

04. Institutional change and regional transition

The new dynamics between regional and urban governance: rural areas as connection element

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Abstract: The dynamics of the expansion of the territory make us think about the fact that territorial development does not exclusively concern urban transformations but also synergistically involves rural areas. As part of the ongoing PhD thesis (tutor Prof. Maurizio Carta) we analyse the richness of the relationship between urban and rural and the vision of a landscape that is not only made of intensive production. The involvement of themes that can interact with each other makes it possible to strengthen the quality of production and its physical extension. This contribution considers the presence of networks among the agricultural entrepreneurs and it discusses the territorial context and the local communities. The synergies between users and rurality, not only intended as agricultural production, lead to a new competitiveness in this field. The increase in productivity is promoted through innovative processes that use new technologies and the social involvement connected to the quality of agriculture. The case of the Inner Area of Madonie is an example: a territory that has led to think of innovative strategies spread throughout the territory and not aimed to a single Municipality, to cope with the development difficulties connected also to the morphology of the site.

Keywords: rural areas, agriculture, landscape, local development

Introduction

Many European countries, in particular Italy, are characterized by the variety of issues concerning their territory. Specifically, Panunzi (2017) states that geography and landscape find their own representation in social, cultural and economic characteristics. These components inevitably interact with each other and, at the same time, cause gaps between the various territories more through human action than natural causes. The differences are reflected between north and south as well as between city and countryside, leading to the need for a rebalancing that leads to the overcoming of marginality, for a sustainable revival in the cultural and economic sphere. The Italian territory, given the different naturalistic and environmental conformation, is characterized by different levels of spatial periphery and infrastructural, social and economic disadvantage (Marchetti *et al.* 2017) but also by wealth of resources and natural heritage in the cultural, landscape and biodiversity fields. These conditions are



found in the territories identified as inner areas¹, which are affected by the actions that humans have performed on the quality of nature and are characterized today by demographic problems although they are highly polycentric and with a widespread historical and territorial heritage (Marchetti *et al.* 2017).

For many years the inner areas have been labelled as marginal and difficult contexts, characterized by difficulties in production and habitability. In these areas it has thus intervened with the logic of economical subsidies instead of using programming strategies. The absence of specific strategies led from the mid-nineteenth century to large migratory waves and, consequently, to the abandonment of fields, pastures and villages, despite the quality of floristic and faunal biodiversity, landscape, cultural heritage and food and wine (Marchetti *et al.* 2017).

As far as the production of the agricultural sector is concerned, especially in the South of Italy, agricultural employment rates in the inner areas are higher than those in other areas, even if intensive and mechanized agriculture has resulted in a reduction of the number of people employed and the depopulation of these areas with population transfer to the cities (Moroni, 2008). Today, employment in agriculture (Istat, 2010) for young people under 39 is equal to 9.97% in Italy and 12.01% in Sicily. The trend towards the abandonment of agriculture shows contrasting values in the percentage of the number of farmers up to 39 years in Italy (-0.47%) and in Sicily (+ 1.69%). Even the percentage of part-time management of agricultural enterprises has high values in Italy (98.30%) and in Sicily (99.50%). Values indicative of the fact that the income deriving from the agricultural activity alone is not sufficient for the complete sustenance of the entrepreneur (Mortellaro, 2017). However, there is an important presence of quality brand productions in Italy (1.56%) and in Sicily (2.67%) which lead to the activation of local production routes (D'Angelo, 2015). Therefore, the strong rural potential of inner lands, particularly in the Southern part of Italy, can be a strong point in local development strategies. Thus, policies to enhance natural resources are activated to promote agricultural products by the means of appropriate territorial marketing strategies (Mortellaro, 2017).

Polycentric territorial development and the overcoming of boundaries

The territory and, consequently, the planning are currently subject to a change in their nature. The change in the territorial balances, connected to the displacement of the population from the hilly and mountainous areas (population decrease) to the flat areas and to the cities (increase), has been developing in the last years (Palmieri, 2017). The decrease in the population that has characterized (and is still marking) a specific and significant portion of the national territory has worsened, as a consequence also of the country's financial crisis. This decline has led to an institutional weakening,

¹ The inner areas are defined by the SNAI as areas distant from the centers offering essential services (education, health and mobility), rich in important environmental and cultural resources and highly diversified by nature and after anthropization processes (SNAI, 2013).

the contraction of services and public facilities (Borghi, 2017) and a change in the capacity of channeling broad public resources, often understood as a form of assistentialism (Provenzano, 2015).

