
BASSA SABINA



ETH Studio Basel
Contemporary City Institute
Caterina Inderbitzin, Stefanie Krautzig

Prof. Roger Diener, Prof. Marcel Meili
Mathias Gunz, Rolf Jenni, Milica Topalovic
Christian Mueller Inderbitzin

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BASSA SABINA

RURAL LANDSCAPE UNDER PRESSURE

TERRITORIAL FEATURES

AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE: WEAKENING ECONOMY OF OLIVE OIL PRODUCTION

Olive cultivation
EU aid
Weak touristic offer
Pressures on the land

RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE

Commuters' hinterland
Transformation of settlements
Vieni a vivere in Bassa Sabina!

LANDSCAPE UNDER PRESSURE

Dual residential impact



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TERRITORIAL FEATURES

Historically significant for farm produce and more specifically for olive oil supplies of the roman aristocracy the Bassa Sabina presents itself today as a stratification of layers, yet leaving the olive cultivation an evident supremacy at least in the appearance of the landscape. Because of the 20 km distance from Rome this region once played an important role in river transport of materials towards the capital and today it is becoming the target of strong dynamics of settlement.



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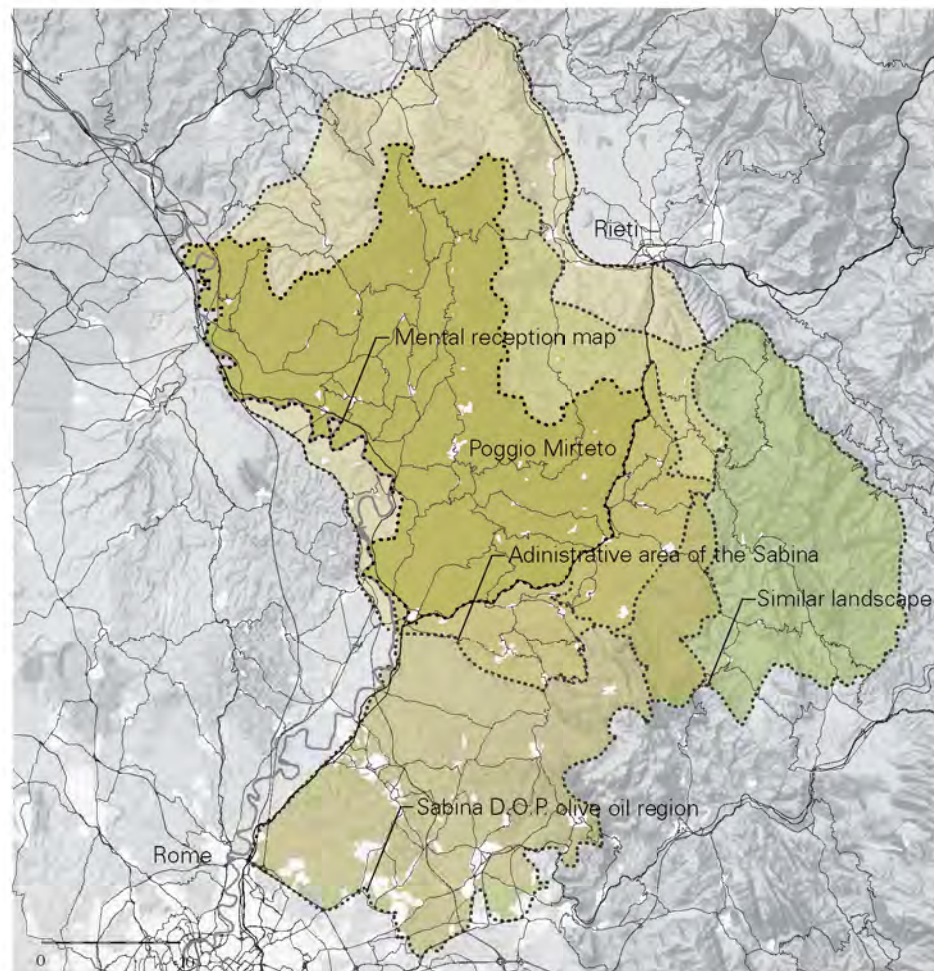
Landscape continuity over centuries

Even before the Roman period the territory was utilized for agricultural production which was then shipped to Rome. Hilltop towns were important strongholds for civil protection and securing supplies from raids.



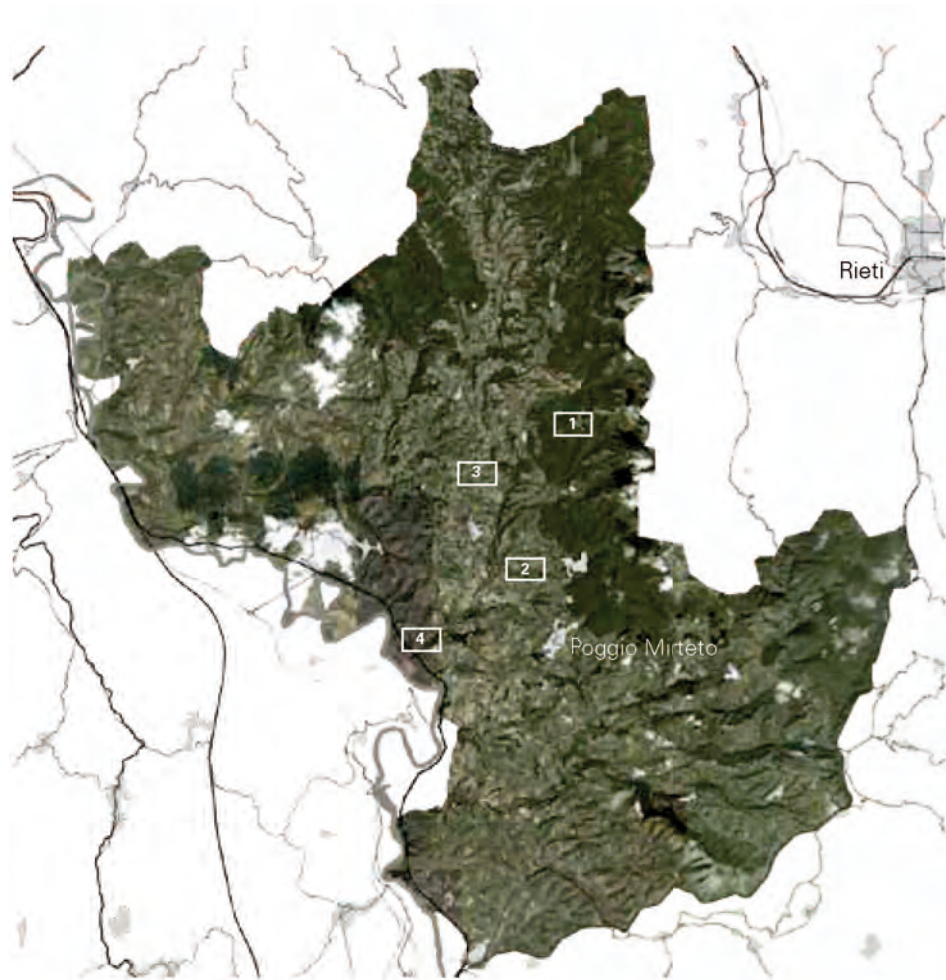
Flatland plies into mountains

Enclosed by the river Tevere in the western flatland and by the Sabinian mountains on the East and the North, the Bassa Sabina is characterized by a smooth hilly landscape.



Multiple territorial definitions

Various entities use the term "Bassa Sabina" in defining their territory. Important for the determination of our research area was the individual mental perception that interviewed persons described as Sabinian landscape.



1



2



3



4

Heterogeneous agricultural settings

- 1 Forest
- 2 Pasture
- 3 Olive Plantation
- 4 Field

Heterogeneous agricultural settings

Olives and wine cultivation in the hills as well as crop in the plain represent a historically deep-rooted feature and tradition, taking part in the formation of today's landscape.

AGRICULTURAL LANDSCAPE: WEAKENING ECONOMY OF OLIVE OIL PRODUCTION

As in many other Italian or Mediterranean regions the cultivation of olives for their oil or the fruits is a deep-rooted aspect of the regional traditions. Since modern plucking machines harvest the treasured fruit many times faster than the hand pluckers, nowadays the payable fostering of olive trees for a living is reliant on the size and topography of the fields. In the Bassa Sabina the new techniques to make the cultivation efficient have not had the curb yet because of the relief of the landscape, the fragmentation of the fields and the missing coordination amongst the few full-time farmers.

Generally speaking and from the dawn of globalization, olive oil production in the Bassa Sabina is

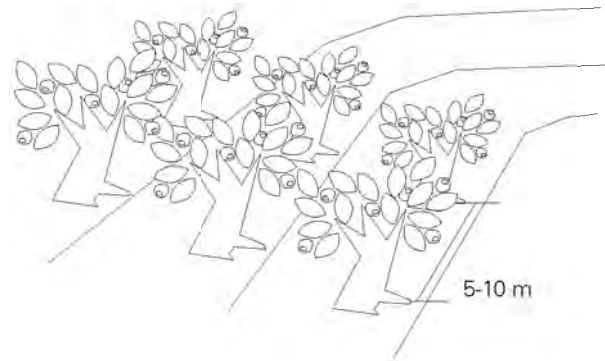
becoming a luxury for which farmers are getting subsidized by EU funds and where private plantation owners only harvest as a private hobby or for a small scale market.

On the other hand the special charm of the olive-strewn rural landscape, which delights some people from all around the world, has to endure the pressure of the building sector: towards the large traffic systems the communes are changing large areas of agricultural land into new residential zones to accommodate the increasing housing request.



