

# Ordinary vs. Extraordinary: An Urban Comparison in the Delta Po Area

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## Abstract

In a time of pandemics and climate pressures, social sustainability has become a crucial issue within diverse sectors and disciplines. This article endeavors to enrich the discourse on social sustainability, particularly concerning community efforts, in contrast to large-scale private investments employed as catalysts for enhancing attraction and territorial development. This article critically examines the case of the Delta Po area along the Eastern Adriatic coast in Italy, where several “ordinary cities” are situated, featured in a similar urbanization pattern to the nearby Venetian Metropolitan areas, identified by B. Secchi as “*città diffusa*.” To comprehend the significance of ordinary cities, this article delves into a comparative analysis between an ordinary setting, specifically the village of Massenzatica, and an extraordinary one, exemplified by the Porto Tolle power plant. These two contrasting approaches to utilizing the territory are assessed through a qualitative methodology in order to understand the factors that contribute to enhancing social and territorial sustainability.

## Keywords

Delta Po; Italian countryside; ordinary cities; territorial sustainability; urban sprawl; wetlands

## 1. Introduction

In certain vulnerable and fertile territories, such as the margins of lagoons, coastlines, and river deltas, urban settlements are often unplanned and characterized by an urban morphology that arises from productive needs such as agricultural irrigation, access to water reservoirs, and logistical optimization for cultivation, or as consequences of high-impact industrialization impulses (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change,

2022). An exemplary illustration of this territorial organization is the Delta Po area, positioned between the Venetian Lagoon and the city of Ravenna on the west coast of the Adriatic Sea—a productive wetland forged over centuries through the collective efforts of its inhabitants and the utilization of reclamation techniques. Over the past half-century, from the great flood in 1966, the diminution of small villages in these territories has been evident, attributable to challenges encompassing demographic aging, escalating economic constraints, geographical remoteness from core infrastructure, and limited access to essential services (Simeoni & Corbau, 2009). However, in these areas, urban policies have predominantly concentrated on strategic industrialization initiatives designed to attract new residents, create employment opportunities, and facilitate the development of essential infrastructure. Technological transformations have been implemented to assist agriculture in addressing freshwater scarcity and mitigating the costs associated with safeguarding the territory from sea-level rise. The simultaneous presence of various urban and built structures, marked by significant differences in scale, functions, and architectural typologies, disrupts a social model based on the organization of small communities that have functioned for centuries (Tornieri, 2020). Current trends indicate a shift in favor of political initiatives that promote tourist attractions and new highly industrialized food production (Cencini, 1998). This trend poses a threat to the architectural and urban values of ordinary cities situated in these specific territories. The phenomenon needs to be studied by evaluating transformations in a systemic and integrated manner to assess the possible resilience of the ordinary in the face of the extraordinary.

### 1.1. Literature Review

Delta regions represent unique territories characterized by their rapid evolution throughout history. Given their position at or even below sea level, they are perpetually under threat. Defining a delta region is often a matter explored within the field of geology (Correggiari et al., 2005; Parrinello et al., 2021) but from the perspective of architecture and urban planning, a delta region is studied as an important and symbolic place where anthropology is intrinsically related to the shaping of the land (Mathur & Da Cunha, 2001). These regions are sparsely populated, often lacking large cities, as the land has historically been dedicated to agriculture and food production for other cities. An example of this is the Po River Delta and its relationship with the Venetian Republic (Tumiatti, 2005). After the fall of the Serenissima Empire in 1797, commercial exploitation between Venice and the surrounding productive territories, including the Delta Po, began to decrease and as a consequence, small communities and villages remained undeveloped. With a density of 71 inhabitants per km<sup>2</sup> and a surface of 683 km<sup>2</sup>, Delta Po counts seven municipalities included in the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere heritage program and under the regulation of the Regional Park Area. The high productivity and heritage value of these regions make them integral to the theorization of the “ordinary city,” as proposed by Robinson (2006). Robinson argues that to truly learn from different contexts, the focus of academic analysis and policy recommendations should not be limited to global cities or those in the developing world. Instead, attention should be directed towards what she terms “ordinary” cities, with all their complexity, diversity, and distinctiveness.

