

**Tito Bianchi**

### **Blueprint development planning is alive and well**

In his seminal work *Development Projects Observed* AOH introduced several notions which complicate the schematic view of how development projects should be designed and assessed *ex ante*. The concepts are widely known: the Hiding Hand which limits human capacity to anticipate the consequences of planned development efforts; the primacy of Unintended Consequences - always underestimated at the time of project appraisal. Not only are these concepts ignored in the design of development policy in Italy. The very attitude to policy design that Hirschman's approach evokes, modest and open to uncertainty and adjustment, is not to be found in Italian development policy. The framework of local development policy remains fundamentally based on the idea of preparing comprehensive strategy documents whose preparation precedes implementation in a rigid logical sequence, and whose 'program theory' rationally connects goals and results. This logical framework at the project level still permeates the way local development is conceived in the context of EU Cohesion policy at the Italian and at the EU levels alike. This is the sequential development process that informs the implementation of the much celebrated Strategy for Italian Inner Areas. EU regulations extending the Leader approach to other thematic domains such as infrastructure and social investments, also follow the same blueprint approach. I argue that the failure to acknowledge the way development processes work in practice, so brilliantly illustrated by Hirschman in 1967, determines unnecessary cycles of enthusiasm and disappointment, and makes development work at the local level more costly and difficult.