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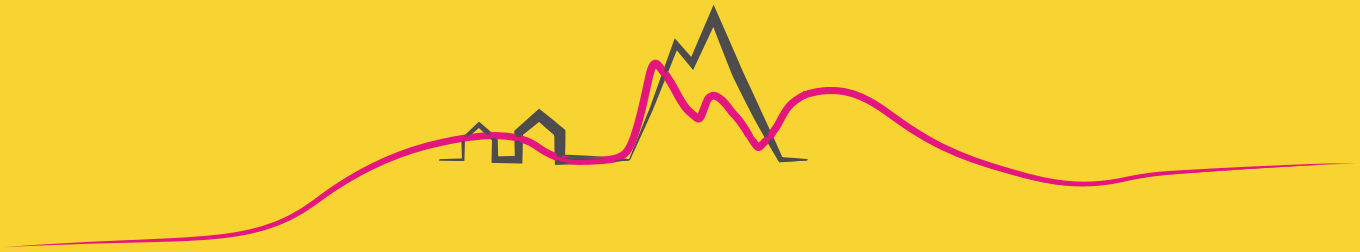
DOCTORAL THESIS

VILLAGES AND LANDSCAPES OF THE ABRUZZO INNER AREAS

STRATEGIES OF REUSE AND REGENERATION IN THE BASSO SANGRO-TRIGNO AREA



UNIVERSITY OF STUDY "G. D'ANNUNZIO" CHIETI - PESCARA
PHD COURSE IN **DESIGN CULTURES: CREATIVITY, HERITAGE, ENVIRONMENT**

Università degli Studi "G. d'Annunzo" Cheti - Pescara

University of Study "G. d'Annunzio" Chieti - Pescara

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Talvolta sono cittadine o borghi molto belli,
per la posizione, per qualche torre
o castello o chiesa antica e piazza.
Voi parlate con qualche abitante,
e vi rispondono che «non c'è nulla».
Ma è vero?

Sometimes they are small towns or villages of great beauty —
for their setting, for some tower
or castle or ancient church and square.
You talk with one of the inhabitants,
and they tell you that "there's nothing here."
But is that true?

— Aldo Capitini
(Translation of the author)

ABSTRACT

The question of villages and landscapes in Italy's inner areas is situated at the intersection of some of the most pressing challenges of the present day: the depopulation of rural and mountain territories, the decline of historic built heritage, territorial inequalities in access to essential services, and the search for development models that do not sacrifice the margins in favour of the centres. These dynamics are rooted in long-term processes through which vast portions of the national territory have been progressively emptied of inhabitants, functions and economies, leaving behind a widespread built heritage in conditions of abandonment or underuse. Despite growing attention within scientific debate and public policy, accelerated by the definition of the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI), a significant gap persists: development strategies for marginal territories, both in Italy and in the main comparable European contexts, have privileged the strengthening of essential services and support for local economies, while the specific question of abandoned built heritage has been neglected as an object of systematic intervention. This gap reflects the absence of a shared legal definition of the phenomenon, of adequate operational tools, and of methodologies accessible to small administrations, which rarely have the technical and economic resources necessary to address the problem autonomously.

The research takes this scenario as its starting point and sets itself a general objective: to develop and validate an operational methodology for the census and valorisation of abandoned built heritage in inner areas, verifying its applicability in a real context and its transferability to other local administrations. The question guiding the work is whether it is possible to construct a census methodology for disused public heritage that is at once rigorous on the cognitive level, sustainable on the administrative level, and transferable at the inter-municipal and regional scale. Three hypotheses structure the inquiry: that abandonment is not a residual or inevitable phenomenon, but the outcome of systemic processes that can be addressed through targeted tools, provided these are designed in accordance with the actual capacities of administrations; that the inter-municipal scale represents the minimum effective dimension for policies aimed at regenerating disused heritage; and that the systematic production of knowledge, through standardised and shared censuses, constitutes the indispensable precondition for any evidence-based public policy in this field.

On the methodological level, the research adopts an action-research approach, understood as an iterative process in which theory and practice mutually inform one another, and is structured in four phases. The first, theoretical and reconnaissance in nature, reconstructs the debate on inner areas and territorial inequalities, and comparatively analyses the policies for marginal territories adopted in Scotland, Switzerland and Italy, drawing also on two periods of research abroad at the Centre for Mountain Studies of the University of the Highlands and Islands in Perth and the Department of Architecture of ETH Zurich. It further addresses the phenomenon of built abandonment in its definitional, morphological and normative dimensions, proposing an operational systematisation according to building typologies, degrees of disuse and ownership regimes. The framework is completed by an analysis of two contemporary territorial dynamics that render the question of reuse more complex — touristification, with its risks of the commodification of space and the exclusion of residents, and the housing emergency, which produces the paradox of thousands of empty buildings alongside unmet housing demand — together with a critical review of socially, touristically, culturally and productively based reactivation practices, from which recurring enabling conditions in successful experiences emerge: project-based social capital, multifunctionality of provision, open territorial rootedness and public support configured as an enabler rather than as a permanent subsidy.

The second phase grounds the theoretical framework in the study context: the inner areas of Abruzzo and, within these, the Basso Sangro-Trigno area, the first SNAI prototype area in Abruzzo, comprising thirty-eight municipalities in the province of Chieti marked by long-term depopulation and structural economic fragility, while at the same time possessing environmental and cultural capital of exceptional value. The territorial analysis, conducted through statistical data, planning documents and an extensive programme of site visits and field meetings with administrators, mayors and community cooperatives carried

out over the course of the doctoral research, sets out the morphologies of abandonment that stratify the territory as though it were a palimpsest — from historic settlements to disused agricultural spaces, through to twentieth-century public buildings lacking protected status — and brings into focus the economic dimension of the phenomenon, further highlighted by the outcomes of post-seismic reconstruction: substantial public investment concentrated on the physical recovery of heritage, in the absence of territorial conditions enabling its effective use, produces a structural mismatch between refurbished provision and the vitality of places.

The third phase, central to the overall economy of the research, develops and tests the census methodology; on the basis of a critical analysis of existing tools, a methodological kit was designed, comprising strategic guidelines and operational instruments (a structured survey form, data-collection instructions, and criteria for assessing the state of conservation and the potential for reuse) conceived to be managed by municipal technical officers within the scope of their ordinary duties. The methodology distinguishes intervention approaches according to the value of the assets: conservative restoration, appropriate for protected heritage or heritage of recognised historical-cultural value, is complemented by the adaptive reuse of unprotected heritage, oriented towards reactivating its use value and environmental value through flexible and reversible solutions. The trial was conducted in the municipality of Colledimacine (149 inhabitants), selected for its advanced depopulation and for the presence of disused public heritage significant relative to the size of the municipality, and led to the survey of eleven abandoned public buildings, characterised on both a quantitative and a qualitative level and validated through a participatory presentation of results to the administration.

The fourth phase critically evaluates the results and addresses the question of the scalability of the model, analysing the limitations of the trial. Circumscribed to public heritage alone and tested in a single municipality, the methodology presents a defined scope of validity: it does not cover private heritage, which in small Apennine municipalities is estimated to represent between 70% and 85% of the total abandoned built stock, nor the inter-municipal dimension, nor the question of fragmented ownership that characterises much of the disused private heritage. On this basis, the research discusses the institutional and governance conditions necessary to extend the approach beyond the boundaries of the trial.

