

Molise-Montenegro Cross-border Cooperation

Edited by
Emilia Sarno

Preface by
Antonio Iacobucci

Contributions by
Cosimo Carmine Cassetta, Marina Fuschi, Marijana Krivokapic,
Goranka Lazovic, Gojko Nolic, Concettina Pascetta,
Emilia Sarno, Danijela Stolica.



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Introduction

Emilia SARNO, project manager “A Study of Mountain Landscape for Transborder Cooperation: Integrated Planning between Molise-Montenegro”

This volume collects the results of a three-year research project (2011-2014) sponsored by the Regional Agency for the Development and Innovation of Agriculture of the Italian Molise region (ARSIAM). The project is entitled: “A Study of Mountain Landscape for Transborder Cooperation: Integrated Planning between Molise-Montenegro”.

ARSIAM, in a forward-looking project, has chosen to go beyond its national and regional limits stimulated by the opportunities offered by the EU and by various organizations such as the Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion and the Adriatic Eurodistrict. These institutions have long created the conditions for transborder cooperation. Although the research project foresees theoretical ‘steps’, its main focus is on practical application to identify the themes and areas which are more conducive to cooperation between the agencies and companies of the two territories.

Why Montenegro? First of all because of a geographical proximity favoured by the Adriatic Sea which acts as a natural bridge between the Italian and Balkan peninsulas. It is also one of the countries with which transborder cooperation has become stable in initiatives and projects promoted by Italian authorities. Environmental factors and territorial characteristics shared by both, mountain landscape being one of them, has played a further role in determining the choice. For these reasons, I chose and coordinated a group of researchers from various scientific disciplines to begin studies of both a theoretical and practical nature. Of importance have been study trips made to Montenegro; in particular the trip of September 2011 made to establish contacts with the Italian embassy in Montenegro, the Mediterranean University of Bar, the Chamber of Commerce of Podgorica and local

companies. The collaboration of the Italian Embassy in Montenegro was invaluable in its work in favouring partnerships.

The meetings with experts from the Chamber of Commerce and with company representatives involved talks dealing with the analysis of the Montenegro agro-food sector and comparing it to the agro-food sector of Italian region of Molise. The seminar held at the Mediterranean University of Bar was on the theme of *Molise-Montenegro cross-border cooperation*, and focussed on the importance of tourism in the Adriatic. Later trips led to the collection of further data and bibliographical information as well as strengthening ties allowing us to both include and extend the research group to Montenegro experts and researchers and to initiate actions in common. The encounters, focusing on the agro-food and tourism sectors, highlighted elements in common, paths and strategies to be shared, the possibility to share know how and the possibility of reciprocally developing potential.

The first sector is based, in effect, on agriculture and cattle breeding, which are the traditional foundations of the economies of Molise and Montenegro. The second is an economic driving-force. Both however require a new economic policy capable of renewing direction and prospects. In these cases, transborder cooperation becomes an efficacious instrument for the sharing of both problems and experiences. Furthermore, given its decentralized structure, it can develop in the most authentic way because it depends upon a direct collaboration between agencies and companies, both of which find in reciprocity a scientific, relational and productive advantage.

Giving birth to this collaboration has been one of the results of the project, and we would like to present throughout this paper the path taken, and the scientific results achieved, by the research group.

The volume has therefore been divided into four sections. The first section deals with Molise and Montenegro from an environmental and socio-economic perspective. An understanding of the territory is fundamental in order to have a wide knowledge from which to draw when evaluating planning and practical viability of projects to be adopted. Consequently, Emilia Sarno and Gojko Nikolić, together with Marijana Krivokapić, have underlined the particular characteristics of both Molise and Montenegro, especially the presence of mountain chains and the importance that the Adriatic coast has acquired recently.

In an effort to clarify the characteristics of the process of transformation, both the demographics of the territory as well as the structures

of settlement have been focussed upon. In this way the socio-economic context of both territories have emerged with their comparable potential and criticalities. This section is completed by an appendix edited by Gojko Nikolić and Marijana Krivokapić. It includes further information towards an understanding of Montenegro.

The second section deals with agro-food issues. The subject is treated by two experts, Cosimo Carmine Cassetta for Molise and Danijela Stolica for Montenegro. Their contributions present a global view of agriculture and the agro-food sector. They have highlighted the resources of the two territories, how they are exploited and which aspects should be developed further. Their study indicates the common presence of zootechny and of some valuable crops such as olive growing and viticulture. Of note are also some typical dairy products of both Molise and Montenegro as well as honey production. The two researchers, in their description of the various activities, have underlined the current economic incidence of the sector as well as possible further developments.

The third section deals with the other sector considered as strategically important – tourism. Goranka Lazovic has outlined, also through presenting statistical data, the strategic importance of tourism for Montenegro. She has clarified the political thinking that has begun to appreciate the potential value of the territory taken as a whole and that takes into account the diversity of tourist demand. Marina Fuschi and Concettina Pascetta have outlined a methodological itinerary for the application and implementation of rural tourism in Molise and elsewhere. In fact, they propose guidelines that can also be applied in other contexts. The development of rural tourism is, however, considered an integral part of a wider promotion of the territory. Added to this part of the volume is Appendix II, which offers a synthetic framework of tourism in Molise.

The final part of the volume presents those factors that make collaboration do-able. These factors include the historical role played by the Mediterranean as a meeting place for commercial and cultural exchanges and the political strategies promoted by the European Union. Strategies and actions to be programmed in the two chosen areas have been selected, based also upon environmental and socio-economic factors shared by both territories. Cooperation thus becomes a way of initiating a shared reflection and a magnifying lens through which the

potential of the territory is identified. These last, highlighted by comparative studies, emerge more clearly.

Seen from this point of view, a further result of this itinerary of study is the promulgation of a culture of territorial cooperation and the volume is addressed to researchers, territorial analysts, planning experts and entrepreneurs who wish to be involved in the implementation of partnerships.