The literature on the landscape in the Po Delta area can be categorized into two main groups: studies focusing on territorial development and coastal modifications over centuries from a geographical perspective (Bertoncin, 2004; Bitelli et al., 2012; Nelson, 1970; Simeoni & Corbau, 2009), investigations delving into the cultural heritage values within an evolving landscape (Arillotta, 2022; Siebenhaar & Valtorta, 2017; Tornieri & Vanore, 2018; Tosi, 2013; Tosi et al., 2011; Vanore, 2010). More recently, it is important to

mention that many researchers are exploring various perspectives, not only focusing on the ability to describe a territory in its evolutions or heritage values but also integrating future scenarios for sustainable development (Magni et al., 2021; Marsico et al., 2017; Pungetti, 1993; Tornieri, 2017, 2019, 2020). This involves considering tourism as one of the main factors to achieve sustainability and counteract the effects of climate change.

In this specific sector of studies and especially with the urgent issues related to climate adaptation and mitigation, urban morphology and land use are rarely considered as critical factors in fostering social interaction that can generate alternatives to prevailing capitalist methods of exploiting the ground or profiting from a place.

## 1.2. Theoretical Problem

Even though the Delta del Po has never been considered as part of the Veneto Sprawl, it seems to have the character of the “*città diffusa*,” which, in the idea of the Italian urbanist and theorist Bernardo Secchi, could be used as a synonym for sprawl or dispersion (Secchi, 1992, 2015). Dispersion is the result of a basic infrastructure of the territory that has developed over a very long period. This infrastructure consists of a dense network of canals, channels, and drains, partly intended for irrigation but mostly for draining poorly permeable lands. It is accompanied by a minor road network that mimics the forms and density of the canal network and an equally detailed division of fields and properties. In the 1990s, Francesco Indovina (1990), followed by Boeri and Lanzani (1992), described the changes in the structure and image of the Veneto region caused by intense phenomena of productive decentralization and the dispersion of activities and population that occurred in the two decades prior. Munarin and Tosi (2005) then analyzed in detail the history and characteristics of dispersion in Veneto, one of the Italian regions that, starting from the 1970s, has been at the forefront of studying the new features of urban phenomena.

Secchi (2005), starting with an understanding of the history of European cities and focusing on the social rationale behind the form of the city, argues that the descriptions of the city and the territory at the end of the century have brought to light the fragment, the specific, the local, the irreducible difference. This reveals that the space of dispersion is comprised of constellations of fragmentary materials, among which it becomes important to establish new relationships. Secchi (2005, para. 9) wrote: “[The] city is an image of an open society, where more and more is public, and seems to refuse enclosure and barrier, rigid functional subdivisions and role, imagining a fluid space traversing the dimensions of land and buildings.”

As a contemporary revisitation of the influential theoretical framework developed by the Italian school of urbanism, Koolhaas’s (2020) *Countryside* reimagines the concept of dispersed fragmentation as a characteristic pattern in the rural world. This notion is closely tied to the idea of a highly engineered territory, akin to the Dutch approach to reclaiming lands. According to Koolhaas, the historical heritage persists in shaping the present through the extensive network of greenhouses and large-scale hydro-engineering projects. This interpretation can also be applied to the coastal areas of the Veneto region or the northernmost part of the Emilia Romagna region, where the Po River Delta is situated. Although many studies address urban and architectural value in the Po Delta area and the value of the relationship between the heritage of the land and the heritage of water, as well as the landscape geometry produced by reclamation over centuries, researchers rarely provide a comparison of the sustainability of settlements,

even when considering different architectural scales and functions. In the 1990s, the same years as Secchi's theoretical work, the concept of the "ordinary city" emerged, developed by a group of geographers to critically challenge prevailing Western urban theory. This idea evolved to play an important role in the theoretical and methodological framework of post-colonial studies during the 2000s. Initially introduced by Amin and Graham (1997), the "ordinary city" concept aimed to highlight the significant shortcomings in the dominant urban theory of the 20th century. It critiqued the generalization of findings from a limited number of studies focused mainly on leading cities within the capitalist West. Over time, the perception that cities, as traditionally imagined and depicted, should no longer be the primary focus of urban studies has gained traction. This shift is attributed to the emergence of new urbanization theories viewing it as a global phenomenon, and recent epistemological developments have weakened the notion of urban areas being defined solely by agglomeration and high physical density. This evolution challenges well-known conceptual categories like center-periphery, urban-rural, and core-ring, especially as cities move beyond their classic local configurations to exhibit regional and global dimensions.