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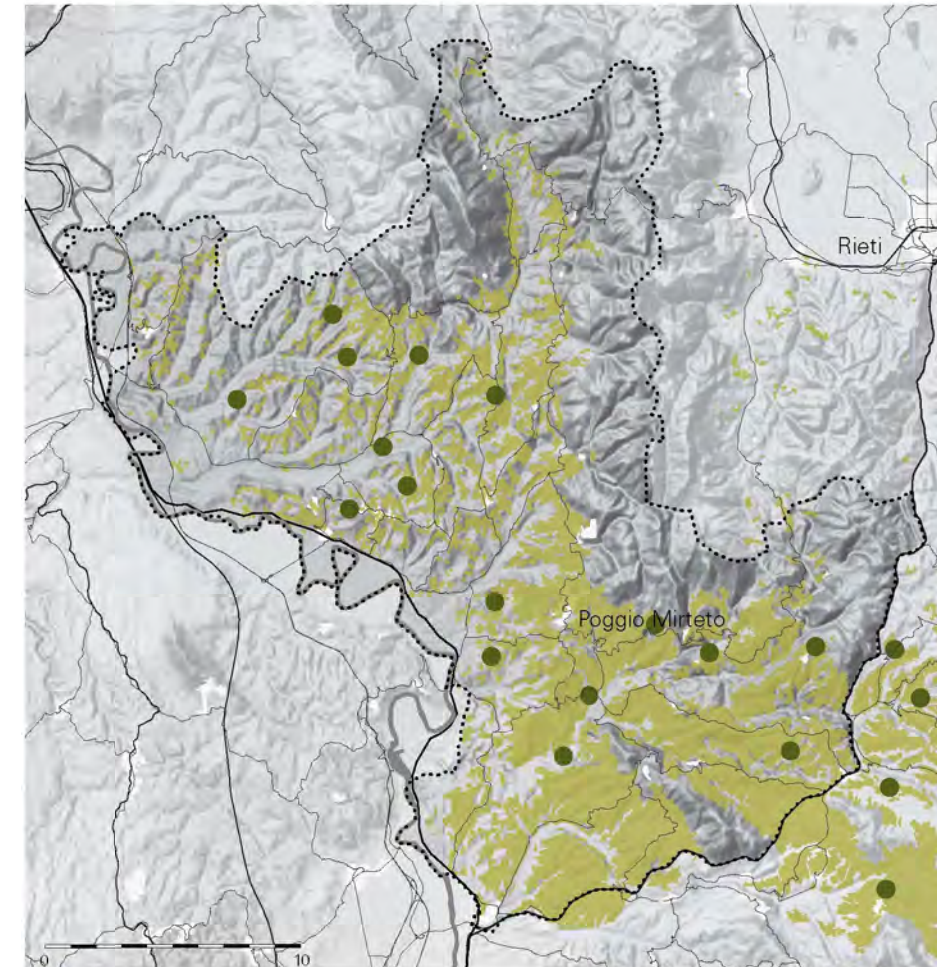
Olive plantation requirements

Olive trees require specific rules for optimal harvesting: maximal sun exposure through 3-10 m spacing, a draining soil (slopes are very helpful in the flowing mechanisms of water) and mild to warm climate.



Olive cultivation

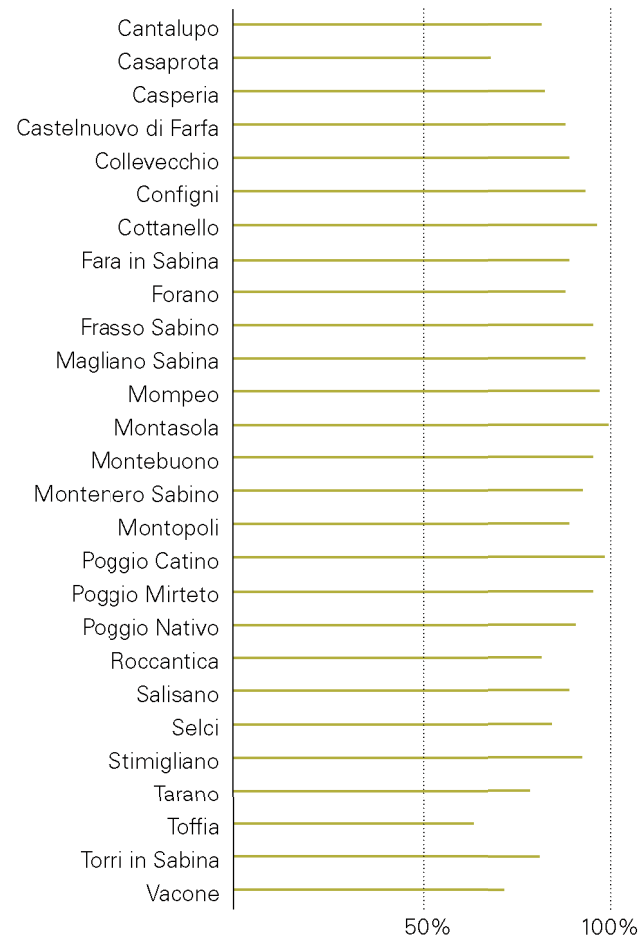
The omnipresence of olive trees in the Bassa Sabina has always been existing and raises the false impression of a flourishing olive market. The branch of olive oil production in a traditional sense is drying out because of a lack of adjustment possibilities towards more efficient harvesting methods. But the oil market found new structures to cope with new interest of the plantation owners since most of them do not use their olive trees for economic reasons any more. The ones that do follow economic reasons have to be supported by EU agrarian funds, otherwise the cultivation would not be profitable.



- Olive plantations
- Oil-mills

23% of the agricultural landscape are olives

8'058 hectares of olive plantations cover around 23% of the non-residential soil. The rest is divided into woods (10780.8 ha) pasture and arable land for a total of 34884.53 ha.



85% call themselves 'Farmers'

Statistics show that in every commune there is a high percentage of people working in the agricultural sector, what would describe this region as a rural based economy. Actually most of the people do harvest their own land, but the question should consider their occupation throughout the year. Usually people involved in agriculture have a different main occupation, mostly in the tertiary, and do farming as a part-time job.



Henk

Dutch gentleman, became a farmer in Bassa Sabina to be able to expand his built property of 30% (instead of the normal 10%). He has never had anything to do with farming in his native country.



Alessandra

Produces olive oil from her own 150 trees and helps harvesting her dutch neighbor's plot while he is away.

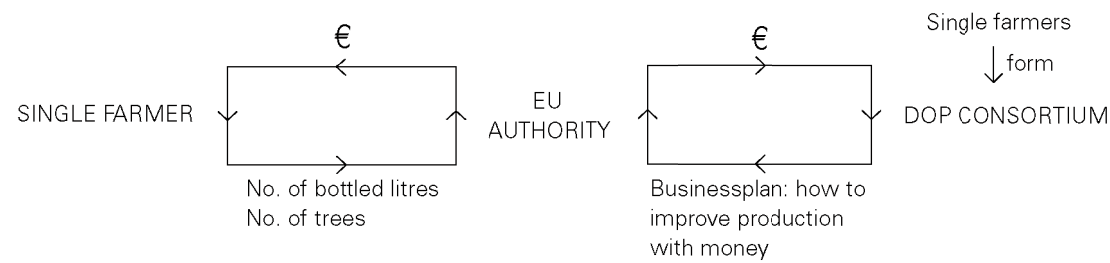


Gianluca

He harvests from 5000 to 12000 quintals olives a year and sells the resulting Sabina DOP olive oil just in his shop, not in bigger markets because it would not be profitable enough.

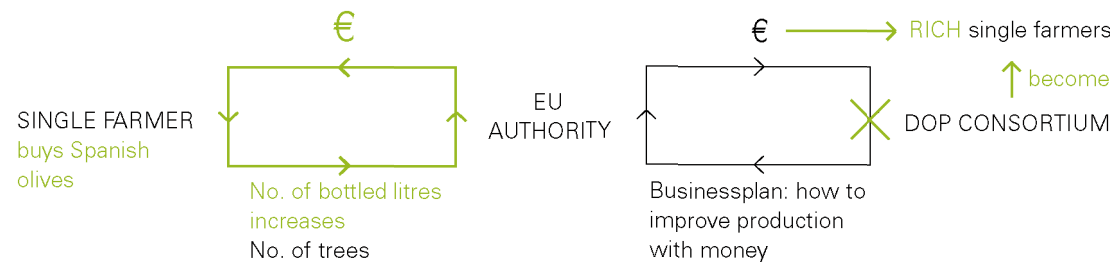
Pressures on small scale producers

Olive oil is sold in different ways depending on the one hand on the landlord's will to undertake (or not) a commercial activity, on the other hand on profit calculations based on the D.O.P regulations, which define strictly the conditions for D.O.P branding. The price for producing oil is about 8 Euros/liter. A considerable percentage is sold on a larger scale under the Sabina D.O.P Brand which is affordable because of the formation of so called 'consorzi', an association of several farmers with common interests. The rest, about 34%, splits in 3 categories of more or less formal sale or exchange (offered to friends, sold for more that it's worth on higher circles, etc.).



EU subvention system

On two independent channels olive farmers can be considered for allocations by the “EAGGF”-fonds for agricultural development of the EU. Either they arrange into a consortium with a regular business plan which summarizes the goals set by the participants to improve their production of high quality oil, or single farmers obtain an allowance for each tree and liter of olive oil they produce in one year.



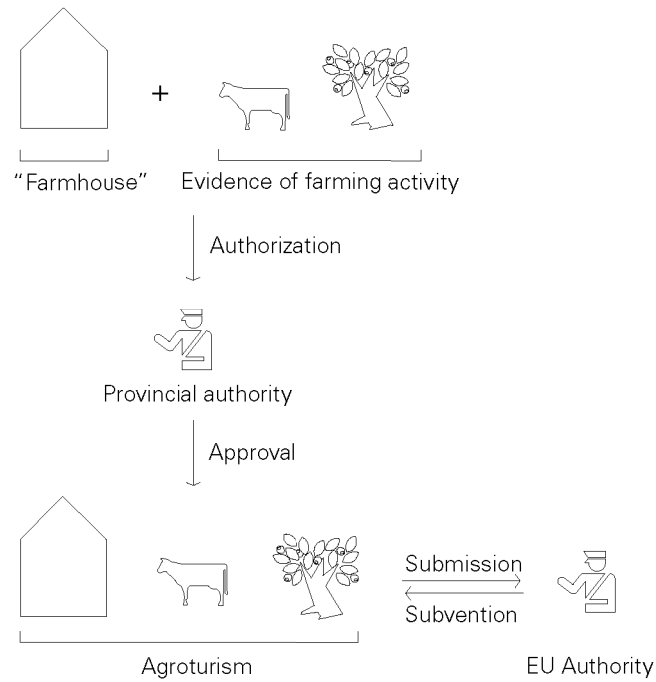
EU subvention misuse

Formally the DOP consortium should invest the grants in a better and more efficient production of high quality olive oil. Nevertheless most of it remains stuck in the higher ranks and there is only few aid money placed in actual farming investments. In Spain three times as many olives as in Italy are plucked per year but Italy manages to produce the double amount of oil liters. In some cases single farmers buy Spanish olives to restock their incomes, which results in misleading the financial allocations of the EU.