The relocation of the population to the cities and the decrease in rural areas in favour of urbanization processes are highlighting new dynamics within the territory that lead to think of the latter not as an element in itself, but as a system consisting of networks and capable of generating innovation (Carta, 2014).

Therefore urban planning processes are increasingly looking outside the municipal boundaries and, therefore, to systems and networks between municipalities through instruments such as conventions, inter-municipal unions, consortia, valley or river communities, program agreements. These are forms of relationship, which have given the possibility to elaborate common strategies able to overcome the limits of the administrative boundary. It is possible, in this way, to promote development in different sectors that can also concern surrounding municipalities with similar interests, because they share the identity of the place to which they belong and of the social groups related to it (Pazzagli, 2017).

Therefore, it is necessary to work on the knowledge, on the valorisation and on the integration into a system of the territorial heritage, because the activation of these endogenous values contributes to improve the quality of life and to generate new lasting economic flows (Magnaghi, 2010). Territory, environment and landscape capture value as common goods and as a model for sustainable development from an economic, social and environmental perspective. Values that also concern, perhaps mainly, the inner areas that need knowledge of the resources and of heritage of the territory as exclusive and non-reproducible resources (Becattini, 2015). The transformation of these territories, also characterized by the presence of towns with small population and territorial surface, was regulated in Italy in the 1990s by the Law on local autonomies (Law 81/1993) and on the decentralization of functions and administrative simplification (Laws 59/1997 and subsequent, known as "Bassanini reforms"). Not surprisingly, in this period the "identity associations" had spread: those are relations between the Municipalities that deal with typical products or cultural heritage and associations for the protection of the cultural, environmental, tourist, food and wine heritage. Factors that, despite having experienced difficulties in the following decade, have been leading in recent years to the territorial promotion of small Municipalities located in inner lands. Furthermore, these factors are allowing the relaunch of local development and the enhancement of the cultural and identifying heritage of the territories. Therefore urban planning processes are increasingly looking outside the municipal boundaries and to systems and networks between municipalities through the concept of urban regions (Balducci, Fedeli, Curci, 2017). The dynamics once linked to the urban sector have today shifted to the new regional dimension, consisting of networks (not borders) and the generative power linked to the social, environmental and economic system. This polycentric complexity of the territory leads to a territorial development that does not exclusively address urban transformations, but that actually ends up in synergistically involving rural areas. The territorial system aims to include urban and rural areas within a system that can be read as unitary by the dynamic structure of the "rur-urban archipelago" (Carta, 2017). This model combines the polycentrism of the territory with the identity that typifies the territory itself, experimenting innovative forms of planning that guarantee a new balance between rural and urban and highlight, in the relationship between urban and rural, both productive and environmental visions. The network system is made up of connections that are not only immaterial (Barbieri, 2015), but also material ones that increase the efficiency of territorial systems to make them developed and economically advanced.



Strategies for the renaissance of rural areas

The implementation of innovative policies concerns not only local development, but also rural development, starting from the presence of a current situation in which marginal areas, particularly in the South, have suffered over time from fragility due to the economic and productive fabric and to public administrations also for the realization of basic services (Vinci, 2010). The national scenario, supported by statistical analysis, currently sees a continuous increase in the conditions of marginality due to economic and social fragility. This situation is related to the demographic decline due to depopulation and emigration and, in areas mainly devoted to agricultural production, also to the decrease in both employment and economic development.

This representation, however, is followed by the presence of global, community and national strategies referring to the 2014-2020 programming which also promotes actions related to rural areas, although they are often parallel and not connected to each other.

An example is the global action of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: an action program involving 193 Organization of United Nations (OUN) member states.