The research has produced results on three levels. On the cognitive level, it has yielded an articulated analytical picture of built abandonment in the inner areas of Abruzzo, confirming that the phenomenon is not an inevitable outcome of marginalisation but the product of systemic processes that can be countered. On the methodological level, it has demonstrated the technical and organisational feasibility of a census conducted with the ordinary resources of a small municipality: the methodology proved comprehensible, manageable by technical officers without additional specialist competences, and capable of producing information sufficient to support regeneration policies. On the strategic level, it has identified the conditions for scaling the model, formulating operational recommendations addressed to different levels of government and proposing the establishment of a “Pact for Disused Heritage”: a multi-level coordination instrument integrating standardised censuses, shared priority criteria, dedicated resources and outcome monitoring, with a view to transforming a widespread critical issue into a strategic lever for the regeneration of marginal territories. Such a framework, however, can function only if sustained by a political will extending beyond the technical instrument itself: reinhabiting the margins of the country, the thesis ultimately argues, is not merely a technical matter, but a political and cultural choice concerning the country as a whole.

Keywords: *inner areas*; *built abandonment*; *disused heritage*; *adaptive reuse*; *territorial regeneration*; *census*; *action-research*; *Basso Sangro - Trigno*; SNAI; *inter-municipal governance.*

At the opening of the Abstract *Vista sulla valle del Sangro*, Scontrone, Abruzzo, Italy.
Photograph by I. Matta, 2024

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On the preceding page *Majella Mountain and Turbulent Clouds*, Colledimezzo, Abruzzo, Italy.
Photograph by M. Kenna, 2016

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PREFACE

On the preceding page *Paesaggio delle aree interne abruzzesi.*
Photograph by I. Matta, 2024

This research was conceived within the framework of a *dottorato comunale* (a doctoral programme co-funded by a municipality) governed by Ministerial Decree No. 725/2021 of the Minister of University and Research, the purpose of which is to strengthen the relationship between academic research and the territories of inner areas by promoting local strategies for sustainable development in accordance with the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI). Within this framework, a doctoral studentship devoted to the themes of territorial regeneration and abandoned built heritage in the inner areas of Abruzzo was established by the Municipality of Montenerodomo—at that time the lead municipality of the SNAI pilot area of Basso Sangro-Trigno—under a partnership agreement with the Department of Architecture of the "G. d'Annunzio" University of Chieti-Pescara.

The initial project proposal proceeded from the observation that the demographic dynamics under way in the municipalities of the area were producing a progressive weakening of the settlement fabric together with a slow but steady economic decline; within abandoned built heritage and bottom-up reuse practices, a strategic resource was identified upon which place-based regeneration processes might be founded. It is upon this institutional and programmatic basis that the present work has been developed, its field of enquiry having been progressively directed, over the course of the doctorate, towards a more specific question: the definition of operational tools for surveying and building knowledge of disused public heritage, recognised as one of the principal critical issues in the relationship between territorial knowledge and the capacity for intervention in inner areas. The doctoral programme included two periods of research abroad, by which the international perspective of the thesis was broadened. The first was undertaken at the Centre for Mountain Studies of the University of the Highlands and Islands in Perth—a key point of reference for the study of policies addressing rural and remote areas—where the models of community governance and the local development strategies adopted in the Scottish context could be examined in depth, with particular attention devoted to community land ownership and to the role of communities in territorial regeneration processes. The second was undertaken at the Department of Architecture of ETH Zurich, where the opportunity was afforded to analyse Swiss federal policies for rural and mountain areas and to engage with a well-established tradition of scholarship on the territorial and landscape dimension.

Although they were pursued in differing institutional and disciplinary contexts, both experiences made it possible to situate the Abruzzo case within a broader European perspective and to identify governance models that may be transferred—albeit with the necessary adaptations—to the Italian context.

The thesis proceeds from the conviction that effective operational tools for inner areas must be designed on the basis of direct knowledge of the conditions under which local administrations operate—a conviction that has matured both on the academic plane and through a personal familiarity with these territories and their fragilities.

INTRODUCTION

The question of the villages and landscapes of Italy's inner areas is situated at the crossroads of some of the most pressing challenges of our time: the depopulation of rural and mountain territories, the decline of the historic built heritage, territorial inequalities in access to essential services, and the search for models of development that do not sacrifice the margins in favour of the centres.

Far from being recent or circumscribed phenomena, these dynamics are rooted in long-term historical processes by which vast portions of the national territory have been progressively drained of inhabitants, functions and economies, producing what Rossi Doria had already lucidly described in the 1950s as the fracture between the "flesh" (*polpa*) and the "bone" (*osso*) of the country—a fracture that has never been fully healed. The dichotomy between inner areas and urban centres does not constitute a peculiarity of the Italian context, but rather a structural phenomenon that has traversed the whole of Europe since the Industrial Revolution, when the shift from rural to urban life set in motion processes of demographic and economic concentration that were destined to persist throughout the twentieth century (Barca *et al.*, 2012; Iammarino et al., 2019; Rodríguez-Pose, 2018).

In Italy, however, this process assumed particularly acute characteristics for historical, geographical and political reasons: the fragmentation of the Apennine territory, the absence of an industrial policy capable of enhancing local resources, and the implicit yet systematic choice to concentrate investment and infrastructure in the plains and in the major metropolitan and coastal areas[1] progressively condemned the inner territories to a condition of structural marginality (Barca *et al.*, 2014; De Rossi, 2018; Dematteis, 2016). To this were added, over the course of the twentieth century, traumatic events of various kinds—earthquakes, hydrogeological instability, wars—by which the settlement fabric of many Apennine areas was further weakened, accelerating the abandonment of villages and minor historic centres.

1 It is no coincidence that Calvino, in 1957, chose coastal building speculation itself as a metaphor for the betrayal of Italian culture towards its own territory: see I. Calvino, *La speculazione edilizia*, first published in «Botteghe Oscure», XIX, 1957, and subsequently in volume form by Einaudi, Turin, 1963.

On the preceding page *Distant Mountains*, Passo delle Capannelle, Pizzoli, Abruzzo, Italy.
Photograph by M. Kenna, 2015

The scientific and political debate surrounding these themes has undergone a significant acceleration in recent decades, above all since the definition of the National Strategy
for Inner Areas (SNAI) in 2014 (Barca *et al.*, 2014), by which a new interpretive key to the territory was introduced, founded no longer upon geo-morphological or demographic criteria, but upon distance from essential services and upon inequalities of citizenship. In parallel, the theme of abandoned built heritage has acquired growing relevance within the urban-planning debate, taking shape as a potential resource from which regeneration processes might be initiated (Curci and Zanfi, 2018; De Rossi, 2018; Oteri, 2019; Varagnoli *et al.*, 2020; Mangialardi, 2023).
Notwithstanding these advances at the level of theoretical reflection and public policy, a significant gap nonetheless persists: development strategies for inner areas, both in Italy and in the principal comparable European contexts, have to date privileged the strengthening of essential services and support for local economies, while neglecting the specific question of abandoned built heritage as an object of systematic intervention (Borghi, 2017; Lucatelli *et al.*, 2022). This gap is not accidental: it reflects the absence of adequate operational tools, of a shared legal definition of the phenomenon of abandonment, and of methodologies accessible to small local administrations, which often do not possess the technical and economic resources required to address the problem autonomously. It is precisely within this space, between awareness of the problem and the lack of tools with which to address it, that the work proposed here is situated. The research path arose from the observation of this scenario in the area of Basso Sangro-Trigno, in Abruzzo: a territory that represents with particular clarity the contradictions of Italy's inner areas, where a built and landscape heritage of extraordinary value coexists with phenomena of abandonment and depopulation that threaten its very survival.
In the face of this scenario, the research seeks not only to describe the problem but also to construct operational tools aimed at transforming it into an opportunity for territorial regeneration, thereby contributing to the bridging of that gap between theory and practice which continues, to this day, to hinder effective policies for the country's marginal territories.

