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SNIA VISCOSA

A4a Rieti and its territory / Natural assets
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According to the Roman scholar Marcus Terentius Varro, the **City of Rieti** (405 m AMSL), his birthplace, was the geographical center of Italy, and for this reason it has been named *Umbilicus Italiae* (literally, “*The Italian midpoint*”). The city lies at the heart of a harmonic natural amphitheater, a fertile plain (called **Piana Reatina**, covering a surface of about 90 km²) surrounded by the slopes of **Monte Terminillo** and the Apennines chain.

It is not easy to find, not only in Italy but also around Europe, such a varied territory: the winding peaks surrounding the Agro Reatino stand against the horizon, while clear and fertile streams cross the land in a wonderful environmental succession of cities and towns, valleys and basins. However, this extraordinary variety and territorial diversity hindered the construction of modern communication lines. Some people might say that maybe it is just as well, since nowadays the good health of the **WATER**, the **AIR** and the **SOIL** is a priceless quality for the constitution of a territorial project.

Italy, the “Bel Paese”, provides favorable locations and conditions, specifically in minor and provincial areas like Rieti that are far from the frenzy of the modern world, from the unnatural living conditions of the greedy and indifferent globalized world. These areas, immune to the historical and natural flattening typical of globalization, have preserved their heritage, defending themselves from an indiscriminate and destructive anthropization. This fortunate and rare condition occurs in the **Valle Reatina**, overlooked by the big silhouette of the Monte Terminillo and nestled among the marvelous mountains of Abruzzo and the lush hills of Umbria.

This explains why being not so close to the capital city of **Rome** (80 km from Rieti) can be considered a fortunate situation.

These environmental conditions explain why the city was chosen, in **1927**, as an administrative center, and raised to the rank of **Province** in an inland area with typical elements from regions like Sabina, Umbria, Abruzzo and Marche – macro-areas with different histories, policies and culture, yet all influenced by Roman civilization. The great importance of **WATER** as a resource was the critical *asset* for the land reclamation works in the Piana Reatina. Water was the most important element and the main wealth factor in the newborn Province (comprising 73 municipalities for almost 150.000 inhabitants and an area of around 2.500 km²).

Rieti and its countryside are a classic example of the Italian landscape: the **quality of life** is good, and **cultural and recreational activities** abound, as well as “**healthy**” **sports** and **entertainment** opportunities. Moreover, the territory boasts a **museum network** (with archaeological, historical, artistic and contemporary collections) spread all over the province, important **archaeological evidence** and monumental **architectural elements**, together with the silent and fascinating **rural complexes, medieval hamlets and cloisters** that host Benedictine, Franciscan and Mendicant friars.

This *unique condition* fosters a people-friendly social and cultural life, mainly

developed along the **Alta Valle del Velino**, the territory of **Leonessa**, the **Cicolano** valleys (Salto and Turano) and the **Sabina** valleys.

The diversity of **flora and fauna resources**, the presence of **5 natural protected areas** (Laghi Lungo e Ripasottile, Monte Navegna e Monte Cervia, Montagne della Duchessa, Monti Lucretili, Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga), ancient Roman connection roads such as the **Via Salaria (Road of Salt)** and the **Via dell' Olio (Road of Oil)**, the variety and quality of **local products**, the unique blend of cultural elements from Umbria, Abruzzo and Lazio and the prevalence of Roman culture since the XVI century have left a legacy that requires, on the basis of the Granada Convention of 1985, the protection of the common cultural heritage.

The cultural heritage described can only be honored through a conservative restoration of the landscape and the buildings, like the ex SNIA Viscosa, that man inserted in an agricultural and rural context (where the signs of its past are still tangible). This restoration must respect the historical and geographical features of the *environment*, in order to preserve today the strong motivations that once represented the development and anthropological identity of this land.

This is the disposition that should drive a project for the recovery of the ex SNIA Viscosa involving the natural heritage and the other strategic environmental assets of the territory (mainly WATER, AIR and SOIL) through mutual connection and “fusion”.