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**THE SUSTAINABLE TERRITORIAL INNOVATION  
OF “INNER PERIPHERIES.”  
THE LAZIO REGION (ITALY) CASE**

**ABSTRACT:** This methodological, policy-focused paper firstly defines the concept of “sustainable territorial innovation” and its operationalisation according to the strategic objectives of Europe 2020. Statistical processing was based on 26 indicators, which helped to perform a multivariate analysis and allowed to identify ten groups of municipalities characterised in terms of the territorial sustainable innovation idea. Their GIS spatial distribution has led authors to combine them with the set of indicators proposed by the Italian Government in the UE Cohesion Policy 2014–2020 perspective. The paper also addresses the constraints and opportunities for urban and peri-urban policies within new scenarios.

**KEYWORDS:** Territorial innovation processes, sustainability, endogenous regional development, urban and peri-urban agriculture, regional governance, Lazio Region.

### **Introduction**

The Italian “inner peripheries” are subject to a specific national strategy, acknowledged by the EU in the Partnership 2014–2020 (MISE, 2013), which will be granted by the following: European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); European Social Fund (ESF); Cohesion Fund (CF); European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development

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(EAFRD); European Maritime & Fisheries Fund (EMFF), and from the Italian “Stability Law” for annual adjustment of basic services in healthcare, education and mobility.

The classification of these areas came about by constructing “inner peripheries” and “centres” macro-classes, such as those proposed by the DPS (Department for Development and Economic Cohesion of the Ministry of Economic Development). These macro-classes are defined by the presence of: 1) secondary education, 2) health services, and finally, 3) rail transport ensured by the presence of at least “Silver type” stations corresponding to small and medium-sized plants. Therefore, the classification of inner peripheries relies on descriptive indicators that relate to the level of spatial remoteness of different Italian municipalities relative to their access to essential services in the event that this “distance” might affect citizens’ quality of life, their level of social inclusion, but also their economic potential.

In the National Strategy document, inner peripheries are also defined as local contexts that “have important environmental resources (water resources, agricultural systems, forests, natural and human landscapes), cultural resources (archaeological, historical settlements, abbeys, small museums, craft centres).” They also “present a highly diverse territory, outcome of the dynamics of the various and diverse natural systems, peculiar and centuries-old processes of human activity” (MISE, 2013b: 8).

The identification of inner peripheries with “peripheral” and “very remote” contexts and their indicators, referring substantively only to the negative aspects of their development, does not allow scholars and practitioners to fully analyse their advantages in terms of lower human pressure and their potential relative to “the offer of services (ecosystem, environmental, landscape and cultural) and developmental factors (energy, water, tourism)” (Dematteis, 2012; 2013). From this perspective, the “inner peripheries” refer to a “dispositional” concept (Lazarsfeld, 1966) which, by definition, emerges in relation to other variables, in this case related to the presence of potential valuable landscape, tourist attractions, economic diversification, the latent cognitive factors for its development and, of course, the demographic profile of these areas.

This methodological contribution is intended to analyse what factors might favour the regional socioeconomic innovation of these areas in order to outline the possible policy scenarios to support their development. The analysis presented here refers to the Lazio Region and results from a study commissioned by the Unindustria Lazio and the Compagnia di San Paolo. It was conducted in

cooperation with the Centro Einaudi of Turin and the University of Roma Tre (Centro Einaudi, 2014). The concluding remarks of this contribution will address the constraints and opportunities urban and peri-urban policies are facing within 2014–2020 scenarios.

**The concept of territorial innovation and sustainability  
and its operation with reference to the inner peripheries:  
the case of Lazio**

The neo-institutional economy, priority given to regional competitiveness rather than that of the nations, the theory of comparative advantage, attention paid to industrial districts all have highlighted the “territory” as a crucial variable to describe and, for some authors, interpret, constraints and opportunities of regional development by questioning the neoclassical theory of growth in favour of the so-called endogenous development (Stimson et al., 2011).

From this perspective, over time, places have taken on the role of a favourable (or unfavourable) environment for business, making possible the creation of external economies (or diseconomies), and giving rise to specific forms of cooperation between companies and developmental players. For some authors at least, what produces development and innovation in certain successful regions is, in this sense, not the assertion of a single company, but the competitiveness of the entire territory, expressed through the synergies between institutions and socioeconomic players. These synergies form the basis of the processes of accumulation of knowledge and the dissemination of information and opportunities useful for supporting development in the context of effective planning (Battaglini, 2014).