In rural areas it intervenes on food security and, more generally, on sustainable nutrition and agriculture. This serves to obtain sufficient food throughout the year with sustainable cultivation and food production systems, keeping the ecosystem and the diversity of seeds and plants to be cultivated intact. The Agenda also deals with the environment and, in this case, with the healthiness of the water, guaranteeing its sustainable management and adequate hygienic conditions, making it clean and drinkable. From an economic point of view, the program wants to promote lasting, inclusive and sustainable growth to promote innovation. These aspects concern, in addition to agriculture, the industrial sector, supporting the entire economic development and well-being, using technological development and research.

At the same time, actions are being promoted for a new rur-urban collaboration that will allow the development of rural areas starting from the adoption of a decentralized urban organization capable of facilitating the growth of potential and the reduction of territorial differences. As in the case of INTERREG IVC projects, funded by the European Union Regional Development Fund, which often aim at urban-rural cooperation for the implementation of practices related to economic, environmental and innovation aspects.

In parallel, strategies of Italian interest are implemented, as in the case of the National Strategy for Inner Areas named “Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne” (SNAI). This strategy, in the rural areas, aims at their promotion through strategies aimed at developing places such as the reversal of the decrease in the used agricultural surface and of the number of farmers in the rural areas identified on the basis of the classification of the national territory. The National Green Community Strategy that promotes economic development with both productive and environmental value is an example. The Green Communities are defined by communities that are formed, compacted and facilitated through actions that develop the attractiveness of a public able to become an active part of the dialectical exchange between nature and culture (article 72 of the law 28 December 2015 n. 221). It also favors the presence of a sustainable development plan that looks at energy, the environment and the economy.



Parallel to these strategies, the Rural Development 2014-2020 of the National Rural Network must be considered through the involvement of different stakeholders, highlighting opportunities for young people and promoting innovation in the agri-food and forestry sector by identifying a financial security to manage national and regional level programs, co-financed in a multi-year framework.

The “Resto al Sud” measure involves the regions of Southern Italy and considers the difficulties young people face in finding employment and the difficulties of the agricultural sector. The goal is to start up businesses to develop the economy in the agricultural sector. In accordance with this measure, the rule on the whole of unused lands named “Banca delle terre abbandonate o incolte” provides for the identification of lands and areas built in a state of abandonment by the Municipalities, in order to be assigned in concession for agricultural activities.

Sustainability and circular economy in rural areas

The propulsive centers, expensive in the use of raw materials, have had a different use of resources than the internal areas due to the physical distance that often separates the two realities. Thus, the internal areas have managed to preserve social, environmental and identity values: a necessary starting point for re-thinking relations with the rural dimension and for generating new forms of creativity. Therefore, we need a model capable of implementing a process that is able to fully use the resources that characterize the territory without, however, exhausting them in order to increase the life cycles of resources (Webster, 2015). Especially for small towns, we need to adopt strategies aimed at sustainability: reducing the consumption of soil in the recovery of the relationship between humans and nature and recycling of production waste (Carta, 2015b). Through a more conscious use of the available raw materials, it is possible to operate in accordance with local, sustainable and environmental development² starting from new strategies linked to social and economic development connected to the identity of the territory. The ability to a continuously renew, activate or reactivate places and resources, in order to facilitate opportunities for cultural, social and economic growth (Carta and Lino, 2015). Thus we arrive at the hypothesis of a "2.0 local development" (Carta, 2015a) which considers innovation as the possibility of a new metabolism for the local territory. Local innovation considers the use of the circular economy (McDonough and Braungart, 2002) as a method capable of restoring the initial capital and allowing new flows of goods and services. The principles of the circular economy are reflected not only in the consolidated city, but also in rural areas, relying on an economic and productive aspect that is increasingly diversified by the production of edible products and promotes new economies around local identities, in particular in territories from the historic agricultural vocation. The model developed by Webster (2015) links biological instruments and technical tools to determine a circular economy model. The relationship between technical tools of the circular economy (recycle, renew and regenerate, re-use and redistribute, maintenance) and

² Local development is not intended as an endogenous development, with a decisive and exclusive role for local agents and with an obligatory development path (Coffey-Polese 1984). Its meaning is connected to the plurality of development models and to the interaction between local subjects (public and private) that share a development idea based on the valorization of the resources of the territory (Garofoli, 1999).

biological tools (agriculture, re-establishment of the biosphere, biochemical raw materials, biogas, anaerobic disposal and composting, extraction of biochemical raw materials) generates new models of economic development and self-sufficiency (Guallart, 2014) capable of relating aspects of a technical nature with biological elements. The ideals transmitted by the circular economy are a fertile field, particularly in territories with a historically agricultural vocation, where new knowledge on the use of resources can allow the overcoming of the ideal that sees productivity as a factor of greater importance than the quality of territory (Bisciglia *et al.* 2019).