RESEARCH THEME

Italy's inner areas—defined by SNAI as those territories distant from the principal centres for the provision of essential services relating to mobility, education and health—cover approximately 60% of the national territory and are home to slightly less than a quarter of the population. These are places which, over the course of the twentieth century, underwent a progressive process of economic and demographic marginalisation, accelerated by the agrarian reform[2] of the 1950s, by the industrialisation concentrated in the plains and in the large cities, and by the consequent haemorrhaging of population towards the urban centres (Carrosio & Faccini, 2018). The result is a profoundly transformed settlement landscape: historic villages in demographic decline, degraded or disused infrastructure, impoverished local economies and a built heritage that is largely abandoned or under-used. According to ISTAT data, between 2014 and 2024 the inner areas registered a loss of 5% of their population, with projections indicating that by 2043 more than 80% of the municipalities of the inner areas will be in demographic decline (Fig. 1), with particularly acute rates in the Apennine and insular areas[3].

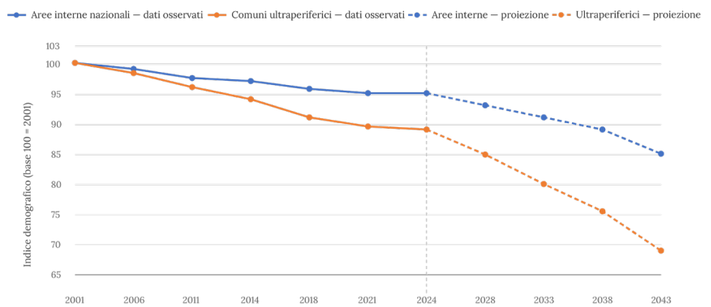

Figure 1.
Demographic dynamics in Italy's inner areas (2001–2024) and projections to 2043 (base index 100 = 2001). The municipalities in the outermost category display more pronounced rates of decline than the average for the inner areas. Source: ISTAT (2024), ISTAT demographic projections 2023.

2 The agrarian reform of 1950, implemented through the *legge Sila* (Sila Act) and the *legge stralcio* (Segregation Act), had the objective of redistributing uncultivated land and colonising the rural areas of the South. Paradoxically, in its implementation phase it contributed to accelerating the depopulation of the most marginal inner areas, since the beneficiaries of the allocations often preferred to monetise the plots they had received and relocate to the urban areas then undergoing rapid industrial expansion.

3 The most recent data confirm the gravity of the phenomenon: according to ISTAT, between 2014 and 2024 the inner areas lost 5% of their population, falling to 13.3 million inhabitants, while projections indicate that by 2043 more than 82% of the municipalities of the inner areas will be in demographic decline—with peaks of 93% in the outermost municipalities of the *Mezzogiorno* (southern Italy). See ISTAT, *Statistica focus: demografia delle aree interne*, July 2024.

The phenomenon of the depopulation and marginalisation of the inner areas has been the object of a substantial body of scholarship by which its understanding has been progressively enriched. Whereas the earliest interpretations tended to read the decline of rural areas as an inevitable outcome of economic modernisation (Friedmann & Weaver, 1978), the more recent literature has highlighted how marginalisation is in reality the product of specific political choices and of institutional arrangements that have systematically penalised the inner territories in favour of urban and metropolitan areas (Barca *et al.*, 2014; Carrosio, 2019). From this perspective, the inner areas are not places naturally destined for decline, but territories that have undergone a process of progressive public disinvestment—in infrastructure, services, education and healthcare—by which their capacity to retain population and generate local development has been eroded (Carrosio, 2019). This reading, which shifts responsibility for the decline from geography to politics, underlies the approach of SNAI and constitutes the interpretive foundation of the present research. Within this general framework, the theme of abandoned built heritage occupies a central yet still systematically under-explored position.

The abandonment of the built environment in the inner areas is a phenomenon of considerable magnitude: according to estimates by the Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica (National Institute of Urban Planning), in the small Apennine municipalities disused private heritage represents a largely predominant share of the abandoned buildings, whereas public heritage, though constituting a minority share, is often the heritage over which local administrations have the greatest scope for direct intervention, as underscored in the literature on inner areas and on the regeneration of built heritage (Curci & Zanfi, 2018). Unlike other urban-planning phenomena—such as land consumption, for which consolidated regulatory frameworks exist (Romano, Zullo, 2016; ISPRA, 2023)—building abandonment in the inner areas does not yet possess a shared national legal definition, nor systematic operational tools by which it might be surveyed, managed and countered. The existing regional regulations, although they represent a first step in this direction—such as LR 24/2017 of Emilia-Romagna and LR 58/2023 of Abruzzo (regional laws)—often prove insufficient on account of the heterogeneity of the criteria adopted, the voluntary nature of the procedures for registration in the relevant inventories, and the absence of shared standards that would render the data comparable and usable at a supra-local scale.

This regulatory and operational gap translates into a paradoxical coexistence that characterises many of Italy's inner areas: thousands of empty buildings coexist with growing difficulties of access to housing for young people, potential new residents and workers, generating what some authors have defined as the paradox of invisible heritage[4] - potentially valuable resources that remain inaccessible for want of adequate cognitive and administrative tools.

Further complicating this scenario is the question of touristification: in certain historic villages, the success of tourism has set in motion processes of the commodification of space that risk transforming heritage recovery into an excluding process, one which attracts investment and visitors but proves unable to retain (or attract) permanent residents (Milano et al., 2019). The risk, denounced by a growing critical literature on tourism in rural areas (Dodds, Butler, 2019), is that the regeneration of abandoned heritage may become a vector of rural gentrification, replicating within historic villages dynamics already amply documented in urban centres (Gravari-Barbas, Guinand, 2017).

In this context, Abruzzo represents an emblematic case for central and southern Italy. With 230 of its 305 municipalities classified as inner areas by SNAI, of which 115 fall within the peripheral or outermost category, and with 253 municipalities below 5,000 inhabitants, the region concentrates in exemplary fashion the structural fragilities of the Apennine inner areas (ISTAT, 2024). The marginalisation of Abruzzo is the result of a historical stratification of traumatic events—earthquakes, hydrogeological instability, post-war depopulation—which have been superimposed upon the long-term economic dynamics, producing a complex

4 The expression "paradox of invisible heritage" recalls the international literature on the concept of *dark heritage* and of *absent presence* elaborated by Tim Edensor (2005) to describe abandoned places as spaces that continue to produce social and territorial meanings notwithstanding their functional decommissioning. In the Italian context, Curci and Zanfi (2018) have inflected this paradox in terms of governance, highlighting how the lack of adequate cognitive tools transforms a potential resource into an intractable problem.

geography of deserted settlements, partially inhabited nuclei and incomplete attempts at re-founding (Varagnoli, 2008; Bartolomucci, 2020). The notion of the palimpsest (Corboz, 1983) is particularly pertinent for describing this territory, where each layer of transformation does not completely erase the preceding one, but rather integrates it within a discontinuous spatial narrative composed of ruins, dilapidated houses and abandoned infrastructure that constitute the material signs of a suspended time.