The extensive analysis of the experience of Italian districts allows us to observe how firms tend to focus on local contexts in which a long-standing culture fosters local production development. The territory is in fact an essential element “that links the performance of firms in the presence of a rich fabric of productive activities and local collective goods” (Triglia, Ramella, 2008: 5). Innovation develops mainly in territories open to creativity and it can attract other innovative companies and develop a “culture of innovation,” a glue for established enterprises and a stimulus for new services, products and processes.

The literature on districts (see, in particular: Becattini, 1987; Bagnasco, 1988; Brusco, 1989; Becattini and Sengeberger, 1991; Pyke et al., 1996) points out that competitiveness and innovation are nested in local contexts where relational resources are most present. Proximity, in fact, fosters the availability of information through informal, random, and interpersonal contacts (such as financial or commercial rumours). It generates other positive effects, such as cooperation in the strict sense, arising from the coordination and mutual control of firms, from the habit of repeated contacts through trust, or from the common feeling of belonging to a community – also of businesses – that shares similar values and attitudes.

Proximity also determines benefits that are related to the production of skilled labour, favours imitation and the diffusion of organisational models or routine management, encourages the identification of common business strategies for promoting and marketing, and stimulates technological and organisational change. These factors also contribute to the reduction of production and transaction costs, in addition to the synergies between the players and the construction of a local unitary image and brand.

Local territory is therefore the core for innovative activities of enterprises, since it provides the setting for economic, as well as organisational and social innovation dynamics. The exchange and the creation of knowledge are also linked to an appropriate socio-institutional and relational system, which could be considered a potential driver and attractor of innovation. Therefore, a territory must be understood as a place where relationships intertwine and build innovation in reference to its social and cultural context. Accordingly, the semantic concept of territorial innovation refers to the different dimensions of development – cultural, socioeconomic, and institutional. Therefore, it is difficult to operationalise, especially in research that is designed to build policy scenarios on a quantitative basis, in the light of the specific characteristics of indicators in terms of communication effectiveness.

Our work thus refers to the operational definition of the concept of “sustainable territorial innovation” by which we mean “those processes that support the efficiency, attractiveness and competitiveness of a local system through the promotion of sustainable activities, opposing the consumption of resources, urban sprawl and promoting soil conservation, landscape, territorial identity, the quality of life for the present and future local communities” (Battaglini et al., 2014).

In order to analyse the processes of sustainable territorial innovation and measure the organisational characteristics of socio-economic structures, five analytical dimensions (demographic profile, production innovation, tourism, infrastructure, land use) have been selected. A quantitative matrix with the information available at the municipal level was then constructed.

Based on the available data, the concept of “territorial sustainable innovation” was then operationalised with reference to the strategic objectives of Europe 2020:

- knowledge economy;
- integrated territorial approach;
- exploitation of natural resources, landscape, and biodiversity;
- multifunctional agriculture;
- sustainable tourism.

Thanks to an encoding operation, 26 indicators (Table 1) were constructed in order to satisfy as much as possible the following criteria: coverage of the entire territory of Lazio, semantic consistency between empirical indicators and the concept dimensions under investigation, and consistent and significant statistical relationships among indicators. The 26 indicators were then divided into two macro areas. The first, composed of 19 indicators, provides an account of the proxies most closely related to the socio-demographic and economic dimension (SL). The second, made up of seven indicators, describes the landscape, environmental and land use issues (AM). At a later stage, we conducted a principal component analysis (PCA), using the “blocks” approach, with the PCA performed separately on the two sections SL and AM in order to identify significant dimensions that describe and summarise relationships among indicators and to mark out relationships among the underlying cases (municipalities) and indicators (Table 2).