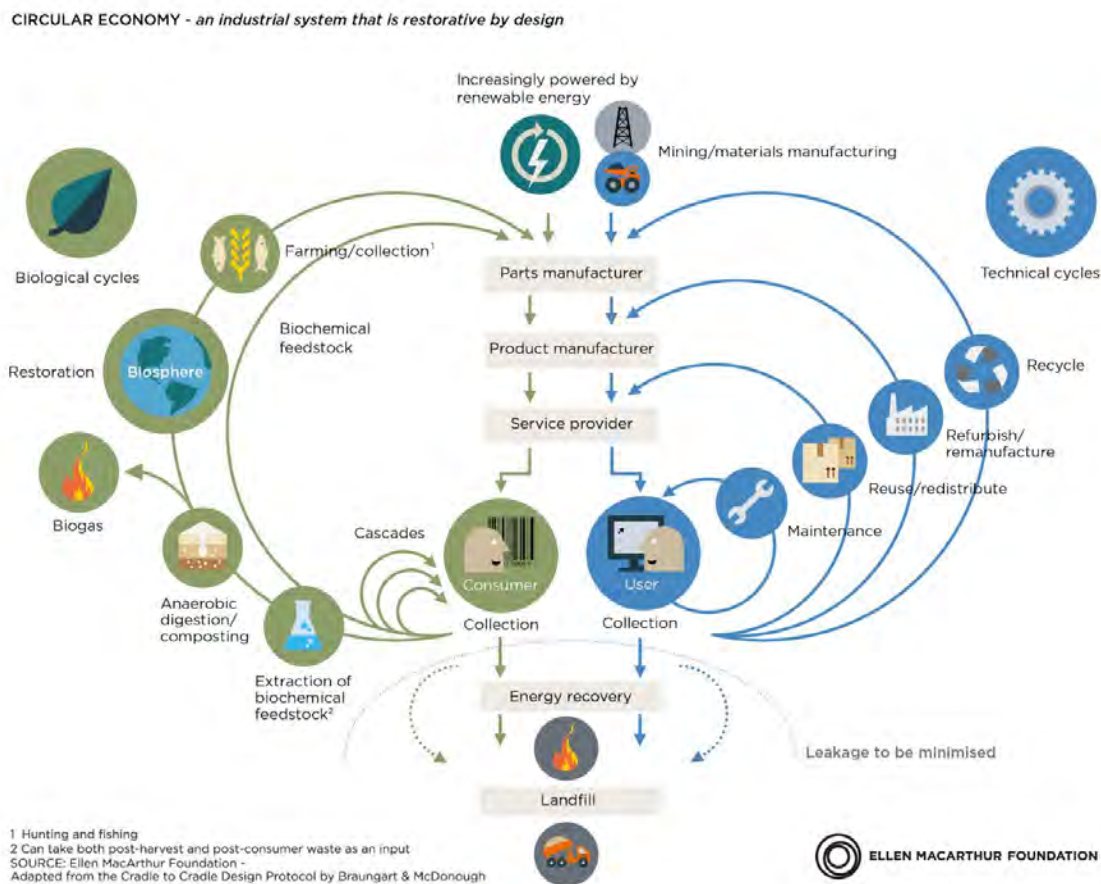


Figure 1. Use of resources in a circular economic system. Source: Webster, K., 2015, *The circular economy: a wealth of flows*, (COWS: Ellen MacArthur Foundation Publishing)