In the context of the Po Delta, the notion of the ordinary takes on an additional meaning related to conformity with what is natural and common. This interpretation aligns with the definition from *Treccani Enciclopedia* (Ordinary, n.d.), meaning regular, usual, common, and standard. In this semi-isolated territory, where food resources have been managed by year-round communities for centuries, the concept of the ordinary frequently appears in the "regular" maintenance of the land, the rural character of villages with similar urban and architectural setups, and in the simple life dictated by seasonality and weather conditions. Within this framework, the simplicity and ordinariness of villages and communities contrast with a few significant exceptions, such as large production facilities introduced to boost productivity and employment.

Within this theoretical interpretation, two primary questions emerge: What are the factors that contribute to the discourse on social sustainability, especially in the context of community initiatives in small and ordinary cities? What are the differences between the approach of an ordinary city and that of an extraordinary one concerning sustainability?

Understanding the community factors that enhance social sustainability can illuminate an alternative approach to utilizing and preserving the territory, one that is more closely tied to social empowerment rather than relying solely on tourism-driven economies. The research underscores the necessity of functional hybridization intended as the integration of multiple uses and functions within city spaces to enhance comfort, offer various ecosystem services, and foster areas that are self-organizing and encompass social, economic, recreational, and environmental dimensions (Krasilnikova & Klimov, 2020). This approach, combined with communal efforts in both typical cities and smaller locales, is considered critical for tackling present environmental issues, including saltwater intrusion, flood hazards, land subsidence, as well as social challenges peculiar to the Delta Po area like feelings of isolation, decreasing populations, challenges in accessing services, and economic viability (UNESCO, 2013). Such community-driven initiatives represent political engagement by the wider society, fostering urban resilience through collaborative management of shared spaces and resources, known as the urban commons (Foster, 2011). Additionally, it underscores the significance of developing urban and territorial projects capable of restructuring various components in a more adaptive and sustainable manner.

## 2. Methodology

A qualitative analysis method is employed to comprehend the urban and landscape quality, alongside fostering societal advancement and enhancing the well-being of the local residents. The primary focus of this article is to provide a description of the urban settlement, drawing a comparison between the village of Massenzatica, considered a typical village in terms of dimension and population in the Delta Po area, and the ambitious redevelopment project of the Porto Tolle power plant. This comparative analysis encompasses an assessment of both urban and landscape quality, utilizing explanatory schemas. Furthermore, the article evaluates the impact of the redevelopment project on the local populace, considering the number of people benefiting from it, the duration of these advantages, and the integration of the landscape into the project. Data collection for this study is facilitated through a collaborative effort between the municipality of Massenzatica and the documentation provided by Enel, the owner of the power plant. This collaboration involves accessing information related to both the construction phase of the power plant and Enel's plans for its future, particularly after the dismantling process. The comparison (Figure 1) has been conducted using three factors considered representative of the approach to using the territory as a sustainable resource or not: (a) territorial branding, defined as how the communication of territory has been employed to promote the attractiveness of a place; (b) the relationship with the surrounding environment, understood as the ability to initiate a virtuous process of inclusion; and (c) land use throughout the year (Table 1).



**Figure 1.** The location of the Delta Po area in Italy and the localization of Massenzatica and Polesine Camerini power plant.