Paradoxically, however, it is precisely the isolation of the inner areas of Abruzzo that has inadvertently preserved the authenticity of the built heritage and the quality of the natural environments, configuring a resource of inestimable value within a context of growing homogenisation (Oteri, 2019): unlike the Alps, where mass tourism development has often distorted the character of mountain villages, the isolation of the Abruzzo Apennines has safeguarded many places that elsewhere have been irretrievably transformed. The area of Basso Sangro-Trigno—the first prototype area of SNAI in Abruzzo, identified in 2015 for the 2014–2020 programming cycle—synthesises these contradictions with particular clarity. Composed of 38 municipalities in the province of Chieti, distributed across the eastern Maiella, the Sangro valley and the Alto Vastese, the area is home to 21,430 inhabitants over a surface of 859 km², with population densities among the lowest in the region and depopulation dynamics among the most accelerated. It is within this territory—articulated into the three sub-areas of the Aventino, the Sangro and the Alto Vastese—that the research has chosen to root its experimentation, in the conviction that an operational approach to the regeneration of abandoned heritage must necessarily engage with the specificity of places, of local administrations and of resident communities, overcoming the temptation of universal solutions that risk failing to adapt to the variety and complexity of the territorial contexts of Italy's inner areas.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research sets itself a general objective: to develop and validate an operational methodology for the surveying and enhancement of abandoned built heritage in the inner areas, testing its applicability within a real context and its transferability to other local administrations. This objective is situated at the intersection between theoretical research and operational practice, within the perspective of action research: it is not merely a matter of describing a phenomenon, but of constructing tools that may be concretely adopted by public administrations in the ordinary management of their disused heritage.

Proceeding from this general objective, the research pursues five specific objectives. The first is to reconstruct the interpretive framework of the Italian and European inner areas, with particular attention devoted to the dynamics of territorial marginalisation and to the existing local development policies. The second is to analyse the phenomenon of building abandonment in its multidimensional complexity—definitional, morphological and regulatory—highlighting the shortcomings of the tools currently available. The third is to contextualise these dynamics within the territory of Abruzzo and the area of Basso Sangro-Trigno, rendering their historical, geographical and socio-economic specificity. The fourth is to develop a methodology for surveying abandoned public heritage designed to be applicable with the ordinary resources of municipal administrations, without the need for additional investment or extraordinary expertise. The fifth, finally, is to identify the conditions—operational, institutional and of governance—required in order to scale the approach from the dimension of the individual municipality to the inter-municipal and regional dimension, thereby contributing to the construction of a more coherent national framework for the management of disused heritage in the inner areas.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESES

Proceeding from the objectives outlined above, the research is structured around a principal question: is it possible to develop an operational methodology for surveying abandoned public built heritage in the inner areas that is at once rigorous in cognitive terms, sustainable in administrative terms, and transferable at the inter-municipal and regional scale?

This principal question is accompanied by three secondary questions by which its complexity is articulated. The first concerns the phenomenon: what are the morphologies, the causes and

the dimensions of building abandonment in the inner areas of Abruzzo, and to what extent are the regulatory and planning tools currently available adequate to address it? The second concerns the methodology: is a survey form designed to be managed by municipal technical staff within the scope of their ordinary competences capable of producing data sufficiently complete and reliable to support regeneration policies? The third concerns scale: what institutional, regulatory and governance conditions are required in order that an approach tested at the municipal level might be adopted systematically at the inter-municipal and regional scale? The research hypotheses that guide the work are three in number. The first is that the abandonment of built heritage in the inner areas is not a residual or inevitable phenomenon, but the outcome of systemic processes that may be addressed through targeted operational tools, provided that these are designed in accordance with the real capacities of local administrations. The second is that the inter-municipal scale represents the minimum effective dimension for policies of regeneration of disused heritage, since the individual municipalities of the inner areas do not possess the technical, economic and administrative resources required to address the problem autonomously. The third is that the systematic production of knowledge—through standardised and shared surveys—constitutes a preliminary and indispensable condition for any evidence-based public policy in the matter of abandoned heritage.

METHODOLOGY

The research adopts an action-research approach [5], understood as an iterative process (Fig. 2) in which theory and practice mutually nourish one another (Lewin, 1946; Schön, 1983), particularly suited to contexts in which the production of knowledge is interwoven with the transformation of the problematic situation through direct intervention and the involvement of local actors.

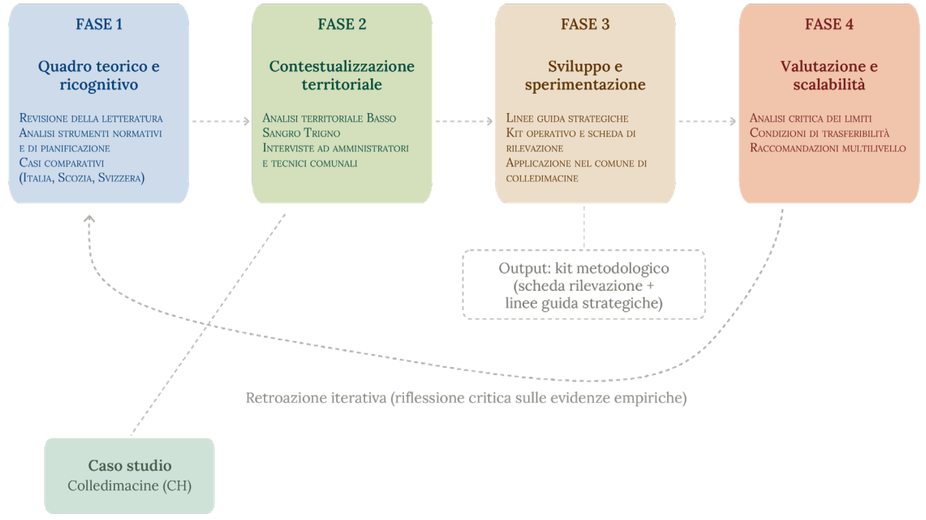

Figure 2.
Methodological scheme of the research: articulation into four phases according to the action-research approach. The dashed arrow indicates the process of iterative feedback between the phases. The case study of Colledimacine is situated within Phase 2, of territorial contextualisation, and Phase 3, of experimentation.
Source: the author's own elaboration

Unlike traditional academic research, which tends to maintain an analytical distance from its object of study, action research is founded upon an epistemology of practice (Schön, 1983) by which the cognitive value of direct action in the field and of critical reflection upon its outcomes is recognised. Within the urban-planning field, this approach has found significant applications in the study of urban and territorial regeneration policies (Healey, 1997; Forester, 1999), and has proved particularly fruitful in the contexts of inner areas, where the distance between academic production and the operational capacities of local administrations is often very wide. On the epistemological plane, the research is situated within a tradition of qualitative and interpretive research, while nonetheless integrating quantitative dimensions wherever these are required in order to convey the substance of the phenomenon analysed. The approach adopted is predominantly inductive: rather than verifying predefined hypotheses through standardised methods, the research has progressively constructed its own interpretive framework through direct observation, dialogue with local actors and critical reflection upon the empirical evidence gathered in the field. This methodological choice reflects the very nature of the object of study: abandoned built heritage in the inner areas is a profoundly contextual phenomenon, the understanding of which requires an immersion in the territory and in its historical, geographical and

5 Action research, proposed as such by Kurt Lewin in an essay of 1946 published in the Journal of Social Issues, has found significant applications in the field of urban planning and spatial planning since the 1990s, above all in the work of Forester (1999) and Healey (1997), by whom its communicative and participatory dimension was brought to the fore. Its adoption in inner-area contexts has been discussed more recently by Carrosio (2019), who has underscored how the distance between academic production and the operational capacities of local administrations renders this approach particularly appropriate for applied research in marginal territories.

administrative specificities that purely quantitative methods are unable to convey.