There is an ideal that looks to the green economy for the clean and safe production of goods, materials and energy, for the reconstruction of natural ecosystems and for the reduction of emissions and pollution factors, with greater efficiency in the use of non-renewable resources (Webster, 2015). This, however, once again leads to a reading of the territory that differs from its identity and from the landscape peculiarities, which are capable of adding value to the entire system. Polycentric territorial development requires a wide-ranging sustainable approach and considers the economic, social and environmental aspects. In addition to the circular economy, in economic matters it is necessary to look at economies increasingly geared to the intangible aspect. As Carta (2015b) states, we need economies based on access rather than on property, on sociality rather than on egoism, on well-being rather than on having, on efficiency rather than on consumption or on the sharing economy. In the environmental topic, strategies are needed to reduce the ecological footprint by upgrading the

agricultural activities and increasing the quality and uniqueness of the products. Furthermore, in the social topic, coordination between public and private actions and the empowerment of local communities is needed (Carta, 2017). All these actions are driven by recovery, recycling and restarting of communities, productions and settlements.

Rural development between sustainability and agriculture

The development of rurality is implemented in rur-urban life models not only aimed at marginal contexts and at the quality of agricultural production, but also connected to new features and services (Magnaghi *et al.* 2010). Their task is to give an innovative and multifunctional role to the open spaces and agricultural spaces of small and medium urban contexts with an environmental, landscape and settlement vision.

The development of rurality that follows these principles wants to overcome the utilitarian vision of the environment and the territory, focusing on the territorial continuity and on the integration of activities in rural areas. These must be able to involve farmers in the production of market goods and in the realization of services through practices of territorial governance of economic, social and cultural value. The territorial continuity guarantees a synergy between city and territory, in which the city forms an inseparable body with its territory (Cattaneo, 1972) and carries on the good conduct of the campaign and the quality of life in the city.

The objectives of rural development look at multifunctional agriculture for the development of local agro-urban systems and at the development of agricultural parks in not only fragile territorial contexts but also metropolitan ones (Vinci, 2010). To do this we need a progressive development and growth of awareness with respect to the recognition of the essential role of the rural territory and of proximity agriculture as factors not only in maintaining and offering the main ecosystem services, but also as a determining factor of local development and innovation (Magnaghi *et al.* 2010).

Therefore, for the recognition of the value of the territory, and in order to promote innovation and local development, it is essential to adopt interventions that focus on environmental sustainability.

The resulting data of the institute for environmental protection and research named “Istituto Superiore per la Protezione e la Ricerca Ambientale” (ISPRA) show data on land consumption in Italy in 2016. From these it is clear that the last few decades have been characterized by an unhealthy relationship between humans and nature, which has led to a condition of reduction of natural resources and an increase in the consumption of soil due to the implementation of continuous building processes.

In this context, the presence of responsible planning devoted to environmental sustainability carries forward political management and economic growth along with ecological value (Cohen and Nagiski, 2016). Therefore the role of rural areas within territorial systems is relevant, given the importance of production, but also of natural, social and cultural values. Therefore rural areas play an essential role in sustainable development and their preservation and protection is necessary (Lekić *et al.* 2018). As regards the purely agricultural aspect, in order to adopt actions aimed at sustainability and that, at the same time, look at economic growth, it is necessary to fight both the excessive use of land due to the intensification of agriculture in the most productive areas, and the tendency to marginalization and

abandonment of agricultural land in less productive areas. These dynamics have an influence on the environmental sustainability of the agricultural sector in territorial terms. They find a role in the social (ability to increase job opportunities and access to resources and services inherent to agricultural activities), economic (profitable use of resources in the area, or without the loss of quality and resources) and environmental (landscape, biodiversity and quality of natural resources) field.

In the sustainable development linked to rurality, in addition to the issues related to agricultural production, the additional activities that concern rural areas, although not directly connected with the agricultural production itself, must be included.

Sustainability applied to rural areas must make it possible to avoid the presence of new phenomena of rural depopulation thanks to interventions connected also to social and cultural areas.

The presence of social problems in rural areas has led to the development of strategies and policies aimed at the development of sustainable rural communities starting from the *plans for residences* (The rural coalition, 2010). Traditional agricultural systems and other activities, such as crafts, can contribute to the sustainability of rural areas by proposing strategies able to strengthen the sense of place of the residents and transform the local community into a more resilient and adaptive socio-ecological system (Gobattoni *et al.* 2015).