EU aid

The cultural landscape of olive plantation regions is running the risk of being neglected by their owners due to insufficient proceeds from the oil branch. Therefore diverse EU aid programs try to reinforce the agricultural activity (among others “EAGGF”) and parallel to stimulate the touristic activity within agricultural areas (“Leader+”) which results in an increasing amount of agrotourisms to experience “holidays on a farm”. Generally speaking the possibility given to profit from these supports is widely and openly accepted amongst the Sabinian farmers.





Agrotourism

This sort of hospitality structure is a protected term that can only be used by attaining to specific criteria. Once achieved the, peasants are allowed to profit from subsidies allocated by the EU.

⊗ Golf Club (closed)

🏠 Congress Centre

🏨 5-star hotel (Planned)

🏠🏠 3-star hotel

🏠🏠🏠🏠 2-star hotel

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🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠🏠 Agrotourism

Weak touristic offer

The big amount of agrotourisms and alternative lodging possibilities symbolizes the peasants' openness towards the offered "EU encouragement". Despite the impression of an agile touristic market in the area, the spare sights and board structures do not succeed in appealing more than some day-trip tourists from Rome.



1



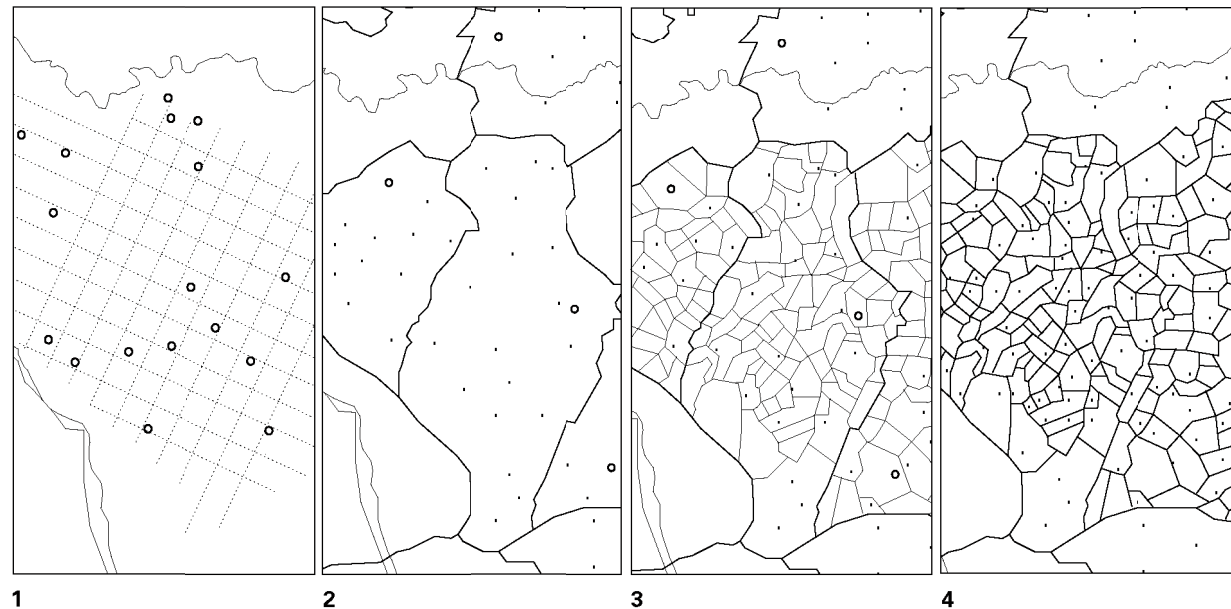
2

The charm of the landscape

The monastery of Farfa or the freshly pressed olive oil in autumn are indeed touristic attractions but the visitors of the Bassa Sabina enjoy the most the rurality of the landscape and, if they stay overnight, the agrarian ambience of an agrotourism.

1 La Tacita Country Club, Casperia

2 Agrotourism 'Il Gelso Nero', Castelnuovo di Farfa



Fragmentation of the landscape

- 1 Roman 'centuriazione'
- 2 Medieval possessions
- 3 Sharecropping
- 4 Independent farmers from the 1960s

Pressures on the land

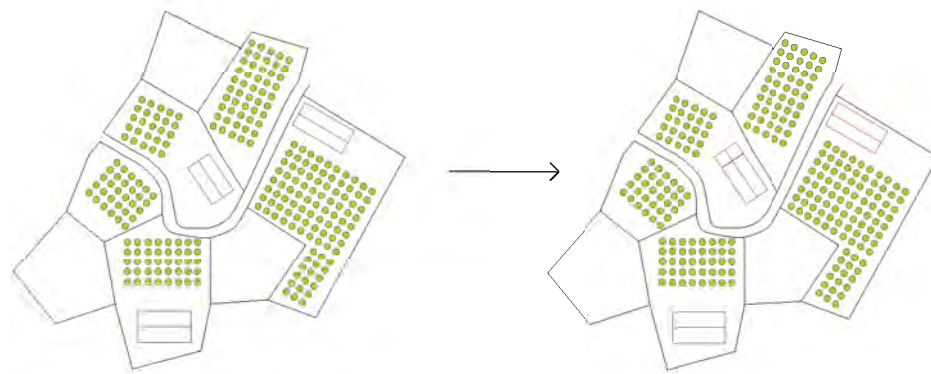
The history of the subdivision of the Sabinian landscape has its roots in roman times. At first introduced as a method for managing the farmland in an efficient way, it has then become more and more an obstacle in this very matter. The plots, which at first were possessed by few landlords were sold or rented to a great number of independent farmers. Splitting the land not only had an influence on the fragmentation of the territory but at the same time added a layer of complexity to the economy of olive oil production: a bigger number of producers possess proportionally less land, which results in smaller individual profit. The efforts for obtaining a positive balance at the end of the production process are mostly disproportional to the achieved result. As a consequence many producers phase out from the official Sabina D.O.P. production and continue the farming activity as a secondary occupation. The fragmented land itself makes it difficult to organize the means of harvesting in an optimal way, for example the distance from one plantation to the other makes it difficult to share tools and machinery.



Olive plots in national comparison

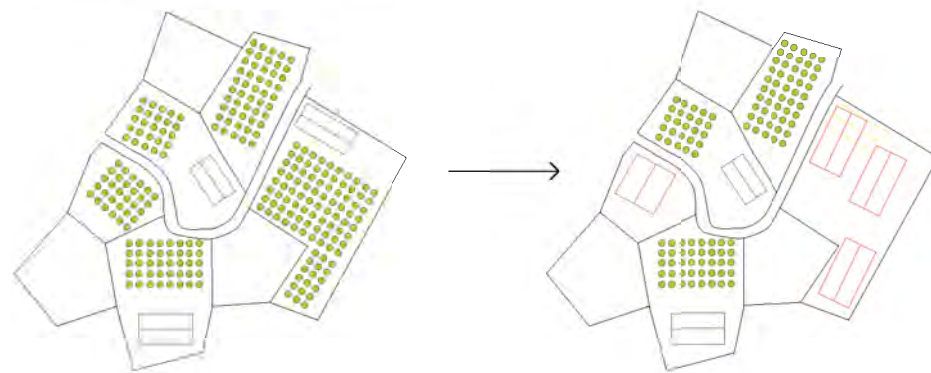
Compared to flat olive fields in Sicily the olive plots in the Sabinian hills are much more demanding in terms of maintenance.

- 1 Bassa Sabina
- 2 Tuscany
- 3 Puglia
- 4 Sicily



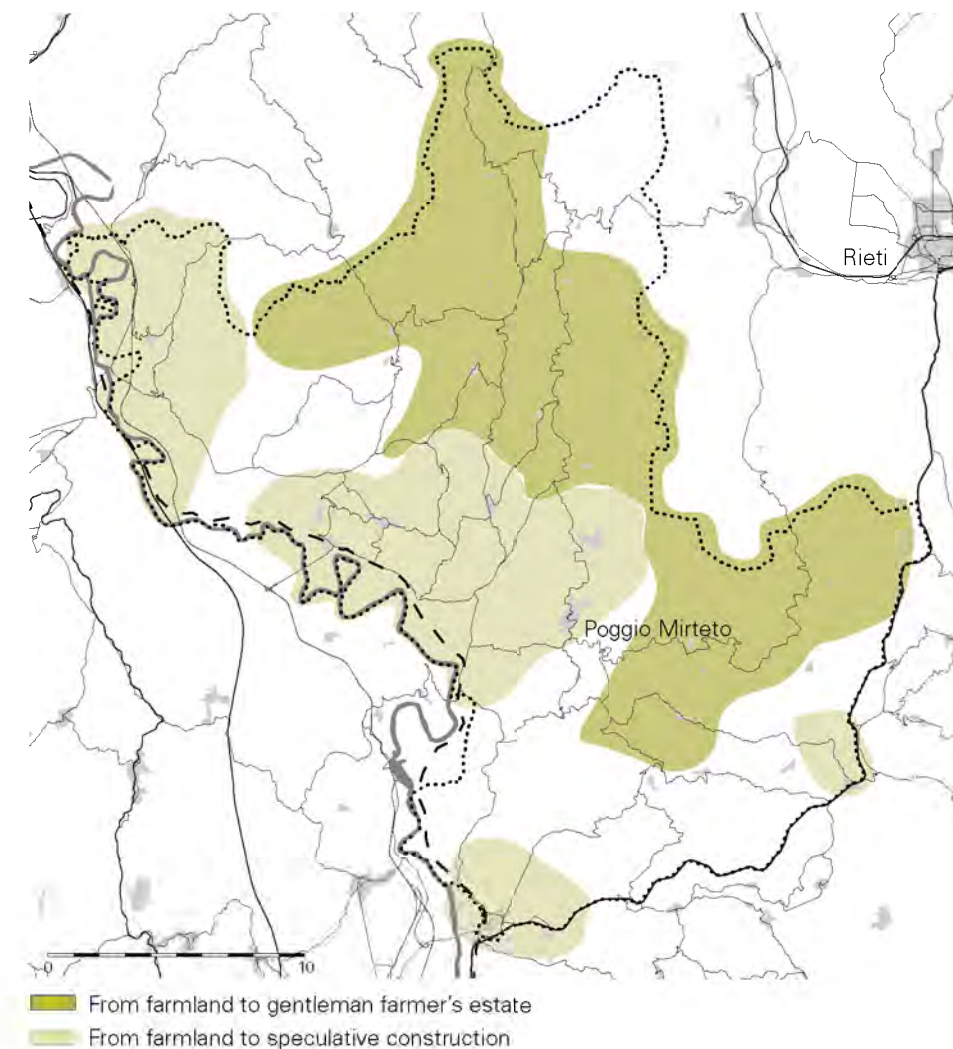
Land use conversion due to gentleman farmers' demand