The work is articulated into four principal phases, each characterised by specific methods and tools. The first phase, theoretical and exploratory in nature, entailed a systematic review of the scholarly literature on the inner areas, on local development policies in comparable European contexts—with particular attention devoted to the cases of Scotland and Switzerland, selected for the sophistication of their respective policies for rural and mountain areas—and on the phenomenon of building abandonment in its definitional, morphological and regulatory dimensions. The literature review was complemented by a systematic analysis of the principal regulatory and planning tools at the national and regional levels, with the aim of mapping the existing regulatory framework and identifying its shortcomings and potentialities. This phase made it possible to construct the interpretive framework within which the experimentation might be situated and to identify the cognitive and operational gaps that the research intends to bridge.

The second phase concerned the construction of the research context through an in-depth territorial analysis of inner Abruzzo and of the area of Basso Sangro-Trigno. This phase combined diverse methods and sources: the analysis of statistical and demographic data (ISTAT, 2024), the reading of regional and national policies concerning inner areas and disused heritage, the examination of the SNAI programming documents for the Abruzzo pilot area, and an extensive body of direct reconnaissance in the field. The latter included systematic site visits to the municipalities of the area, semi-structured interviews with local administrators, municipal technical staff and representatives of the resident communities, and the photographic and cartographic documentation of the disused built heritage. The totality of these activities made it possible to render the historical, geographical and socio-economic specificity of the study area, furnishing the context within which the proposed methodology might be put to the test.

The third phase, central within the economy of the research, concerned the development and testing of the surveying methodology. The process of constructing the methodology followed an iterative path articulated into several stages: an initial critical analysis of the existing tools—survey forms adopted by other administrations, regional inventories of unused properties, mapping experiences conducted in comparable contexts in Italy and in Europe—made it possible to identify the limitations of the available approaches and to define the requirements that the new methodology would need to satisfy. Proceeding from this analysis, an original methodology was designed, articulated into two complementary components: a set of strategic guidelines, intended to orient administrations in the choices of priority and of governance of the surveying process, and a kit of operational tools, comprising a structured survey form, instructions for the collection and organisation of the data, and criteria for the assessment of the state of conservation and of the reuse potential of the properties surveyed. The methodology was then applied in the municipality of Colledimacine, selected as a case study for its emblematic characteristics: 128 inhabitants, advanced depopulation, a monocentric configuration and a public abandoned heritage significant in relation to the size of the municipality. The survey, conducted directly by the municipal technical staff with the methodological support of the research, encompassed the heritage under municipal public ownership, producing a quantitative and qualitative characterisation of the disused properties. The results of the survey were then discussed with the municipal administration in a session of participatory restitution, by which feedback on the usability of the tools could be gathered and the methodology further refined.

The fourth phase concerned the critical evaluation of the results and the formulation of recommendations for the scalability of the model. This phase systematically analysed the limitations of the experimentation—from its restriction to public heritage alone to its testing within a single municipality—identifying the conditions required in order to extend the methodology to private heritage and to the inter-municipal dimension. Through a process of critical reflection upon the data gathered and upon the comparison with the international literature on inner-area regeneration policies, operational recommendations were formulated, addressed to the various levels of government—municipal, inter-municipal, regional and national—within the

perspective of constructing a systemic and coordinated approach to the management of abandoned heritage in Italy's inner areas. The recommendations were structured according to a principle of graduality and operational realism: rather than proposing ideal solutions that would be difficult to implement, the research privileged concrete indications, anchored to the real capacities of local administrations and progressively scalable towards higher levels of complexity.

STRUCTURE OF THE WORK

The thesis is organised into four parts, each of which addresses a specific dimension of the problem and contributes, in progressive fashion, to the construction of the overall framework of the research.

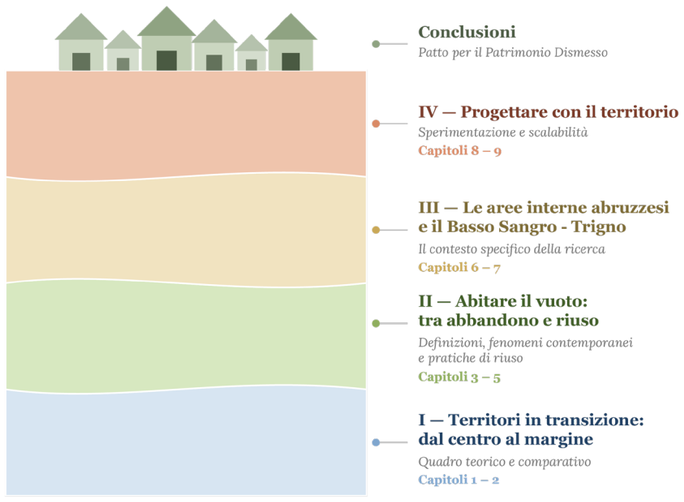

Figure 3. The structure of the thesis represented as a stratigraphy of the territory: each part constitutes a stratum that is superimposed upon the preceding one without erasing it, recalling the concept of the palimpsest (Corboz, 1983). Source: the author's own elaboration.

Part I, entitled *Territori in transizione: dal centro al margine* (Territories in transition: from the centre to the margin), constructs the theoretical and comparative framework within which the research is situated. Chapter 1 reconstructs the scientific and political debate on the Italian and European inner areas, retracing the historical origins of territorial marginalisation from the theories of Rossi Doria (1958) through to the definition of the National Strategy for Inner Areas (Barca *et al.*, 2014), and examining in depth the concept of territorial inequality as an interpretive key to understanding the dynamics that still today govern the relationship between centres and peripheries. Chapter 2 broadens the view to the European context, analysing the policies for inner areas adopted in Scotland and in Switzerland[6] as significant comparative cases, highlighting both the differences in the models of governance and the common shortcomings with respect to the specific question of abandoned built heritage.

Part II, entitled *Abitare il vuoto: tra abbandono e riuso* (Inhabiting the void: between abandonment and reuse), examines in depth the phenomenon of building abandonment in its multidimensional complexity. Chapter 3 addresses the definitional, morphological and regulatory question of abandonment, bringing to light the absence of a shared national legal framework and proposing an operational systematisation of the typologies and degrees of decommissioning that characterise the built heritage of the inner areas. Chapter 4 analyses two contemporary territorial dynamics of particular relevance for understanding the context within which the question of reuse is situated: touristification, with its risks of the commodification of space and of the exclusion of permanent residents, and the housing emergency, which produces the paradox of thousands of empty buildings coexisting with growing difficulties of access to housing. Chapter 5 reviews the principal practices of reuse of abandoned heritage in the inner areas, analysing their approaches, tools and results and identifying the conditions that determine their success or failure.