**Table 1.** Data comparison between the two case studies.

	Massenzatica	Polesine Camerini
Land surface	353 ha	300 ha
Population	1,250 people (stable all year)	400 people (employees) 8,000 tourists per day (estimated)
Density	1.55 persons/ha	28 persons/ha (max)
Main services	Kindergarten and primary school Mail office Church Shops Sport facilities Agriculture products	Commercial activities Craft workshops Fish market Spa Sport facilities Restaurants
Cultural heritage sites	Protected natural area Fossils Dune	Power plant chimney
Tourism	Low	8,000 tourists per day (expected)

Source: Author's work based on data from Consorzio Uomini di Massenzatica (CUM, n.d.) and Enel (2019).

### 3. Results

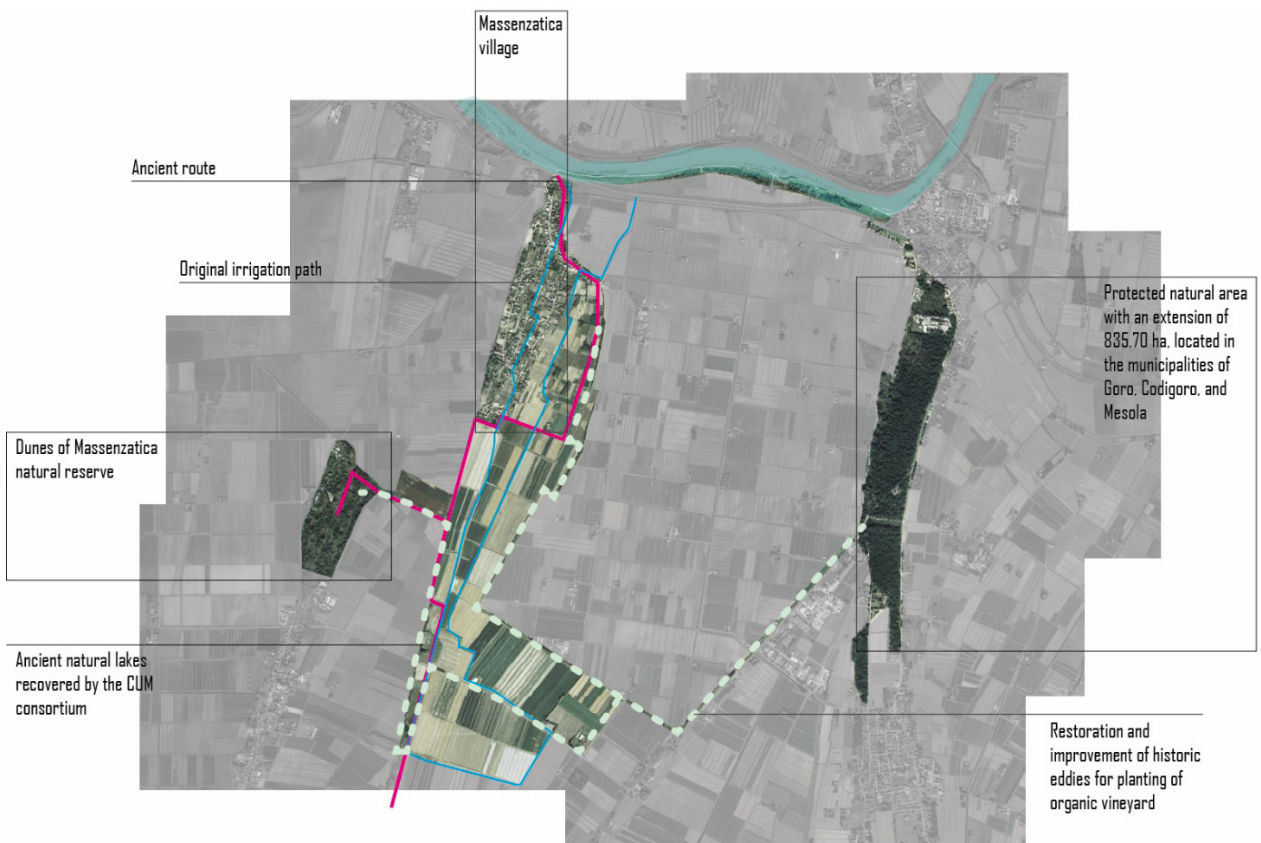
#### 3.1. Massenzatica

The Consorzio Uomini di Massenzatica (CUM), established in 1896, traces its origins back to an ancient collective property of medieval origin, for centuries settled in the territory that was difficult to manage due to the continuous change of boundaries between emerged and submerged lands generated by the cyclic processes of sedimentation and erosion that characterize the Po River Delta. It was the Abbot of Pomposa in 1182 who assigned the undivided patrimony to the community of Massenzatica when the use of the common lands took place through the collective use of pastures and woods by the inhabitants. It is from the end of the 19th century that a slow reclamation began, recounted over the years in poems and popular songs, stabilizing the river network, raising the banks, and making the marshes healthy. CUM is now recognized by the Italian Republic as a collective land management (Italian Republic, 2017). Six hundred families are members of CUM. The beneficiaries are all the heads of families—men or women—residing in the hamlet of Massenzatica, who can derive benefits from the common property in a direct way, through the allocation of shares of cultivable land granted to users at a subsidized rent (40% less than the market value) or through the possibility of working in the employ of the Consortium itself or of the companies to which the land is leased. Profits deriving from the management of collective land are directed partly to agricultural improvements and partly to the economic support of cultural, social, and welfare initiatives that take place in the area (Figure 2). The current 600 families have benefited from a particular legal form of ownership (neither private nor public) that has allowed a peculiar management method that has succeeded, especially in the last 20 years, in combining the income and employment of the Consortium members, with an entrepreneurial approach. In this sense, it takes the form of innovative management of an “internal community serving an external community,” using part of the land to meet the objectives of the local community and giving a residual part of the land to private management. The land is currently suitable for any cultivation and is leased to Consortium and non-Consortium members with the obligation to manage it according to the best agricultural methods. The Consortium directly cultivates around 70 ha of the 353 it has at its disposal, of which one part is cultivated with maize and soya, another with tomatoes, industrial and