**Table 1.** Indicators

Indicators	Source	Year
<b>Demographic profile</b>		
Old age index	FDV elaborations on Istat data	2011
Index of elderly dependence	FDV elaborations on Istat data	2011
Index of youth dependence	FDV elaborations on Istat data	2011
Percentage of foreigners of total pop.	FDV elaborations on Istat data	2011
Housing density	FDV elaborations on Istat data	2012

**Table 1.** (cont.)

<b>Indicators</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Year</b>
<b>Productive Innovation processes and employment (Pavitt categories)</b>		
% Production Traditional and standard sectors' employees of total employees	FDV elaborations on Istat Asia data	2010
% Traditional and standard sectors' local units of total local units	FDV elaborations on Istat Asia data	2010
% Specialised and hi-tech sector's employees of total employees	FDV elaborations on Istat Asia data	2010
% Specialised and hi-tech sector's local units of total employees	FDV elaborations on Istat Asia data	2010
% Agriculture, energy, raw material sectors' employees of total employees	FDV elaborations on Istat Asia data	2010
% Agriculture, energy, raw material sectors' local units of total local units	FDV elaborations on Istat Asia data	2010
<b>Tourist supply and demand</b>		
Average daily tourist presence	FDV elaborations on Istat data	2009/ 2011
Tourist levels	FDV elaborations on Istat data	2009
Visitor density	FDV elaborations on Istat data	2011
Hotel availability	FDV elaborations on Istat data	2011
<b>Material and immaterial infrastructure</b>		
Number of infrastructures per municipality	FDV elaborations on Istat data	2008
% pop. without broadband from landline	Ministry for Economic Development	2012
% pop. without broadband	Ministry for Economic Development	2012
% tourist employers in local units	FDV elaborations on Istat data	2010
<b>Soil use</b>		
Index of agricultural landscape	FDV elaborations Agricultural census data	2012
Green per inhabitant	FDV elaborations on su Cen. agricoltura	2011
Forest area of total	Sian Inea elaborations on Agrit Populos data	2010

Protected surface area in relation to total surface area	FDV elaborations on Environment Ministry data	2010
Photovoltaic energy per capita	FDV elaborations on Gse data	2011
% of organic farms of total	Agricultural census	2010
% of PDO/IGP firms out of total firms	Agricultural census	2010

Source: FDV – Di Vittorio Foundation, Italy.

**Table 2.** Principal component analysis (PCA) dimensions

Indicators	Interpretations	Polarisation
Relationship between Pavitt classification local units, traditional and standard products and total of local units	Innovation in production and employment processes (SL1)	Positive semiaxis: innovative Negative semiaxis: non innovative
Relationship between Pavitt classification local classification local units, traditional and standard products and total employees		
Relationship between Pavitt classification local units, specialised and hi-tech products and total local units		
Relationship between Pavitt classification local units employees specialised and hi-tech products and total employment		
Relationship between Pavitt classification local units agriculture, energy, raw materials and total local units		
Relationship between Pavitt classification local units employees agriculture, energy, raw materials and total employment		
Average daily tourist presences	Tourist supply and demand (SL2)	Positive semiaxis: high supply and demand Negative semiaxis: low supply and demand
Relationship between average daily tourist presences and resident population		
Number of beds per accommodation per sq. km		
Relationship hotels and tourist with total accommodation		