The productivity levels of the rural areas must be raised through a renewal of the collaboration between public and private sectors capable of generating collaboration networks between the various subjects through the implementation of specific actions.³ These interventions aim to enter the territory and generate new networks capable of generating new services and new economies starting from the already existing identities.

Reference models for rural development

In the rural field, relations between development and agriculture are increasingly intense. Synergies that involve different subjects and which, together with a vision of rurality separated from the agricultural activity alone, lead to a new competitiveness of the primary sector.

The presence on the territory of innovative processes related to the theme of rurality, allows the definition of new relationships but also facilitates the partnership between public and private, the activation of new circular economies and the use of technologies and territorial development laboratories applied to the rural theme.

³ They are: the use of platforms accessible both physically and virtually. Digital sensors and instruments for monitoring the pedoclimatic conditions related to production. The sharing of public and private spaces and services to reduce management costs and increase efficiency. Circular economy. The innovative re-use of agricultural production waste. New job opportunities not only in agriculture but, more generally, in manufacturing. The activation of territorial development laboratories (living labs and incubators of ideas) to generate innovative companies.

The case of Rural Hub is an example, later Rural Hack: a hackspace coordinated by Prof. Alessandro Giordano of the University Federico II of Naples, which has put together rurality and technology. In fact, Rural Hack interweaves the agricultural production dictated by the rural tradition with the technological innovations of young digital and agri-food entrepreneurs.

In the last few years in Campania there has been a trend reversal, from a statistical point of view, capable of increasing the employment rate of young people in agriculture and also the growth in the number of registrations in agricultural schools. Rural Hack pursues a new rural economy to make territory, society and economy coexist through companies that look not only to the economic aspect, but also to the quality of the territory and of the environment and social involvement.

The usefulness of the combination of technology and agriculture for the protection of the environment and productivity is evident, for example, in the case of the San Salvatore company in Paestum: a producer of wine. During the manufacturing processes, the presence of a parasite was found, which may occur only in certain conditions (temperature, soil pH, humidity); this forces them to apply specific treatments periodically. The use of sensors, able to detect the presence of those specific characteristics, allows the company to carry out the treatments at that precise moment, thus using the technology to save time and money, reduce pollution and, at the same time, make the activities of the company more productive.

Another way to connect technology and agriculture has been carried out by Farm Hack: an open platform based on an open source technology that aims to unite anyone who wants to collaborate and contribute to the creation of resilient agriculture. Farm Hack is an American platform that connects farms of different sizes (large and small) to each other to increase local economies and improve productivity and profitability of sustainable agriculture and local production. The Farm Hack community makes it possible to share the creation of tools for agriculture aimed at sustainability in production. An example is Culticycle, which replaces the tractor in the operations of cultivation and sowing without the use of fuel, or Fido which introduces a technological system for monitoring greenhouses.

FarmHack involves 35 retailers in Europe (in particular France, Germany and the United Kingdom) and the United States of America. The number of users now referring to Farm Hack is today 189 users, who can relate to each other through a platform divided into 9 main categories (including technologies applied to agriculture, job opportunities, agronomy), which contain within them 222 topics and 1.500 posts.

Another significant example, in the mix between quality of agricultural production and social involvement, is CumpaRete. This association, today, connects 19 Cilento (a specific part of Campania) companies in order to define a network among the local producers of the region. The objective is linked to cooperation and innovation in agriculture, with the idea of bringing together lands of different sizes and networks among farmers. They indirectly intervene on the landscape and, therefore, on the environmental quality.

The network has not only an environmental value, but also an economic one. The presence of socio-cultural relationships centered on relationships of sharing and interpersonal collaboration puts entrepreneurs in communication with different interests. In fact, these deal not only with agricultural



production, but they find in agriculture a differentiation of the services to be offered and possibilities of production and transformation, both in methodologies (innovative or traditional) and in the finished product.

Innovation in the agricultural field involves going beyond the use of agricultural land for food production purposes. This can allow purposes that can permit the limitation of the abandonment of agricultural activity and the consequent environmental degradation.