Part III, entitled *Le aree interne abruzzesi e il Basso Sangro-Trigno* (The inner areas of Abruzzo and the Basso Sangro-Trigno), roots the theoretical framework within the specific context of the research. Chapter 6 renders the physical, social and economic geography of the area of Basso Sangro-Trigno, describing its morphological composition, its demographic dynamics and its specificities with respect to the broader panorama of the inner areas of Abruzzo and of SNAI programming. Chapter 7 examines

6 The choice of Scotland and Switzerland as comparative cases is motivated by three principal reasons: in the first place, both contexts present a long tradition of policies specifically addressed to rural and mountain areas, endowed with regulatory and institutional tools more consolidated than those of the Italian context. In the second place, both Scotland, with its *Land Reform Policy,* and Switzerland, with its *Neue Regionalpolitik* (New Regional Policy), have developed innovative approaches to the management of built heritage in remote areas, which offer comparative insights of relevance for the present research. In the third place, the availability of an extensive body of scholarly literature in English on these cases facilitates their systematic analysis. This choice does not imply an assessment of the superiority of these models with respect to other comparable European contexts, such as the French and Austrian cases, which likewise present elements of interest.

in depth the typologies and morphologies of abandonment in inner Abruzzo and in the study area, reading the territory as a stratified palimpsest in which historical cycles of abandonment and reuse, traumatic events and long-term economic dynamics are superimposed upon one another, and identifying within disused heritage a potential resource for sustainable development processes.

Part IV, entitled *Progettare con il territorio* (Designing with the territory), constitutes the operational heart of the research. Chapter 8 documents the experimentation conducted in the area of Basso Sangro-Trigno, describing the development and application of the methodology for surveying abandoned public heritage in the municipality of Colledimacine: from the definition of the objectives and research questions of the experimentation, to the critical analysis of the existing tools, through to the development of the methodological kit, its application in the field and the presentation of the survey results. Chapter 9 addresses the dimension of scalability and governance, analysing the limitations of the experimentation, arguing for the inter-municipal scale as the minimum effective dimension for policies of regeneration of disused heritage, and formulating operational recommendations addressed to the various levels of government within the perspective of constructing a systemic and coordinated approach to the management of abandoned heritage in Italy's inner areas.

The conclusions draw together the threads of the four parts, assess the degree to which the research questions and hypotheses formulated in the introduction have been answered, and formulate the idea of a Patto per il Patrimonio Dismesso (Pact for Disused Heritage)[7] as an instrument of multi-level coordination aimed at transforming a widespread critical issue into a strategic lever for the regeneration of the country's marginal territories.

7 The idea of the Patto per il Patrimonio Dismesso (Pact for Disused Heritage) draws inspiration from instruments of multi-level coordination already tested in other spheres of Italian territorial policy, such as the Contratto di Fiume (River Contract). These instruments are founded upon a voluntary and participatory approach that simultaneously involves public and private actors in agreements for the shared management of territorial resources. The model of the Patto proposed in this work takes up this logic and applies it to disused built heritage: a framework agreement between institutional levels and territorial actors that defines differentiated yet complementary commitments, shared monitoring mechanisms and a light steering committee. For a fuller discussion, reference is made to Chapter 9.4.

RESULTS OBTAINED

The research has produced results on three distinct yet interconnected levels. On the cognitive level, it has rendered an articulated analytical framework of the phenomenon of building abandonment in the inner areas of Abruzzo, highlighting the complexity of its morphologies, the historical stratification of its causes and the shortcomings of the regulatory tools currently available to address it. The analysis has confirmed the initial hypothesis: abandonment is not an inevitable outcome of marginalisation, but the product of systemic processes that may be countered through adequate operational tools, provided that these are designed in accordance with the real capacities of local administrations. On the methodological level, the research has developed and validated a methodology for surveying abandoned public heritage that is applicable with the ordinary resources of the municipalities of the inner areas. The experimentation conducted at Colledimacine demonstrated the technical and organisational feasibility of the approach, producing a complete survey of the municipality's disused public properties and furnishing empirical evidence on the quality and completeness of the data obtainable through the proposed tools. The methodology proved comprehensible, manageable by municipal technical staff without additional specialist expertise and capable of producing information sufficient to support regeneration policies.

On the strategic level, the research has identified the institutional and governance conditions required in order to scale the model from the municipal dimension to the inter-municipal and regional dimension, formulating operational recommendations addressed to the various levels of government. From this perspective, the work proposes the idea of a *Patto per il Patrimonio Dismesso* (Pact for Disused Heritage) as an instrument of multi-level coordination that may transform a widespread problem into a strategic lever for the regeneration of the inner areas, in the conviction that to re-inhabit the country's margins is not merely a technical question, but a political and cultural choice that concerns the entire national system.

PART ONE

TERRITORIES IN TRANSITION: FROM THE CENTRE TO THE MARGIN

On the preceding page *Gathering Clouds*, Casoli, Abruzzo, Italy,
Photograph by M. Kenna, 2016

1. INNER AREAS: DEFINITION, ISSUES AND POTENTIALITIES

The historic dichotomy between inner areas and urban centres, initiated in Europe with the Industrial Revolution and with the consequent shift from rural to urban life, has over time shaped the European economic and social panorama, laying the foundations for the patterns of migration and urbanisation that still today influence both developed and emerging countries.

In recent years, the debate on the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) in Italy has served as an example of the efforts undertaken to address these inequalities, with the aim of reorganising governmental support and resources and of revitalising these often neglected regions. As has been observed within the academic debate, territorial inequalities derive from a complex interplay of economic, political, social and geographical factors that have historically favoured the more densely urbanised zones over the inner ones (Rossi Doria, 1958; Barca *et al.*, 2014).

Furthermore, the current wave of regional economic polarisation has given rise to new forms of inequality, with rural areas undergoing a growing decline in social status and in access to opportunities. These ongoing dynamics highlight the critical need for policies aimed at promoting a more equitable distribution of public resources and services across both coastal and inner regions, thereby addressing the historical injustices that have shaped the present panorama of territorial inequalities.

1.1 INNER AREAS AND TERRITORIAL INEQUALITIES

Over the past decade, an important role in the Italian political, public and academic debate has been assumed by the so-called inner areas, places which over time have undergone significant processes of territorial marginalisation on account of the sharp decrease in population and of their considerable distance from the centres for the provision of those public services considered essential (health, education and mobility) (Barca *et al.*, 2014).

The concept of inner areas has its deepest roots in the theories elaborated from the 1950s onwards by intellectuals and economists who championed the development of the Mezzogiorno (southern Italy) and who denounced the abyssal distance that, on the socio-economic plane, was coming to be marked between the inner areas and the plains—the flesh and the bone (*polpa* and *osso*) of

the country (Rossi Doria, 1958). According to Rossi Doria, to the more productive and urbanised areas of the flesh were opposed the areas of that rural Italy of the bone: poor, impoverished areas, destined to represent the Italy of the margin, of the edges. Rossi Doria was not the first to have voiced and underscored the progressive divergence that was taking shape between the inner areas and the productive areas of the country. Between the 1920s and 1930s, the survey promoted by the Committee for Geography of the National Council of Agricultural Economics, *Lo spopolamento montano in Italia. Indagine geografico-economico-agraria* (Mountain depopulation in Italy: a geographical-economic-agrarian survey) [8], highlighted how the phenomenon of mountain depopulation is indissolubly linked to factors of an economic nature and brought to light how policies, from the Industrial Revolution onwards, had privileged the processes of industrialisation of the plains and large urban areas to the detriment of the more remote areas, leaving to these territories their more pastoral vocation.