To live the dream of a second house out in the beautiful Sabinian landscape mostly well situated foreigners declare themselves to be farmers for the authorities. Only this qualification enables them to buy agricultural land and to extend the built area (most of them are ruins) by 30%. Either the existing structures are then refurbished with modern features or everything is being torn down and rebuilt in a modern way.



Land use conversion due to commuters' demand

Many communes have recently changed or are in the process of changing their masterplans according to higher residential demand. Agricultural zones are converted into residential zones, where mainly people that commute to Rome and/or desire a modern accommodation tend to live.



Land use conversion

These two phenomena can be monitored in some communes of the area. The rather rural areas of the Bassa Sabina experience a rise of "farmers" and refurbishment of ruinous structures whereas the regions along the transport systems have to deal with intense new housing demand and higher requirements.



- Land use conversion to buildable area
- New streets

Land use conversion in Stimigliano

According to the newly elaborated masterplan (2009) in the next years most of the building development in Stimigliano will take place in the center down at the rail lines where a new network of roads builds the head of the motorway drive-up to the A1 (to Rome or Orte). By car or train it lasts about one hour to reach the center of Rome.



1



2



3

Mushrooming new constructions on agricultural land

Agricultural land becomes the "unspoiled garden" for some (1), or modern "living in the green but close to Rome" for others (2/3).

- 1 Enclosed olive cultivation
- 2 Detached house
- 3 Apartment building

RESIDENTIAL LANDSCAPE

The urban evolution in the Bassa Sabina shows some clearly distinguishable ways of which base on the historical residential structures that have experienced different ways of extensions over the time. These are due to changed idea of living like the necessity of more modern housing and to a great part to the escape of Romans from the capital which can no longer offer the same living standard like the Bassa Sabina, even less to the same prices. These commuters to Rome force a strong speculation development along the highway and train line which is answered with modern building types.

An oppositional progress takes place in the inner, more rural parts of the Bassa Sabina where either agricultural ruins are refurbished or replaced by modern high standard houses or old houses in the hill towns are refurbished. This is mainly caused by well situated foreigners that love the landscape and dream of a second house in the rural setting.

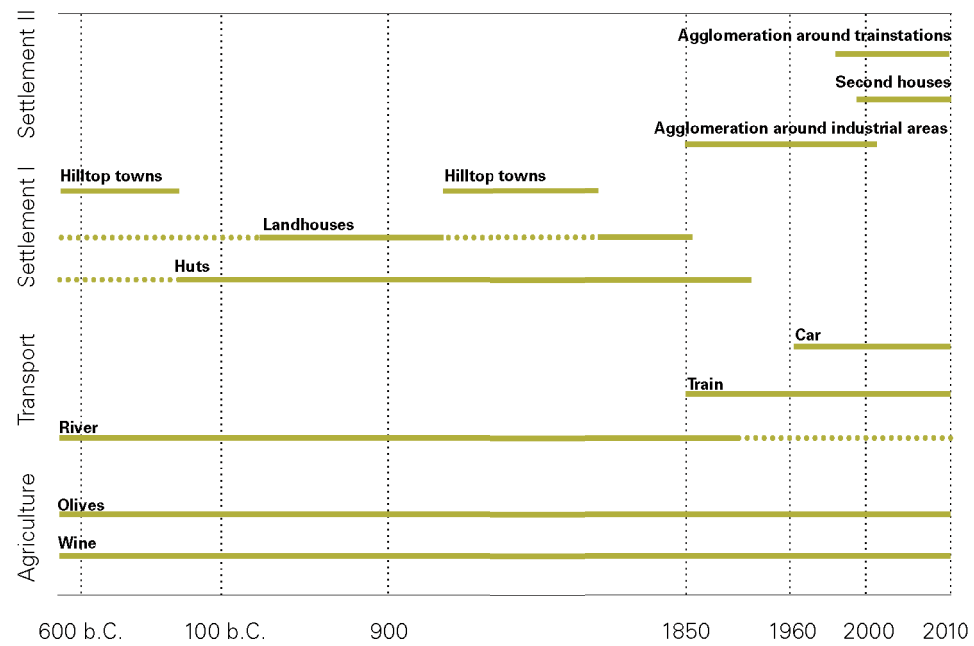


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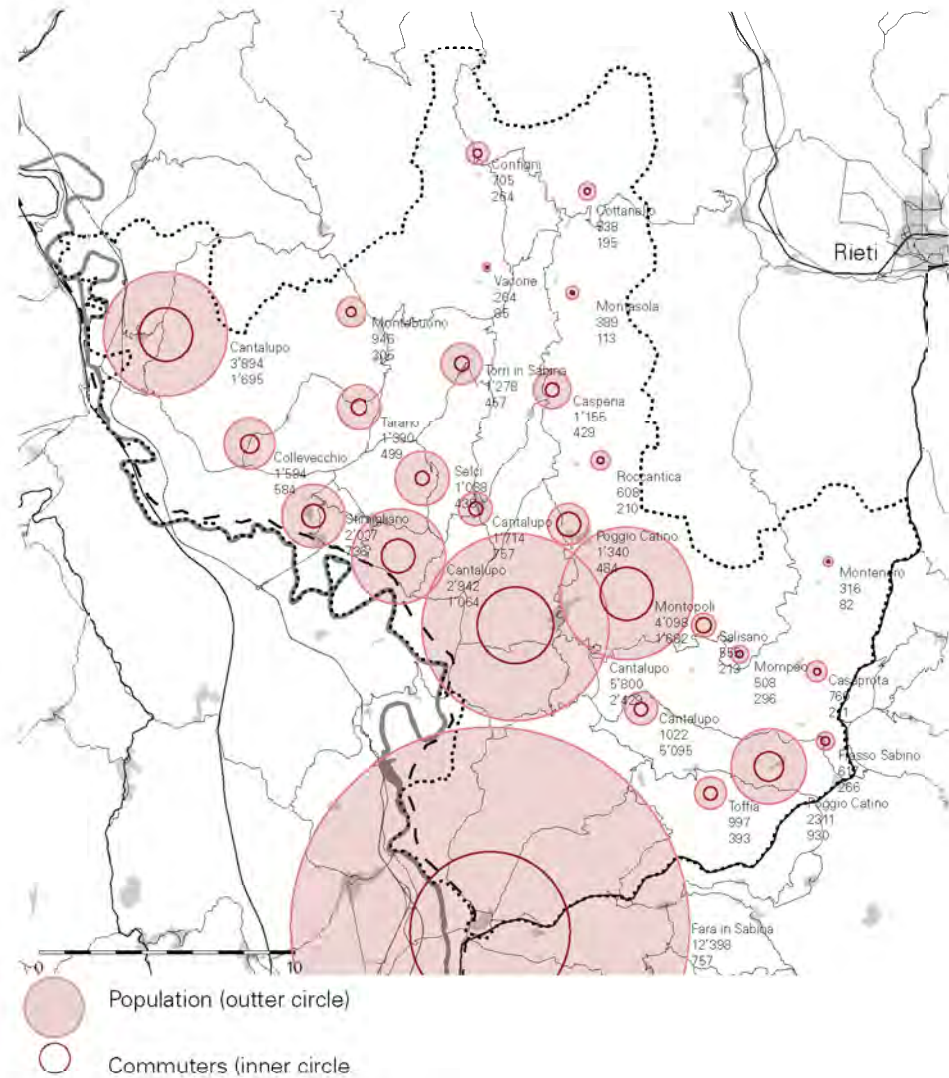
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Old landscape stimulates new trends

The Sabinian landscape is formed by multiple layers taking place at precise times, sometimes being erased by new ones, other times persisting over centuries. Olives define very strongly the attractiveness of this rural landscape, stimulating new trends of housing, tourism and, in general, of living.