There are uses aimed at the production of agro-energy (especially biogas, starting from the exploitation of agricultural raw materials and residual substances of all kinds), to agro-cosmetics (research and development of products deriving from the agricultural sector), to tourism (Tastings, naturalistic excursions, involvement in harvesting or sowing activities, show cooking), to the pharmaceutical industry (production of plants for pharmaceutical use).

New urban-rural relations for sustainable development

The implementation of sustainable processes, dedicated to multi-functionality and sustainability of the territory, contributes to detecting the potential of the relationship between urban and rural areas in order to promote new synergistic forms of governance. Starting from the overcoming of administrative boundaries, it is necessary to look at the enhancement of natural and cultural resources and innovative strategies for development in agriculture, in order to strengthen the economic, cultural and environmental profitability that comes from the establishment of a rural-urban network approach.

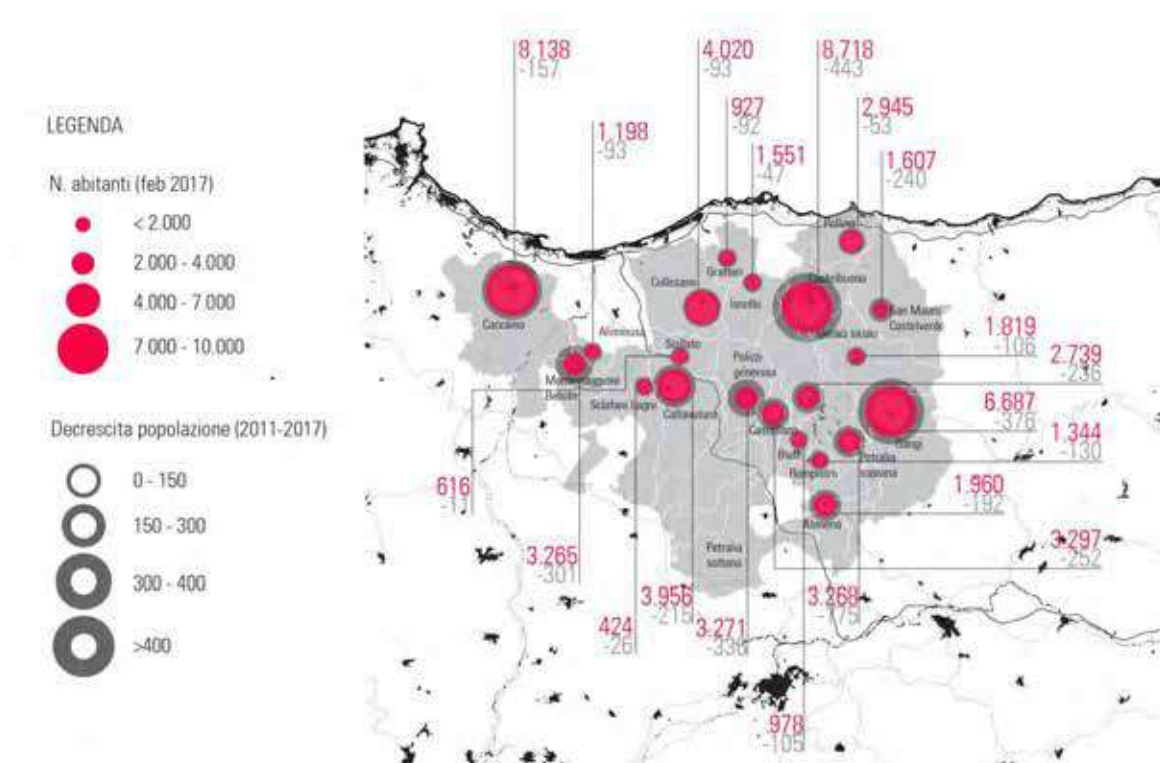


Figure 2. Population decrease in the municipalities of the Madonie Inner Area. The author has processed the image. Data source: <http://demo.istat.it>