In the ensuing decades, new surveys and studies were promoted, and measures and actions introduced, with the intent of investigating and attempting to counter the emptying that afflicted the many rural territories. Such areas, being effectively unable to oppose the hegemony represented by the cities, still less to compete with the dense urban areas, were over time deprived of essential public services such as schools, health facilities and rail connections. These factors inevitably accelerated and contributed to marking the fragility, as well as the distance, between the areas of the flesh and those of the bone.

From 2014 onwards, the National Strategy for Inner Areas has once again brought attention to bear upon the rights of citizenship (Carrosio, Faccini, 2018), with the intention of bridging the civic gaps of those citizens who live at the edges. Such marginality is expressed on the basis of the opportunity that people have to exercise their rights, translated in terms of accessibility to those public services considered essential mobility, schooling and health: the greater the travel time required to reach the municipalities in which such services are provided, the greater the gap that affects them. From the methodological point of view, the National Strategy for Inner Areas is founded upon a classification of the territory that measures the temporal distance from the principal centres providing services, arranging the Italian municipalities along a gradient of decreasing accessibility. The inner areas in the strict sense (Fig. 4), those most distant from the poles, occupy approximately 60% of the national territory, comprise more than 52% of the Italian municipalities and concern approximately 13 million inhabitants, involving predominantly the Alpine and Apennine mountain systems but also extensive portions of the hilly and insular territory (Barca *et al.*, 2014).

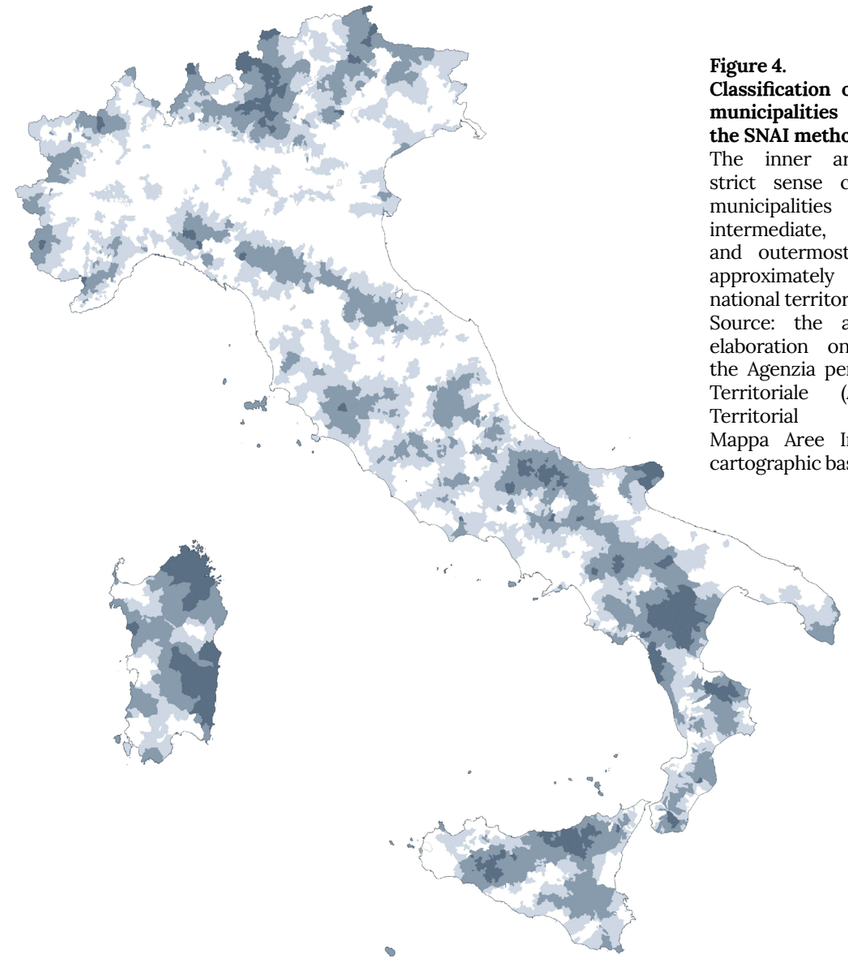

Figure 4.
Classification of the Italian municipalities according to the SNAI methodology.
The inner areas in the strict sense comprise the municipalities classified as intermediate, peripheral and outermost, and cover approximately 60% of the national territory.
Source: the author's own elaboration on data from the Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale (Agency for Territorial Cohesion), Mappa Aree Interne 2020; cartographic base ISTAT 2021.

8 The survey was promoted between 1932 and 1938 and was articulated into eight regional volumes. It represents the first systematic attempt to document the phenomenon of mountain depopulation on a national scale, anticipating by more than twenty years the theoretical debate that would find its most fully realised synthesis in the work of Rossi Doria. For a historiographical framing, see Bevilacqua (1993).

What emerges from this methodological approach and from the associated mapping is a new interpretive key to the territory. Whereas up to this point the territory had been read on the basis predominantly of criteria of a geo-morphological, demographic and socio-economic nature, the approach introduced by SNAI takes into consideration, for the first time, the factors of territorial inequality. This shift becomes fundamental in directing attention towards the spatial dynamics of inequality and the implications that these have for local development (Barca, Carrosio, 2018), which represents one of the five strategic objectives of the National Strategy for Inner Areas, together with the increase in the well-being of the population, in employment, in the use of territorial capital, and the reduction of the costs of de-anthropisation.

Yet how might one suppose that geography does not influence the destiny of the people who inhabit particular places?

From the conceptual point of view, the inner areas are situated at the intersection between peripherality and marginality, where by peripherality is understood the distance from the poles, conceived as a difficulty of accessibility to the physical and infrastructural apparatus, while by marginality is understood social, economic, cultural and demographic impoverishment.

Although the inner areas prove to be places rich in terms of territorial capital—which appears for the most part unused and/or abandoned—account must be taken of the social and economic hardship of those who live in these places. The cycle of decline generated by the scarcity, both quantitative and qualitative, of services, besides bringing about a diminution in the quality of life of the inhabitants and a de facto weakening of services, as well as of the availability of employment, represents an incentive to outward migratory flows and a disincentive to the relocation of any prospective new residents. The result of this impoverishment is represented by the progressive ageing of the population, which does nothing but feed this spiral of remoteness that struggles to be arrested. Although SNAI attempts to overcome the opposition, as much geographical as symbolic, between inner areas and urban areas, this governmental initiative nonetheless raises certain questions regarding the criteria adopted for their classification. The opportunity to measure accessibility in terms of effective improvement in access to services, rather than basing it exclusively upon temporal criteria, would make it possible to assess with greater precision the actual benefit for residents, moving beyond a purely quantitative reading of distances (Di Ciommo and Shiftan, 2017)[9].

Nevertheless, notwithstanding the methodological limitations highlighted, the SNAI classification has had the merit of rendering visible and measurable the territorial dimension of inequality, laying the foundations for the more targeted policies that will be discussed in the following chapter.

1.2 FRAGILITIES AND POTENTIALITIES OF MARGINAL TERRITORIES

Once the nature of the territorial inequalities that characterise Italy's inner areas has been grasped, it becomes necessary to examine in greater depth the specificities of these contexts, analysing the dialectic between the elements of fragility and the potential resources that define their socio-economic and territorial profile.