market potatoes (this is cultivated from year to year for variable crops with the intention of maximizing income and local employment), and another is occupied by a fixed green asparagus plantation. Approximately 160 ha of the Consortium’s land are given under management through contracts with subsidized rents to direct cultivators or local professional farmers. Each rental contract assigns plots of about 5–8 ha each, and beneficiaries may include people who are already owners, on their own account, of other land (Figure 3).



**Figure 2.** Massenzatica workers in the past and today. Source: Courtesy of CUM.



**Figure 3.** Massenzatica relations with the surrounding territory.

### 3.2. Porto Tolle Power Plant, the Project of Transformation

The thermoelectric power plant at Polesine Camerini, Porto Tolle, was one of the largest electricity production plants owned by Enel S.p.A, ranking among the largest in Europe, and is located in the southern part of the Veneto region. The plant, which stood in the area of the Delta Po, near the island of Polesine Camerini, about 4 km from the outlet into the sea, was extended over an area of 240 ha and operated from 1980 until July 2009. It produced 2,640 MW, or 10% of the national electricity output, with four units of 660 MW each, burning heavy fuel oil, amounting to three million tons per year. It was therefore equipped with a tank farm, consisting of seven tanks of 100,000 tons and two 50,000-ton tanks, as well as numerous boilers. Of absolute importance is the presence of the Delta Po, which constitutes one of the most important and vast wetlands in Europe and the Mediterranean, with an area covering 786 km<sup>2</sup>, of which over 160 are valleys and lagoons of high naturalistic value and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The distinctive value of this area is further attested by the introduction of various forms of protection, as described below:

- The Po Delta Regional Natural Park was established by Veneto Region Law of 8 September 1997 No. 36, with the declared aim of protecting, recovering, enhancing, and preserving the natural, historical, and cultural features of the Delta Po territory, as well as to ensure adequate promotion and protection of the economic activities typical of the area and contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of local communities.
- The site, designated as a Site of Community Importance (SCI IT3270017), borders the Enel thermoelectric power station on the perimeter area facing the sea. In accordance with the Habitats Directive 92/43CE, its main purpose is to protect the unique ecosystem of river branches and the various areas with sandbars, Bonelli, and “sacche” characteristic of the Delta Po.
- The Special Protection Area (SPA IT3270023), established in accordance with the Birds Directive 79/409CE, aims to protect the numerous bird species that reside in that type of habitat and which are particularly sensitive to alterations to the quality of the area, soil and water. Indeed, the area surrounding the thermoelectric plant, being of alluvial origin, is entirely flat, as is most of the province of Rovigo.