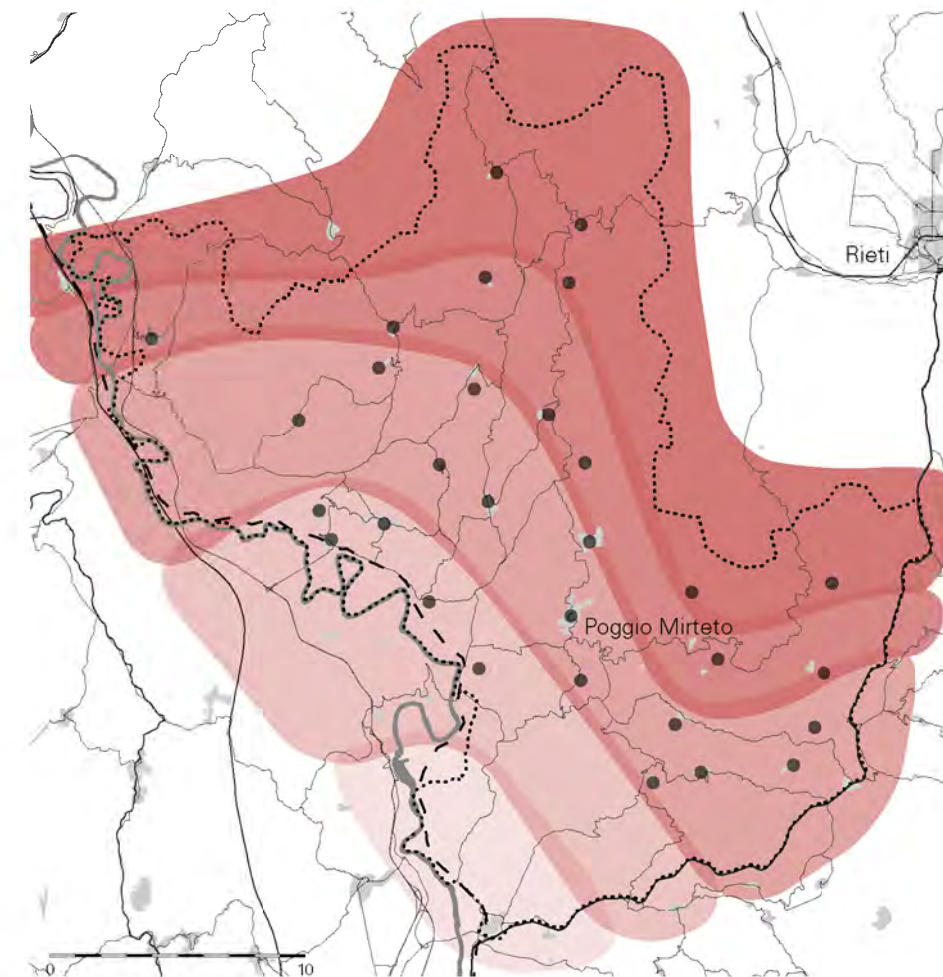


Commuters vs. Inhabitants

A reasonable amount of persons commute to work towards Rome or Rieti even in from smallest towns. Towards Rome the population and the amount of commuters increases visibly.

Commuters' hinterland

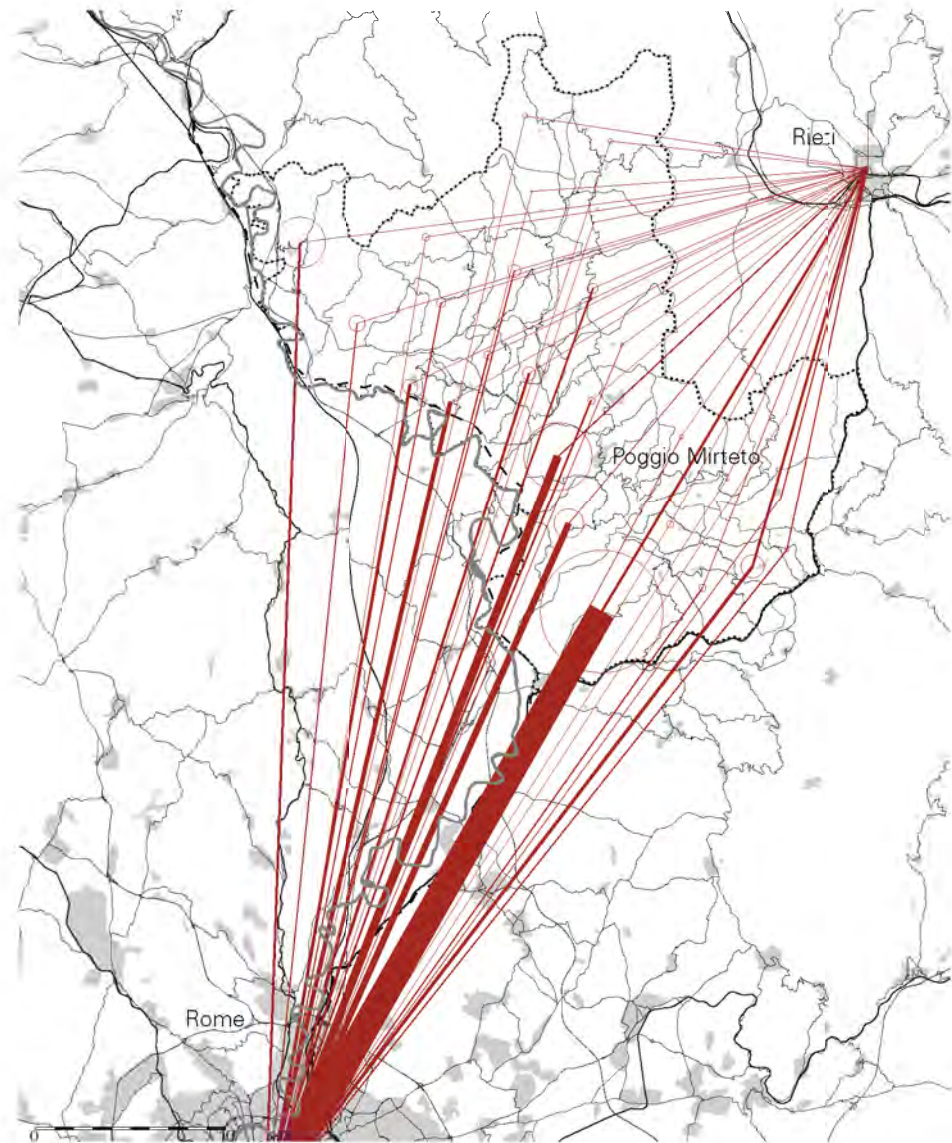
Both Sabinians or “immigrated” Romans commute daily from the Bassa Sabina to Rome. The Sabinians mostly because of the fact that the local job offer, especially in services, is not very pronounced and workers depend in this matter on the presence of Rome although a tendency to upgrade the local job offer is to be observed (Poggio Mirteto is for example establishing its own court of law). The Romans still work in the capital but exchange their homes in the contiguous Roman periphery for 1/4 or even 1/3 of the price for modern housing standards and a less stressful, non-urban atmosphere along the railway in the Bassa Sabina .



- < 50 mins
- 50-60 mins
- 60-70 mins
- 70-80 mins
- >80 mins

Travel time to Rome

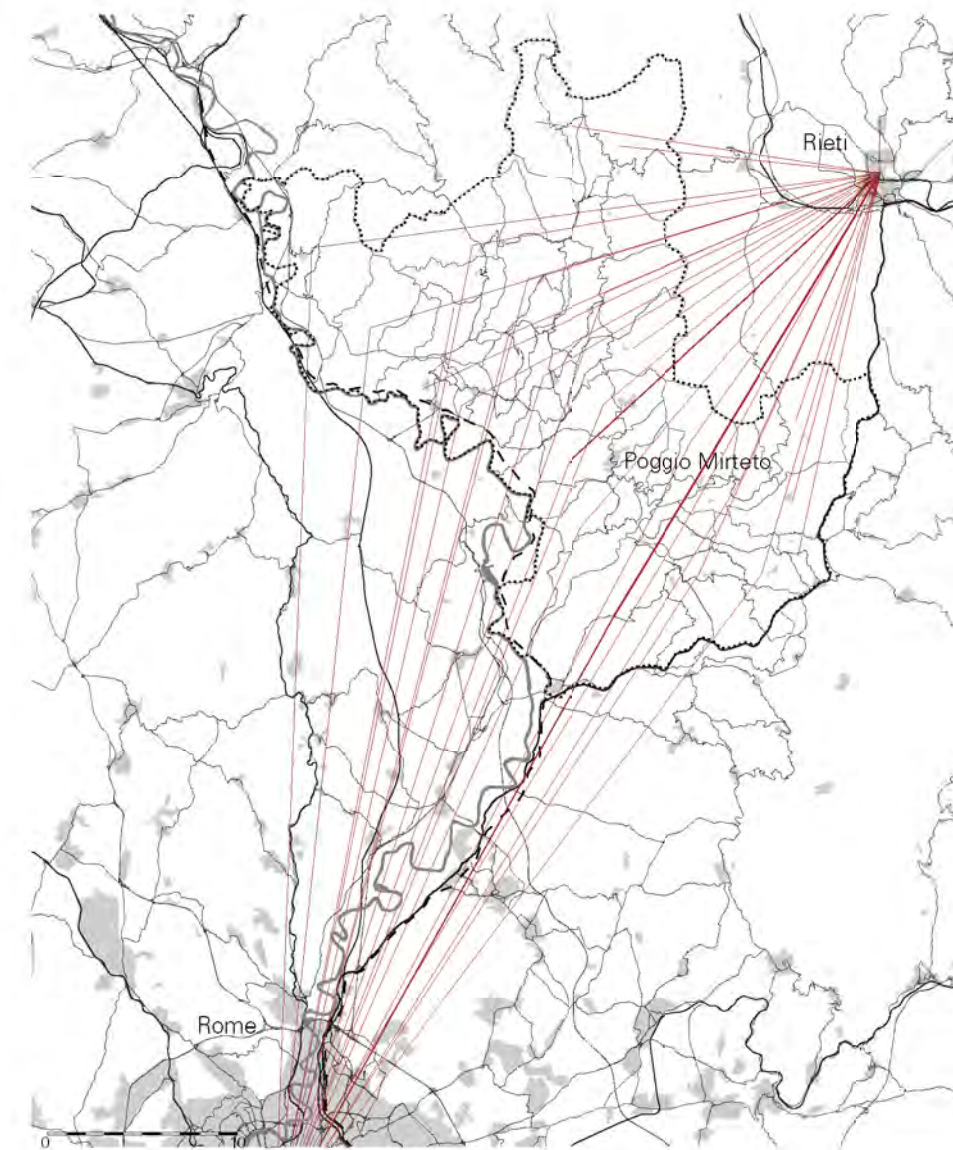
The road system far-off from the main traffic routes, like the motorway A1 or the Via Salaria, becomes very winding, which adds to the driving times to Rome.



