is a clear problem. But the fact is this landscape was build many years ago, and if we fill up all the spaces the difference between that landscape and the new one is going to disappear.

The cultural dimension of the landscape produced can be read in a strong trend evident in entrepreneurship, wishing to be "a self made men", managing on his and her own hands typical of a rural culture, wanting the family to be self-sufficient and independent and so on. These social and cultural characters are still visible in what some Italian authors have widely described (Bagnasco, 1978), made by a widespread and capillary entrepreneurship: Partecipanza seems to be in some aspects anticipating expression of what today is called "molecular capitalism" (Bonomi, 1997).

If we try to classify the type of cultural landscape produced here following the operational definition given by UNESCO we could compare it to:

"An organically evolved landscape results from an initial social, economic, administrative, and / or religious imperative and has developed its present form by association with and in response to its natural environment. [...] continuing landscape is one which retains an active social role in contemporary society closely associated with a traditional way of life. It is continuing to evolve while, at the same time, it exhibits significant material evidence of its historic evolution".

Of course I do not want to suggest that the landscape produced in this context is worthy of note in the famous list of UNESCO. It's simply an attempt at classification which follows logically the description made in the previous pages. Using the definition above we simply point out that the presence of a common property in a particular context has produced a unique landscape that has considerable historical importance. We do not know if the significance of landscape in this context has a weight globally. This is not the task of this brief paper. We are confident that this, as well as other adjacent Partecipanze, have produced unusual and totally specific landscapes.

In this regard, please refer to the experiences of Partecipanze of Nonantola and especially Villa Fontana, who tried to convert parts of its lands in sustainable management experiences as we read from this piece of paper<sup>4</sup>:

“Villa Fontana’s Partecipanza, for example, through regulations Cee Ce 1257/99 and 2078/92 has been able to make a vast regeneration project of environmental balance. The "Green Plan of Vallona farm" has allowed the conversion of approximately 100 hectares of arable crops in humid areas and meadows, stains, hedges and tree glades, spaces at a very high environmental value and fauna in the areas covered by natural Sites of Community interest<sup>5</sup> and special area of conservation of the Natura 2000 net. Moreover, it was favoured an extensive farming using techniques with low environmental impact based mainly on the integrated pest management. [...]Partecipanza promoted and supported this plan to all its participants [...] Farmers have been thus protagonists of solving problems of environmental compatibility of agricultural practice on at least 40% of the area included in the agreement”.

We cannot therefore assume that the Partecipanza of Cento has produced an interesting landscape from a global perspective. It was the system of common management of land to have demonstrated over the centuries to have potential in the development of cultural landscapes. With its ability to take root in the territory it has helped in developing a diversity of landscape and it has been able to match it to a sustainable use of land resource over time. The relevance in a global sense of this type of experience can perhaps be understood in this sense.

At this point, however, some fundamental questions are given: are we sure that the award of a strong weight to historical and cultural dimension to these institutions is sufficient to give greater weight to Partecipanza in the process of defining logic of local development? Isn't it the only alternative to the decline of these areas? I wonder if this idea is capable of producing work and welfare or whether it is a fallback solution and what this implies for the inhabitants of these areas. Should we think perhaps the Partecipanza as an open-air museum? The current chairman of Partecipanza he stressed that putting all in heritage conservation is not enough. There must be one more reason to the inhabitants of the campaign to stay on those territories. It's strong thus the desire to regain a greater weight in the strategies of local development. To do this we must avoid the depopulation of these areas and find out social functions as well as economic issues that today are hard to glimpse. In short, the concept of cultural landscape represents a possible way to re-think in a

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<sup>4</sup> M. Filippini “Le proprietà collettive, un valore per il territorio” in *Agricoltura*, Novembre 2007, rivista on line

<sup>5</sup> Directive 9243/CEE; 21st May 1992

modern world the survival and the interest of these institutions such as Agrarian Partecipanze. This concept helps to give these properties a new common role during previous centuries had never been attributed to them. It helps to give meaning to common property within an economic transformation that involves a transition from a society of consumers, what were the fathers of the current participants, to a society of producers. Certainly dealing with the experience above we do not know if the awareness of being an expression of a cultural landscape unique in the world can return a structural weight to Partecipanza within the framework of local development, but at least in the short term, there are not any other alternatives than an inevitable transformation of Partecipanza in simple farm. This process started already from the nearby Partecipanza of Pieve through the progressive acquisition and sale of land.

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