The tourist village project proposed by the Human Company group of Florence was presented in 2018 as the winner of the Futur-e tender promoted in 2016 by Enel to give new life to 23 disused power plants in Italy, including precisely that of Polesine Camerini. At the end of June 2019, the preliminary sale agreement between the energy giant and the tourism giant was signed. In January 2021, the actual dismantling began, while in November 2022 the municipality started the procedure of the Programme Agreement according to Art. 7 of Regional Law 11/2004 for the reconversion of the area of the former Enel power plant into the Po Delta agro-food sports tourism park: the Delta Farm. In the meantime, the administrative process is proceeding to arrive at the change from an industrial site to a tourist-receptive one, in order to then start with the construction of the village proper: 100 ha out of the 300 available, including a water park open to all. To build the tourist center, the Florentine Group will invest about 60 million euros, while Enel will contribute to the demolition work. Delta Farm will be built in the southern area of the former power plant, on an area of 110 ha, 20 of which are wooded, and will be able to host up to 8,000 tourists a day, with accommodation areas destined for different types of open-air hospitality, from pitches (2,000–2,200 caravans) to new mobile homes (Figure 4). Inside, there will be space for commercial activities, craft workshops, local entrepreneurs, fish markets, and markets dedicated to Polesine’s agro-food excellence and





**Figure 4.** The old Polesine Camerini power plant and the future design of the area. Source: Human Company (n.d.).

floriculture. It is expected that 400 people will be employed directly. The project envisages, in particular, the construction of an open-air tourist village, a water sports center, a visitor center for the enhancement of environmental and landscape excellence, and one for the development of typical fish and agricultural production. Following the demolition of the four primary structures of the former power plant, a substantial area has been meticulously considered for the establishment of an expansive tourist resort. The overarching concept put forth by the victorious competition entrant involves the subdivision of the area into four distinct zones, each designated for specific activities. Adjacent to the landmark chimney, the project incorporates a sports center, featuring a diverse array of indoor and outdoor sports facilities such as tennis, soccer, and basketball. Positioned centrally within the designated area, a primary village is envisioned, comprising small cottages with gardens arranged in a systematic grid pattern. These dwellings are interlinked with an additional outdoor leisure pool, further enhancing the recreational offerings. Proceeding southward, the village layout maintains a consistent and orderly configuration, extending towards the southernmost region where an innovative experimental venture focused on fish-based tourism and gastronomy is envisaged. This specific area aims to celebrate and showcase local fish and produce, contributing to the overall appeal and uniqueness of the resort. Within the planned sequence of the new settlement, a narrative unfolds from north to south, characterized by new design elements. Notably, an exclusive access point to the beach has been incorporated for the village residents. Enhancing connectivity, a novel pedestrian bridge is slated for construction, facilitating a direct link between the village and a small beach situated along the west coast. In terms of access to the private area, the project retains the existing industrial harbor to the north, situated in proximity to the primary river arm. In contrast, to the south, a novel small-scale tourist harbor is envisioned. This newly proposed harbor will be seamlessly connected with an already established restaurant, creating a symbiotic relationship between tourism and culinary amenities (Figure 5).