- 0-10 people
- 90-100 people
- 490-500 people

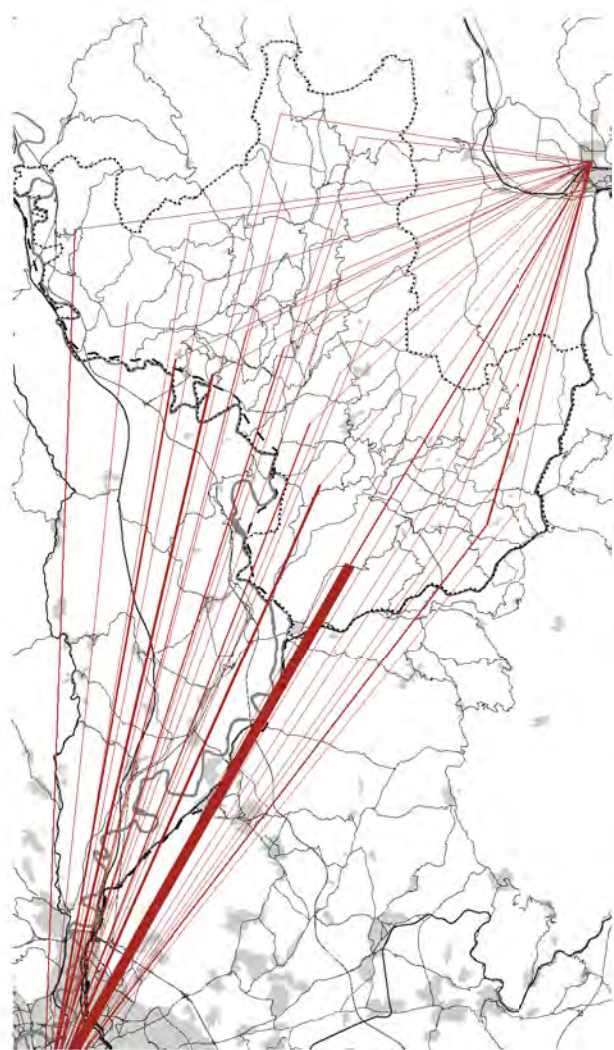
Outward mobility: to Rome and Rieti

According to the Italian National Institute for Statistics (ISTAT, 2001) 36% of the Sabinian population commutes for working or educational reasons every day. Commuting shows a stronger tendency along the Railway.



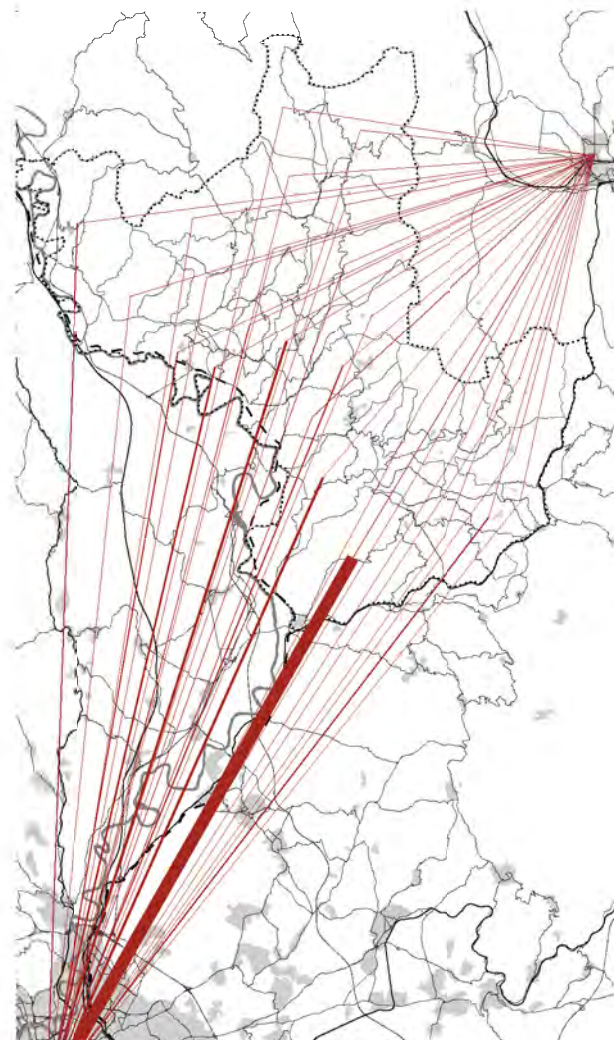
Inward mobility: from Rome and Rieti

In comparison with the outwards commuter's pattern, the commuters' flow moving daily into the Sabinian border is definitely meagre.



Train / Bus (46%)

Obviously, using public transport to Rome shows a bigger tendency along or close to the rail way and the Via Salaria.



Car (54%)

Slightly higher is the commuting by car.



1



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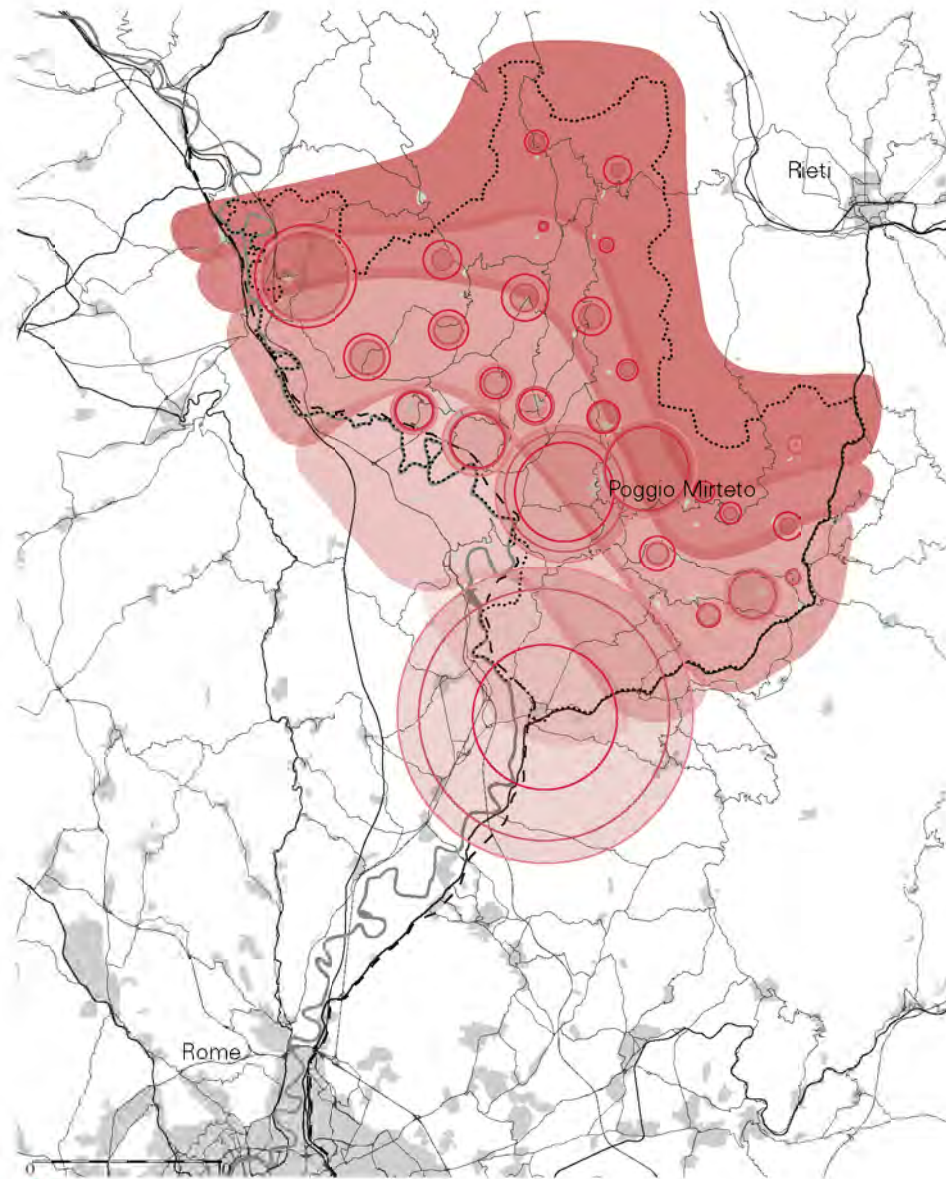


3

Park-and-ride

The public access to the train stations from the center of the Bassa Sabina is insufficient. Therefore commuters need a car to reach the station, where they can park it for free all day long.

- 1 Parking at Poggio Mirteto Scalo
- 2 Stimigliano's deserted station
- 3 Commuters filling the station

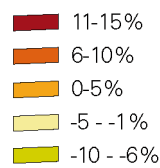
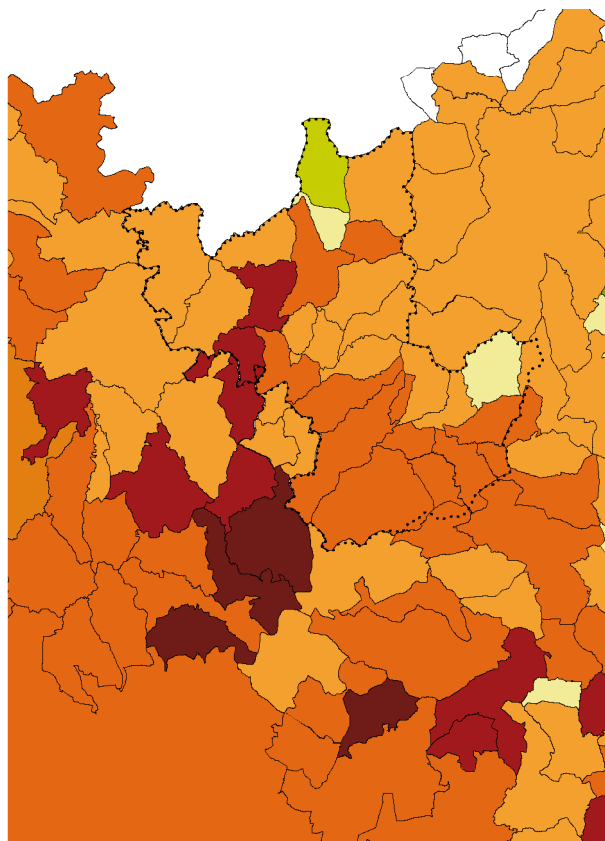