**Table 2.** (cont.)

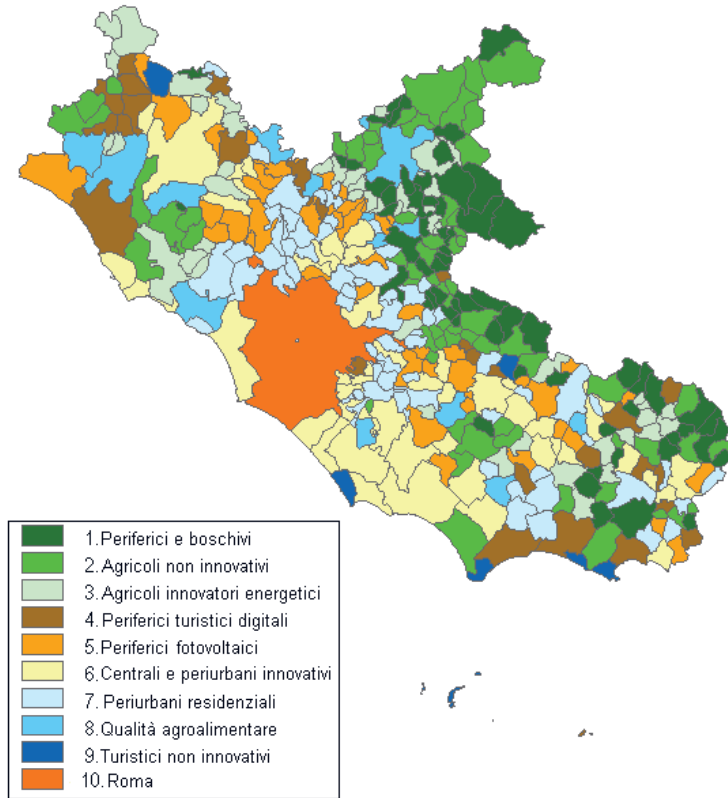
Indicators	Interpretations	Polarisation
Index of aging: percentage >64 and over <15	Demographic characteristics (SL3)	Positive semiaxis: youth dependence, foreigners, high density  Negative semiaxis: elderly dependence, aging
Index of elderly dependence: percentage >64 in population 15–64		
Index of youth dependence: percentage <15 in population 15–64		
No. of foreigners in total resident population		
Population density: inhabitants per sq. km		
Infrastructure index: number of infrastructures per municipality	Material and immaterial infrastructures (SL4)	Positive semiaxis: lacking  Negative semiaxis: high levels of infrastructures and work in the tourist sector
Digital divide 1: percentage of population without landline broadband		
Digital divide 2: percentage of population without landline and/or mobile broadband		
Relationship between tourism employees in the municipality and Italy on local tourism units Italy		

Source: FDV – Di Vittorio Foundation, Italy.

Afterwards, we conducted a cluster analysis (Fig. 1) which allowed us to identify ten groups of municipalities that were characterised uniformly with respect to the main components of the analysed concept of territorial innovation.

We finally combined spatial distribution of the groups with macro-classes and indicators proposed by the DPS, the Department for Development and Economic Cohesion of the Ministry of Economic Development, from the perspective of 2014–2020 European programming (Tables 3 and 4).



**Fig. 1.** Territorial sustainable innovation clusters in the Lazio region

Source: FDV – Di Vittorio Foundation, Italy.

Based on this correlation, cluster 1 (WOODED & PERIPHERAL) is composed of 61 municipalities mainly located towards the eastern and the south-eastern borders of Lazio Region. This is the group that best represents the type of inland regions made up of villages with a population of less than 5,000 inhabitants. This cluster is characterised by poor infrastructural facilities. High presence of woodlands and parks is the reason why this area will focus on development policies that actively protect the territory, natural resources and bio-diversity, which are beneficial to urban centres as they generate positive externalities.

Cluster 2 (AGRICULTURAL & CONSERVATIVE) is composed of 65 municipalities, distributed throughout the Lazio region, with a population, mostly elderly, of less than 5,000. This group consists of two-thirds of municipalities located at inner peripheries, the majority of the “intermediate” type and only a few in peri-urban

areas. They are characterised by high presence of wooded and agricultural lands, often located in natural beauty and landscape-valuable areas, such as Sabaudia, in the Circeo National Park, Antrodoco, Amatrice, Leonessa and other towns in the Rieti area that base their attractiveness on four regional natural protected reserves and the proximity of the National Park of Gran Sasso and Monti della Laga, as well as Orvinio and Roccagiovine in the Lucretili Mountains Regional Park.

Cluster 3 (AGRICULTURAL & INNOVATIVE) includes 46 municipalities, mostly small, widely distributed throughout the region and nearly all related to inner peripheries. It organises its activities around the supply of certain agricultural products and woodlands, as well as photovoltaic energy production. This cluster, because of natural resources and a tendency to stimulate innovation – represented by an interest in alternative energy sources – offers a glimpse of possible gains from the production and supply of renewable energy resources also in reference to wind power, biomass, and water.