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Territorial Branding

The Delta Po area exhibits one of the lowest population density grades in the entire Pianura Padana, ranging from 25 to 50 people per square mile. Despite being classified as an inner area, it holds significant landscape value, earning inclusion in the UNESCO Man and the Biosphere program, along with the regional Po Delta



**Figure 5.** Polesine Camerini: Masterplan of the new resort.

Regional Natural Park. The presence within a UNESCO-designated area, encompassed by the Po Delta Regional Natural Park and Special Protection Area, appears to be a significant advantage, particularly in the context of the Delta Farm project. UNESCO and other territorial grants are conventionally utilized to allure individuals and tourism. The UNESCO Man and the Biosphere program, as implied by its name, seeks to enhance the relationship between human activities and the territory in which people reside. However, the Delta Farm project primarily leverages this designation as an attractive feature without substantially enhancing the quality of this relationship with the local populace. Conversely, in the case of the Massenzatica Cooperative, the residents view the land as a communal asset. Their objective, as written in the CUM foundation documentation (Giacoa, 2003) is to preserve the land's quality, cultivation practices, and the established landscape system that has endured for many years. Unlike the Delta Farm project, the Massenzatica Cooperative embodies a genuine commitment to the land as a shared resource, aiming to sustain not only the physical attributes of the landscape but also the intricate interplay between human existence and the environment over an extended period.

#### 4.2. Relation With the Surrounding Environment

In terms of urban qualities, a notable disparity exists between the two entities. In the envisioned Delta Farm project, the concept revolves around establishing a sheltered, exclusive, and closely regulated village. Driven

by considerations of security and maintenance, the plan involves the implementation of a private perimeter, a fenced boundary of 9.7 km that delineates a secure enclave. While this configuration aims to create a “protected haven” within, it concurrently results in a restrictive enclosure with limited interaction with the external environment. Analogous to industrial areas mentioned earlier, this design features a non-porous fence, impeding meaningful connections with the surrounding landscape. As visible in Figure 5, the design proposal is readable as a sequence of delimited functions, conceived with an emphasis on security and containment. While safeguarding internal elements, the general functional plan contributes to a disconnected urban fabric, resembling the insularity often associated with industrial zones. In stark contrast, the Massenzatica Cooperative represents an open and inclusive structure where the community actively participates in preserving the high quality of the soil and ensuring the sustainable productivity and social well-being of the locale. The social aspect in Massenzatica indicates the view of a “new form of capitalism” (Gandini et al., 2007), where families have benefited from a particular legal form of ownership (neither private nor public) which has allowed a peculiar management method in the last 20 years. Distinguished by an absence of enclosed boundaries, this cooperative embraces an ethos that values the interconnectedness of the municipality’s ecological assets. Unlike the Delta Farm project, which views the surrounding high-value ecological areas primarily as tourist attractions, Massenzatica perceives these areas as integral components of a complex ecosystem. Within this cooperative framework, the irrigation system, fields, residences, labor practices, and the intrinsic value of the landscape all contribute synergistically to a holistic, long-term sustainability strategy. By rejecting closed boundaries and adopting a community-centric approach, Massenzatica fosters a more integrated urban fabric, emphasizing the interdependence of human activities and the surrounding environment in the pursuit of enduring social and ecological sustainability.

### 4.3. *Landscape Quality and Society*

The Delta Po landscape is characterized by a distinctive system, documented in literature as a reclaimed land crafted, sustained, and governed by human intervention. It stands as an entirely artificial landscape, essentially a hydraulic mechanism whose survival hinges upon a delicate equilibrium maintained through ongoing land management (Figure 4). In the case of Massenzatica, residents form a community with direct ties to agricultural production, where agricultural fields serve as the primary means of supporting families. From 2000 to 2007, a total of 702,000 euros were spent, with 220,000 euros allocated for the purchase and renovation of the new headquarters of the Consortium (recorded in the years 2005, 2007, and 2008) and an additional 482,000 euros for various social activities, the most significant of which included (a) financial aid to individuals in need due to family hardships; (b) initiatives to support the spread and protection of green asparagus; (c) support for income and employment in agricultural labor through the planting of vegetable crops (asparagus, watermelon, cabbages, radicchio, pumpkins, etc.), which, despite causing economic losses to the Consortium, could ensure profitability, insurance, and pension protection for many members; (d) sponsorship and funding of expenses for publications aimed at cultural and tourist dissemination, among others (medicinal plants of the Massenzatica dune area, etc.; Gandini et al., 2007). The village, while seemingly unremarkable in its dimensions, holds a unique position within one of the most intriguing archaeological landscapes in the delta, the Massenzatica Dunes. Here, the landscape apparatus serves as a testament to the past, reinforcing a sense of community identity. The population residing in Massenzatica remains constant throughout the seasons, establishing a permanent and rooted presence, in stark contrast to the transient nature of the Delta Farm touristic resort. Delta Farm, with an anticipated daily tourist influx of around 8,000 visitors, presents a critical dissonance in its approach to inhabiting the territory. The Delta Po