- Population 1951
- Population 2001
- Population 2009

Population growth

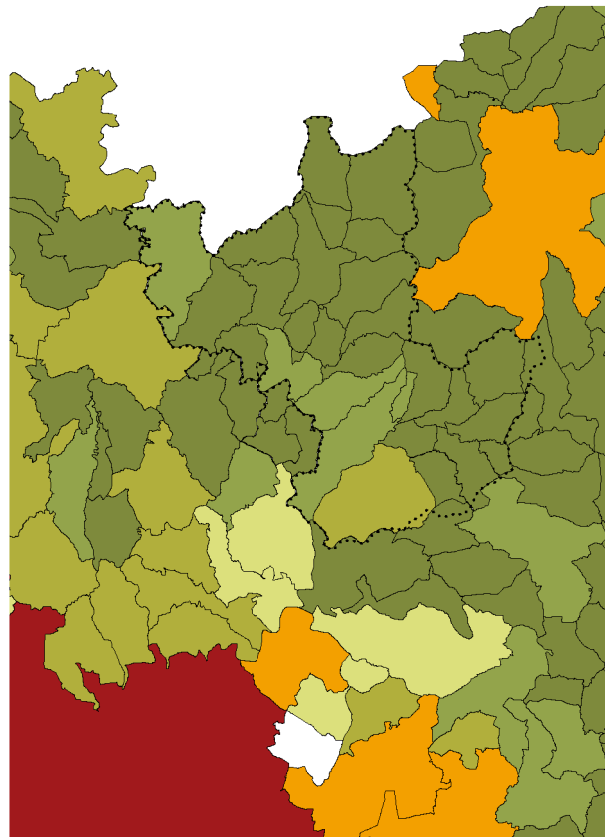
In comparison to the 1950s the population numbers in the last decade draw in the majority of the towns at least a slight increase which mainly has to do with the accessibility of Rome by car or public transport. Interestingly even communes near the superior traffic system show fewer inhabitants nowadays than in the 1950s for the reason that many migrated to Rome for employment since the agricultural sector became less attractive and profitable.





Density increase (2005-2008)

Within a short period of time the density rose distinctly in the outer districts of Province of Rome. This also had an effect on the towns of the Bassa Sabina that border the Railway. Maybe the legitimate utilization factor, together with the challenging topography, represent the only restraint in the densification of this area similarly to other peripheral towns of Rome.



Land price still affordable

The distribution of the prices for the built area is also striking. The numbers inside the considered perimeter adjust towards higher prices the closer they are to Rome. Further north of these towns the housing costs are amongst the lowest of whole Lazio (1-50 €/built m²).



Types of inhabitants

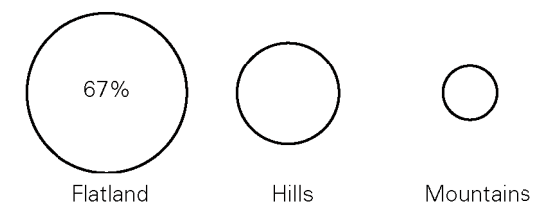
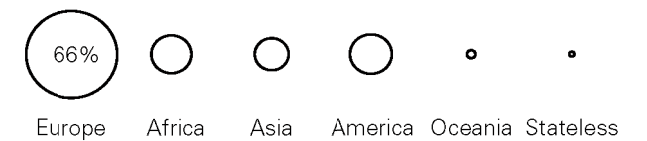
In combination with commuter's areas, costs for accommodation, territorial features and personal preferences there are distinct groups of people that can often be found in the same areas and types of buildings.

01 Native Sabinian: work in Bassa Sabina or in Rome, most of them show local patriotism

02 Roman: middle to low income, families, move from expensive periphery of Rome to the green and cheaper Bassa Sabina, look for modern living in a non-urban area

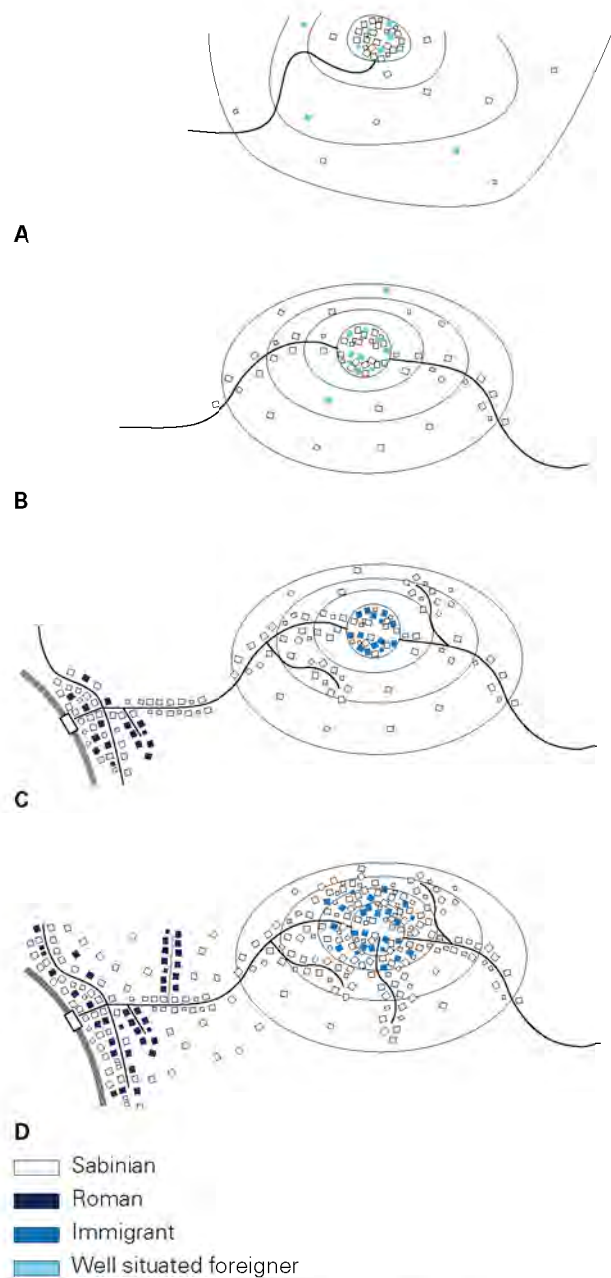
03 Immigrant: mostly from eastern European countries, works in building, housekeeping or home care, live in the cheapest accommodations (not refurbished old)

04 Well-situated foreigner: wealthy, mostly British, dutch and American persons fascinated with the landscape, decide to have a second home here, renovate the old ruins or "casali" they buy, looking for farmer style living (gentleman-farmer).



Foreigners in the Bassa Sabina

Amongst the term "foreigners" in the Bassa Sabina there are two oppositional poles to be distinguished: part of the 66 % of European and all of Americans belong to the type "upper class foreigner" and mainly quest for the rural landscape in the hills or mountains. The rest of the 66% of the European, all African, Asian and Oceanian belong to the type "immigrant" and mostly live either in the flatland area or in the hills.

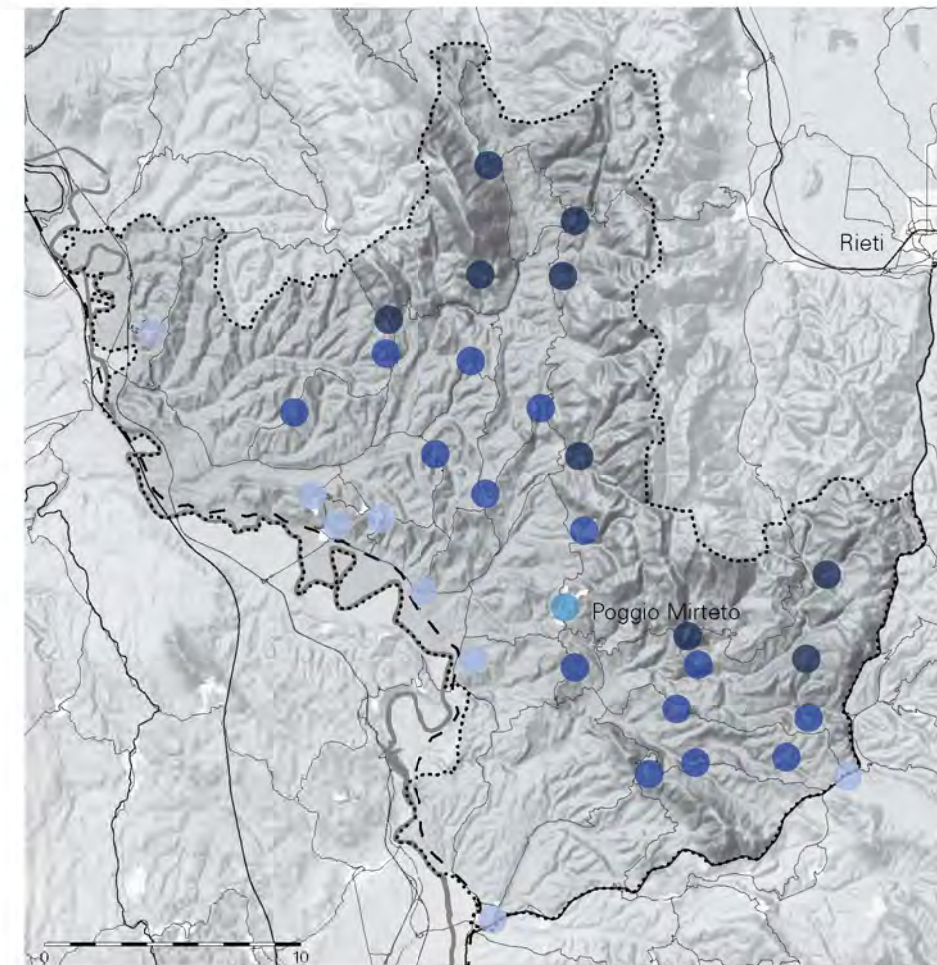


Types of town transformation

Different stages of urbanization are shown with these town types. Each contains the old town core but with increasing amount of inhabitants and the topographic features the structure of the extensions built up on each other or diverge.