Cluster 4 (PERIPHERAL, TOURIST & DIGITAL) contains 28 municipalities, two-thirds of which are related to inner peripheries. This is the group that encompasses the biggest number of “remote” municipalities. Despite that, it has got a good access to digital infrastructure, which, in a way, shortens the distance from the transportation network. There are many tourist destinations (particularly in Terracina, Fondi, Formia and Ventotene, in the province of Latina), centres and historic towns such as Tarquinia, Soriano nel Cimino, Capodimonte, Civitella d’Agliano in Viterbo, Arpino, Acute (Fr) or Prossedi (Lt). It is a perfect location for green areas and parks, which is indicative of possible development of tourist routes through the use of integrated and multi-thematic routes that could connect Rome with natural, cultural, and culinary resources of the hinterland of the Lazio Region.

Cluster 5 (PERIPHERAL & PHOTOVOLTAIC) is represented by 43 municipalities, two-thirds related to inner peripheries. Despite the presence of artistic and cultural towns (Alatri, Palestrina, Montefiascone, Cori), the cluster is characterised by a lack of tourists, a low level of industrial activities, and a significant youth dependence ratio. However, signs of innovation come from the production of photovoltaic energy, for which agricultural land is mainly used. Therefore, we would claim that activities of this kind are important tools of “deepening” (Van der Ploeg, Roep, 2003) the

functions of farms to appropriate added value that is traditionally achieved outside of them.

Cluster 6 (CENTRAL & PERI-URBAN INNOVATIVE) is formed by the major provincial capitals (Latina, Viterbo, Frosinone) and other peri-urban towns, many of which are located in the Valley of Sacco and the Pontine lowland, administratively bounded by the 1999 master plan. This cluster shows significant levels of innovation and tourism economy but reduced infrastructure resources, including digital ones. This group presents higher than the average levels of the dependence ratio; it also has a high presence of immigrants and an increased population density. Despite difficulties inherent in these realities, the cluster represents socioeconomic dynamics that should be supported by industrial policies that might foster a greater territorial rooting of firms and the development of relations between different territorial polarities in order to reproduce material goods and intangible assets more effectively.

Cluster 7 municipalities (PERI-URBAN & RESIDENTIAL) belong to two-thirds of inner peripheries, especially mid-range. The remaining part is made up of densely populated urban centres like Tivoli, Monterotondo, Ladispoli (Rm) and belt municipalities often located in areas of valuable landscapes as in the case of Bracciano and Anguillara, and many municipalities located in the Castelli Romani. High population density, the youth dependency ratio and a large presence of foreigners suggest that these areas are attractive in terms of low residential costs rather than employment.

The 14 municipalities (Boville Ernica, Priverno, Rieti and Vetralla – “central” areas – and Canino, Castelnuovo di Farfa, Cerveteri, Collecchio, Lanuvio, Neroli, Orte, Poggio Moiano, Segni and Tuscania relating to “inland” areas) that are parts of Cluster 8 (FOOD QUALITY POLES) are all located in valuable landscapes. This cluster is strongly characterised by agricultural economy devoted to organic and certified agriculture (PDO, PGI) with interesting quality products like olive oil of Canino, Tuscia (Vt) and Sabina (Ri, Rm) and Cerveteri wine, in the Alban hills (in the Province of Rome). The group shares a moderate accessibility to infrastructure, including digital, and shows an aging index that is lower than the average. To fully seize these important opportunities for innovation and diversification of the offer in terms of multifunctional agriculture, what is required is an “active” management of interinstitutional relationships to be directed

towards market innovation, creation of business networks and an offer of differentiated quality services.

Cluster 9 (TOURIST BUT NOT INNOVATIVE) includes 7 municipalities: some central, located along the coastline, Anzio, Gaeta, San Felice Circeo, Sperlonga, and others relating to the inner peripheries, Bolsena, Fiuggi and Ponza. It has experienced a substantial demand and supply of labour in the tourism sector, but their geographical location refers to a traditional form of tourism development, with a strong seasonal component. Although this cluster presents significant infrastructural facilities, data allows us to observe a lack of innovation in terms of production and employment. The presence of wooded, agricultural and natural protected areas is a potentially significant factor for developing alternative tourism patterns that enhance the nature and culture of the places.

**Table 3.** Clusters and DPS macro-classes matrix  
Number of municipalities and related column distribution percentages

Macro Classes		CLUSTER									Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
Inner peripheries	N	56	54	38	18	27	22	46	10	3	274
	%	91.8	83.1	82.6	64.3	62.8	45.8	70.8	71.4	42.9	72.7
Centres	N	5	11	8	10	16	26	19	4	4	103
	%	8.2	16.9	17.4	35.7	37.2	54.2	29.2	28.6	57.1	27.3
Total	N	61	65	46	28	43	48	65	14	7	377
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: FDV – Di Vittorio Foundation, Italy.