region is characterized by low-density settlements and small and unassuming cities. The stark contrast in density introduced by Delta Farm is apparent and raises concerns about the harmony of coexistence within the landscape. Furthermore, the tourism-centric nature of Delta Farm, predominantly a summer activity in the Delta Po area, results in a significant population decline during the winter months, rendering the village nearly uninhabited. This discrepancy in living patterns creates a noticeable disjunction between the intended lifestyle of Delta Farm and the more enduring, community-oriented existence in Massenzatica.

## 5. Conclusion

Even if the resort, which is going to be built as part of the Porto Tolle power plant redevelopment, is still in the first phase of realization, some critical considerations are possible. These considerations can discuss the research questions and theoretical problems. The factors contributing to social sustainability in “extreme contexts” or delicate ecosystems, such as wetlands and deltas, are connected to the capacity to create new connections with the environment. It involves linking activity and land use to seasonality, the specificity of the landscape, and understanding its dynamic morphology, rather than merely using the landscape as a brand. The case of CUM demonstrates that in ordinary cities, a new organization is possible, and new ways of living in communities are achievable. It shows that the quality of the landscape should be considered a long-term attribute, not just as an attractor during the summer season. Moreover, interpreting the landscape as an “oasis” of beauty, as in the case of the resort, will surely evoke a sense of security but also create a separation from the “original” landscape. This approach goes in the opposite direction of a positive interpretation of sprawl, as proposed by Secchi (1992, 2005). The countryside, viewed as a new opportunity for the future in Koolhaas’s (2020) research, finds in the Delta Po a remarkable example of a highly engineered landscape. Addressing safety from climate change consequences in such areas should involve connecting land use and territorial infrastructure, as demonstrated by CUM. The ordinary approach is grounded in a smooth and delicate intervention on the territory. It focuses on maintaining the original hydro system, restoring old cultivation, and reviving ancient routes with the aim of enhancing the sense of community and sustainability. In contrast, the “extraordinary” approach represents a significant economic investment that radically imposes a new urban structure, a novel challenge for the history of the place accompanied by a high degree of risk. In conclusion, it is important to highlight that Massenzatica serves as a model in alignment with the National Strategy of Inner Areas. This national place-based policy initiative has pioneered new multi-level local governance methods. These methods are designed to address demographic challenges and meet the needs of regions marked by significant geographic or demographic disadvantages through an integrated approach to local promotion and development. These fragile territories, which are often remote from major service centers and frequently neglected, actually comprise 60% of the national territory’s surface area, encompassing 52% of its municipalities, and house 22% of its population. In Massenzatica, the stable population ensures ongoing and consistent maintenance of the area. This stability supports the regular functioning and needs of various public services (refer to Table 1), which are critical in combating depopulation, a key focus of the Inner Area National Strategy. Regarding the main connections with different levels of planning, it is important to mention the relevant program (Regional Law 11/2004) for the redevelopment of the former Enel power plant area. This involves a change to the territorial planning scheme, which requires the province’s adherence and the approval of the agreement by the provincial president. It has been an exceptional accordance to permit the realization of a big private investment. On the opposite, the experience of Massenzatica represents a case of civil uses of community assets, intended to be enduring because they are legally inalienable. These are referred to as civic demesnes,

collective domains, or collective assets, equivalent terms that vary by geographic area within the country. These assets represent genuine forms of land ownership, exercised collectively by the community. Today, the civil uses of community assets are subject to a public regime and cannot be alienated. They are bound by specific legal purposes, as dictated by the Framework Law on the Reorganization of Civil Uses No. 1766 of June 16, 1927, which ensures controlled availability and dedication to the objectives specified by the law.

### Conflict of Interests

The author declares no conflict of interests.

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