The case of the Inner Area of Madonie is an example: a territory characterized by an extension of 1814,40 km² and the presence of 62.728 residents⁴, which makes a double reading possible. The municipalities belonging to it, in fact, have a dual approach: the identified Municipalities (as in national law 56/2014) are part of both the metropolitan city of Palermo (with the same boundaries of NUTS3 level) and the network of the inner areas of Madonie (national strategy). Economic and social fragility is connected to the demographic decline due to depopulation and emigration and, in the areas mainly dedicated to the primary sector, also to the decrease in both employment and economic development. This double reading is a symptom of the heterogeneity of the readable Madonite territory as a rural settlement model characterized by the presence of "islands of excellence" of the Sicilian cultural and landscape (Carta, 2016) capable of establishing relations both internally and with other "islands" external to the identified 'archipelago'. The Madonie territory has the ability to establish relationships both internal and external to the identified network, because it is recognizable as an active socio-economic actor. Furthermore, the presence of both human and economic capital and landscape and cultural values identifies the need for new and different methods, approaches and tools for territorial planning (Orlando, 2016). In addition to having the characteristics described, the Madonie Inner Area has been chosen as an experimentation area by the SNAI thanks to the use of strategies capable of generating innovation, as well as new and differentiated resources for the territory. The case of the Madonie development society named "Società di Sviluppo delle Madonie" (SoSviMa) is an example: a public-private association that interacts with public and private subjects of the Madonie in order to promote development of appropriate strategies for the use of the local resources. SoSviMa has a different area of action than the one identified by SNAI because it brings together a total of 29 Municipalities. In fact, some municipalities in the Imerese area, Caltanissetta and Enna are also included.

The strategies adopted for the development of the Municipalities of the Madonie area that historically have an agricultural vocation involve innovation to different parts of the territory. It is precisely in the agricultural sector that strategies have been developed for uncultivated and abandoned land, but also training courses for unemployed citizens in order to increase the employment of young farmers.

The energy needs of the Madonie territory are today met through renewable energy sources only with a percentage equal to 52% of the total energy requirement. A part of these renewable energies is replaced by the production of energy from biomasses: a figure destined to grow, based on the "Accordo di Programma Quadro", signed in September 2018. Specifically, the areas dedicated to agricultural production and interested in the creation of a network of small platforms for the treatment of woody and agricultural biomass are: areas with extensive crops (580,000 ha); olive groves (75,000 ha); vineyards (39,000 ha); orchards and citrus orchards (15,000 ha).

For agricultural production, some specific productions have been recognized as Slow Food Presidia:

- Scillato apricot (150 Q / year),

⁴ The data have been processed starting from the census data and the data relating to the surfaces of the administrative units. The author has processed the data.

- *Ape nera sicula* honey (1.5 T / year),
- *Badda* bean (15 Q / year)
- *Manna* (1500 kg / year)
- Polizzi pepper (1500 kg / year)
- *Provola delle Madonie* (59 T / year).

To these products must be added others that have not been awarded particular certifications, but which are recognized as identifying productions of the territory (*Basilisco* mushroom, Polizzi hazelnuts, *origano Vulgaris*, *Crastu* oil, Petralia Soprana salt) which are however a value for the madonite system.⁵

With the contribution of the Slow Food Foundation for Biodiversity, farms are engaged in the recovery of local varieties of ancient grains and olive oil, of which the Condotta Slow Food Alte Madonie is proposing the enhancement for the specific nutritive and pharmaceutical characteristics, together with the other productions of the Presidia. The promotion of typical products exceeds the theme of production and also involves agritourism initiatives. The multifunctionality that allows the rural environment allows to connect the productive activity of the agricultural and pastoral companies with the tourist activity in the rural areas.

The distance of the inner areas from the metropolitan propulsion centers has allowed the Madonie to maintain social, environmental and identity values. Today they allow to rethink the territory starting from the relationships with the rural dimension. In fact, in addition to productive specialization, there are attempts to enhance the natural and cultural heritage. Their development makes it possible to think of new forms of experiential tourism capable of involving both the resident population and external users. The values, differentiated among the single municipalities, were evaluated on the basis of the qualitative and quantitative methodologies developed in the field of research of Local Cultural Systems (Carta, 2003), which evaluates the cultural, naturalistic, touristic, agricultural, productive components in order to identify the peculiar identities and specializations and, therefore, the attractiveness of a given territory.

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⁵ The data are based on the 2017 production year. The author's elaboration was made starting from interviews with Slow Food managers.

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