**Table 4.** Clusters and DPS indicators matrix  
Number of municipalities and related column distribution percentages

Classes of municipality		CLUSTER									Total
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
A – Poles	N	0	0	0	1	0	6	1	1	1	10
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	3.6	0.0	12.5	1.5	7.1	14.3	2.7
B – Inter-municipality poles	N	0	0	0	2	1	3	1	1	0	8
	%	0.0	0.0	0.0	7.1	2.3	6.3	1.5	7.1	0.0	2.1

<b>C – Belt</b>	N	5	11	8	7	15	17	17	2	3	85
	%	8.2	16.9	17.4	25.0	34.9	35.4	26.2	14.3	42.9	22.5
<b>D – Intermediate</b>	N	36	36	18	13	21	21	33	7	3	188
	%	59.0	55.4	39.1	46.4	48.8	43.8	50.8	50.0	42.9	49.9
<b>E – Peripheral</b>	N	19	18	20	4	6	1	13	3	0	84
	%	31.1	27.7	43.5	14.3	14.0	2.1	20.0	21.4	0.0	22.3
<b>F – Ultra peripheral</b>	N	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	2
	%	1.6	0.0	0.0	3.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.5
<b>Total</b>	N	61	65	46	28	43	48	65	14	7	377
	%	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: FDV – Di Vittorio Foundation, Italy.

## Conclusions

Our analysis reflects not only on the threats, but also on settlement opportunities of the municipalities of Lazio regarding the innovation of production and employment processes, their demographic profile, demand for tourist services and their offer, tangible and intangible infrastructures of the territory and, finally, land use.

The municipalities of the first five clusters, while mainly belonging to inner peripheries, show clear signals of potential development trajectories towards the development, management and environmental protection and renewable resources, transition to a low-carbon economy, promotion of mitigation and adaptation to climate change, exploitation of natural and cultural assets through development paths and supply diversification also in relation to tourism. In particular, the third cluster (AGRICULTURAL & INNOVATIVE), the fourth (PERIPHERAL, TOURIST & DIGITAL), and the fifth (PERIPHERAL & PHOTOVOLTAIC) are showing signs of potential positive externalities with regard to the Roman metropolis. To promote employment and control the centripetal attraction towards the Roman metropolis and areas in the region with a more precise industrial vocation, we need to focus on the innovative latent tendency in these municipalities and on “priority themes/focal points” (Mantino, 2012) that they can grasp within local communities.

Compared to 2007–2013, the new European programming provides opportunities for inner peripheries on highlighted trajectories, providing a clearer concentration of resources on the objectives more directly related to innovative and sustainable development: access to information and communications technology, competitiveness of the agricultural sector, and that of fisheries and aquaculture, support for a low-carbon economy, inclusive growth, investment in education, and lifelong learning.

The “place-based” development policy, inaugurated by the new programming could also promote the most “central” areas: in particular the sixth (CENTRAL & PERI-URBAN INNOVATIVE) and the eighth cluster (FOOD QUALITY POLES) that show stronger innovation effort in quality of production and employment. The 2014–2020 financing period could also stimulate socioeconomic players in the ninth cluster (TOURIST BUT NOT INNOVATIVE) to develop cultural, food and wine and overall well-being (wellness) tourist routes through public-private synergies.

In order to counteract the processes of “top-down territorialisation” (Palazzo, 2014), local communities must therefore regain their role of “active protection” of the territory, distancing themselves from a conceptualisation of protection in terms of purely executive regulations.

In our opinion, the active and efficient protection of a territory could be achieved through the local management of resources and autonomy in controlling the economy. Innovative processes of protection imply, in fact, that local communities, by virtue of specific values they assign to their own resources, could choose the destination of use or non-use of individual territorial assets (e.g., we produce photovoltaic energy or food? Should we sell the timber from forests or use the area as parks?). In other words, innovative policies entail promoting and developing local visions on development and, ultimately, enhancing the local social capital and material culture rooted in the territory.

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