Transformation of settlements

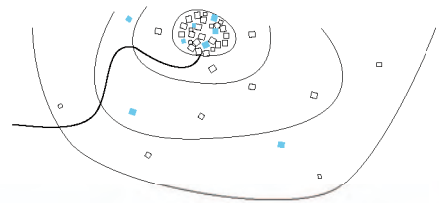
Depending on density growth, population increase and land prices we can distinguish different types of towns. The resulting appearance and expansion dynamics also depend on the inhabitant types.



- Type A: intact traditional town
- Type B: linear extensions
- Type C: new poles
- Type D: multiple types of growth

Emerging settlement types

The four town types can be recognized throughout the perimeter. Hill's slope gradient, rurality, (in-)urbanity, access to the transport system and the availability of modern/old housing structures are decisive criteria in this distinction.

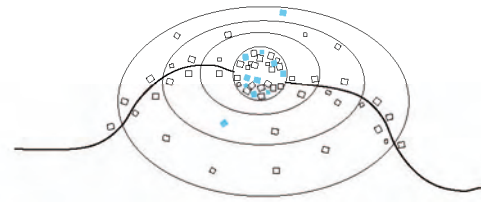


Type A: intact traditional town

This type is situated in the steeper areas of the Bassa Sabina. The old core of the town is placed on a hill or attached to the mountain slope. Single farmhouses in the surrounding landscape can be seen as the only extensions of the hilltop town.

The age pattern is quite equalized but because of the lack of employment the working community often has to commute to bigger towns such as Poggio Mirteto or even to Rome.





Type B: linear extensions

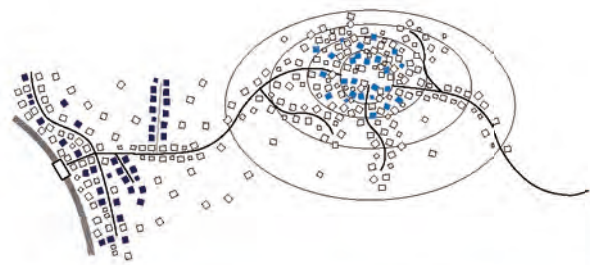
Placed on an elevation in the less sloped area, this type symbolizes the first step of expansion of an old hilltop town (spread farmers housing not considered). The primary structure in the core has been left in favour of more modern housing in the linear extensions along the roads.

At the moment there seems to be an agile market for these "abandoned" hilltop houses, which are being bought by foreigners or better situated Sabinians of the area to be refurbished.

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Type C: new poles

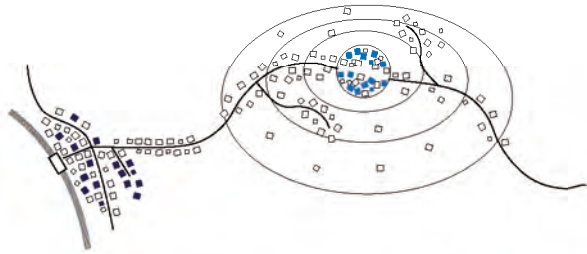
Towns which are situated close to the train lines were and are still being generated in two strong diverging directions. The old core on an elevated site was extended like described in "type B," through linear extensions along the roads. At the bottom of the slope of the hill, the train station has been encircled by new residential areas.

Commuting to Rome is simple and the land prices are much lower in the Bassa Sabina than in Rome. This leads to the fact that people who work in Rome move to the Sabinian towns or that others, who can not find work in the Sabina, to commute to Rome from there. For Italians rather unpopular jobs like elderly care, construction and agricultural work are left to immigrants from the Eastern European Countries or from Africa, who retrieve and revive the old, not refurbished, often abandoned houses in the town cores.



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Type D: multiple types of growth

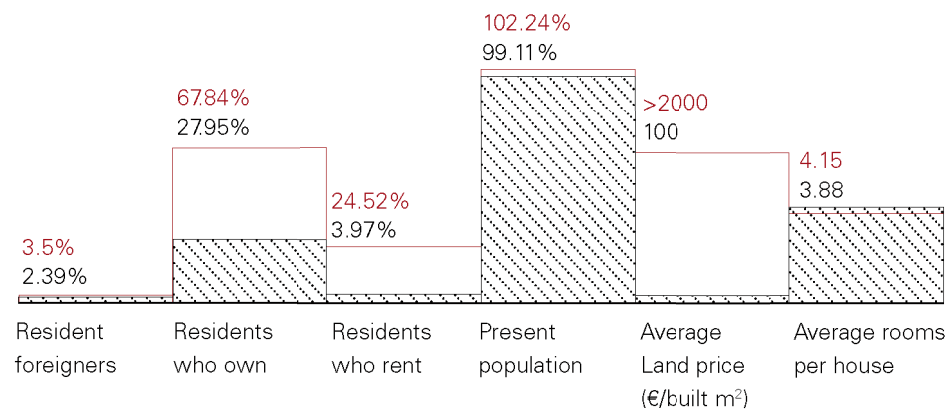
Similar settlement dynamics like in type C are to be found in this example which represents the largest town of the Bassa Sabina, Poggio Mirteto, and can be called the center of the region. Its appearance does not represent a town character anymore but rather reminds of an urban structure that has been growing in many different directions and with much more pressure than in other towns.

Even if there are more employment possibilities than in other towns high-qualified people can not find work there and have to commute to Rome.

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Sabina provides living advantages

The shown data set a clear statement in the improvement of the life conditions offered by this region. The average land price is definitely much more affordable, which allows mid-class families to own a property with higher standards, especially if compared to the urban standards in the adjacent Province of Rome.

— Province of Rome
 — Bassa Sabina

Unprofitable speculations

The awareness and possibility of obtaining a profit from the landscape not through agriculture but through investments in the housing market led, in particular in this last decade, to a remarkable construction fever. Some of this speculations could not achieve the hoped success and present today as abandoned construction sites in the landscape.

LANDSCAPE UNDER PRESSURE



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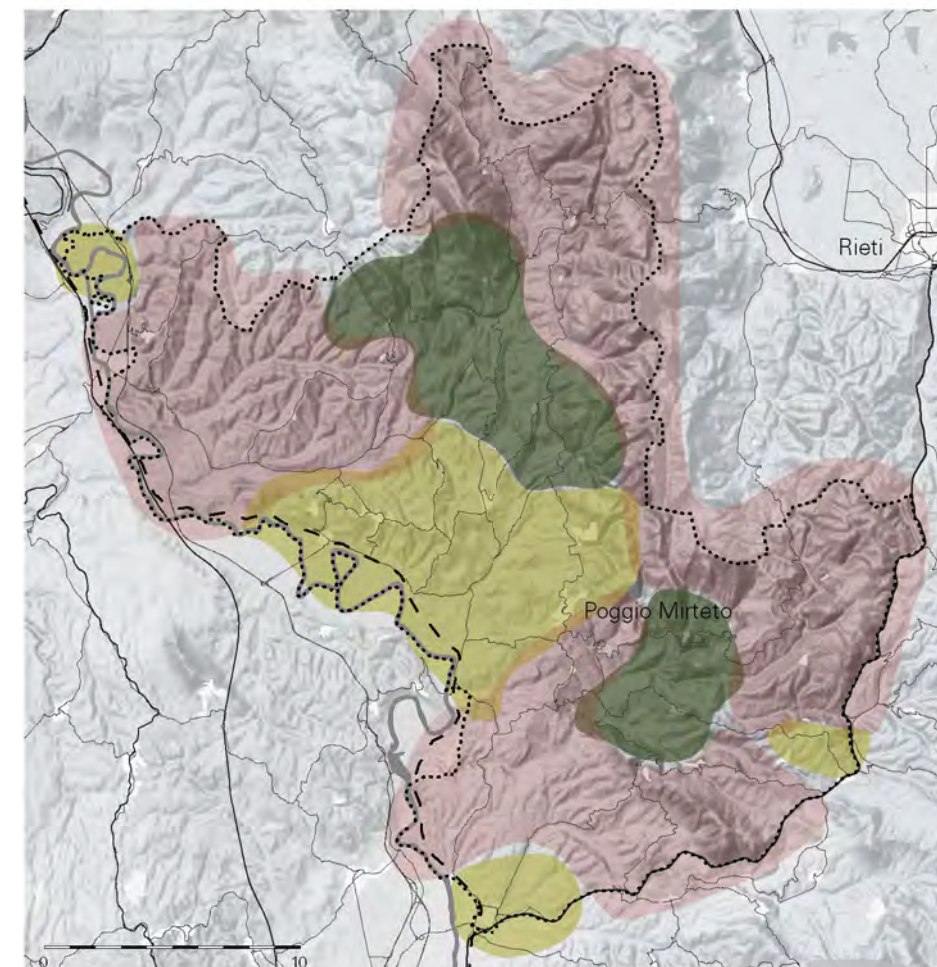
Dual residential impact

Through the research about the different aspects of the Bassa Sabina two different kinds of strongly diverging areas appeared. These undergo pressures caused by the expectations of inhabitants and their ideas of housing and living, which again are connected to either the rurality and even on a smaller scale to the existence of olive trees, or in the other case to the urbanity with all its characteristics such as public transport, road systems and the proximity of Rome.

The urban periphery of Rome represents the fast growing towns that have the geographical advantage of being situated close to the main transport systems. All facts that have been considered showing the development of these towns lead to an appearance of an early urban state of Rome's periphery. The pressure on these areas in terms of construction development will increase in the future and it is not clear to us how consciously this problem is being dealt with.

Instead, the demand of second housing is closely connected to the beauty and charm of the landscape in the inner parts of the Bassa Sabina. The trend connected with this market of the better situated foreigners is hard to foretell. A possible scenario could be a "tuscanyzation" of the landscape. This way there would be a focus on the market for second houses that would then be broadened with significant effects on land and housing prices in the area, which again would lead to an even stronger shifting of the social structure as well as in the conversion of land use, attracting in particular the better situated.

In the area with slower dynamics both, the commuters' landscape and the second houses, can be observed but with still far less intense and slower dynamics, which could possibly be different in a few years time.



■ Second houses landscape
■ Commuters' landscape
■ Landscape with slower dynamics

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INSTITUTIONS

University of Camerino. School of Architecture
and Design, Ascoli Piceno
Facoltà di architettura di Roma 3, Roma

Waterloo School of Architecture, Rome

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