The reading of marginal territories has long oscillated between two interpretive extremes: on the one hand, a deterministic vision that configures them as residual spaces destined for abandonment; on the other, a celebratory rhetoric that uncritically extols their unexpressed potentialities. To overcome this dichotomy requires a more nuanced view, one able to recognise simultaneously the structural fragilities that characterise these contexts and the specific territorial resources that they safeguard, within a perspective of place-based development (Barca, 2009)[10], founded upon the recognition of territorial specificity as the point of departure for any development strategy. The fragilities of marginal territories manifest themselves first and foremost on the demographic plane.

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9 The SNAI classification has been the object of critical revisions on the methodological plane as well. Scrofani and Accordino (2024) have proposed an alternative reclassification for Sicily based on principal component analysis, demonstrating how the adoption of exclusively temporal indicators tends to underestimate marginalisation in complex geographical contexts. Similarly, Vendemmia, Pucci and Beria (2022) have proposed an alternative geography of Italy's marginal areas that integrates indicators of multimodal accessibility.

10 The concept of place-based development was systematically elaborated by Barca (2009) in the report An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy, commissioned by the European Commission, in contrast to place-neutral approaches that privilege the mobility of the factors of production independently of their location.

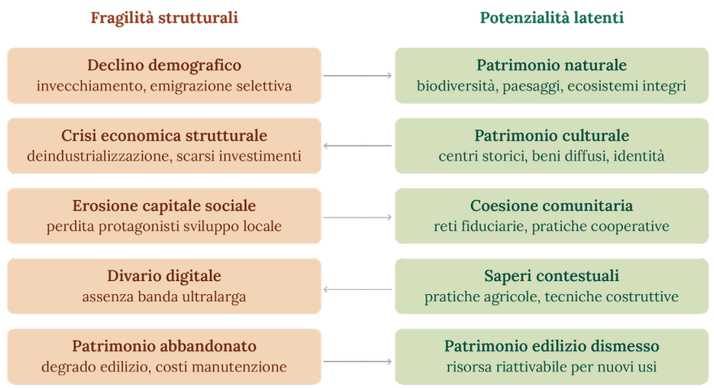


Figure 5. The dialectic between structural fragilities and latent potentialities in Italy's marginal territories. The arrows indicate the tension between the two dimensions, which constitutes the field of possibility within which the future of the inner areas is played out.
Source: the author's own elaboration

Progressive depopulation, understood as the outcome of selective migratory cycles that have deprived the inner areas of the youngest generations and of qualified human capital, has produced a strongly imbalanced age structure, characterised by high old-age indices and very low birth rates (Lanzani and Curci, 2018). This process forms part of the Italian demographic transition (Golini et al., 2000) and generates a senescent society (Viazzo and Zanini, 2014), in which the loss of demographic critical mass threatens the sustainability of local services and the vitality of the social fabric. On the economic plane, marginalisation takes shape as the outcome of long-term structural transformations. The crisis of the traditional productive sectors, such as mountain agriculture and small-scale diffuse manufacturing, within the context of the decline of the minor industrial districts, was not offset by the emergence of new economic supply chains (Becattini, 2015); and the difficulty of attracting investment and the poor infrastructural endowment, together with the limited presence of advanced business services, progressively reduced territorial competitiveness (Carrosio, 2019), setting in motion a process of deindustrialisation that particularly affected the marginal territories. The digital divide [11] today represents a further factor of competitive disadvantage, precluding access to forms of remote working that might represent an opportunity for these territories (Infratel Italia, 2020). The social dimension of fragility manifests itself in the progressive erosion of local social capital. While recognising the importance of the networks of trust and the cooperative practices that have historically characterised many rural and mountain communities, it is necessary to consider how depopulation and ageing have weakened local organisational capacity. The loss of the protagonists of local development—entrepreneurs, administrators, professionals, teachers—has reduced territorial planning capacity, that is, the possibility of elaborating and implementing strategies of endogenous development (Trigilia, 2005; Cersosimo and Donzelli, 2000).

Alongside these fragilities, however, the marginal territories safeguard a wealth of resources which, although often under-used, constitute the potential basis for alternative trajectories of development; and this natural and landscape heritage, first and foremost, represents an asset of growing value in a society that is rediscovering the importance of environmental quality. The inner areas conserve high levels of biodiversity, stratified cultural landscapes and intact ecological systems that constitute an essential counterweight to the processes of intensive urbanisation, and this heritage may become the basis for local economies founded upon the sustainable enhancement of territorial resources (Magnaghi, 2010).

Tangible and intangible cultural heritage constitutes a second fundamental resource: the contextual forms of knowledge linked to traditional agricultural practices, to construction techniques and to artisanal production represent forms of knowledge embodied within the territories that may nourish quality supply chains (Carrosio and Faccini, 2018); moreover, the rich heritage of widespread cultural assets—historic centres, rural architecture, archaeological heritage—known as the *paesaggio costituzionale* (constitutional landscape) (Settis, 2010) [12], offers potentialities for

11 The data on ultra-broadband coverage in the inner areas are rapidly evolving as a result of the investments of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (Piano Nazionale di Ripresa e Resilienza, PNRR), which has allocated 6.7 billion euros to connectivity in the areas of market failure, predominantly coinciding with the inner areas. For updated data, reference is made to the Piano Italia 1 Giga and the Piano Italia 5G of the Ministry of Enterprise and Made in Italy (MIMIT, 2022).

12 The expression "constitutional landscape" refers to Article 9 of the Italian Constitution, which enjoins the Republic to protect the landscape and the national historical and artistic heritage. Salvatore Settis elaborated this notion in his book *Paesaggio Costituzione cemento* (Einaudi, 2010), maintaining that the protection of the landscape is not a mere aesthetic question, but a right-and-duty of citizenship, rooted in democratic principles and with strong implications for spatial governance policies.

forms of cultural tourism and for the enhancement of territorial identity. This reading, however, risks halting at an instrumental perspective, one that accords the landscape value only in so far as it is convertible into tourist flow or competitive advantage. The European Landscape Convention, ratified by Italy in 2006[13], introduced a conceptual shift: the landscape, from a portion of territory to be subjected to protective designation, becomes "an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors" (Art. 1). Two implications follow. The first is that the landscape concerns the territory in its entirety: the Convention encompasses "landscapes that might be considered outstanding as well as everyday or degraded landscapes" (Art. 2). The second is that the landscape exists in so far as it is perceived by the populations that inhabit it, and not solely in so far as it is recognised by the authority that protects it.

The centre of gravity thus shifts from protection to perception, with a consequence that bears directly upon marginal territories. It is not possible to inhabit a territorial reality without considering the image of that reality: the relationship between those who inhabit and the territory is not exhausted in the material production of resources, in the forms of settlement or in tourist promotion, but encompasses the production of its own representation, to the extent that if a territory is not afforded the occasion to give rise to a landscape, those who inhabit it are not permitted to have an identity as a social body (Palerm Salazar, 2021). Read in this key, depopulation withdraws from inner areas not only inhabitants, services and economies, but erodes also that "landscape consciousness" (Palerm Salazar, 2021) through which a community recognises itself in the places it inhabits.

On the social plane, notwithstanding the erosion caused by depopulation, forms of communal cohesion and of mutuality persist in many inner areas that represent a precious relational capital (De Rossi, 2018), in which practices of reciprocity, networks of proximity and forms of collective self-organisation constitute resources that may be activated for processes of social innovation and for models of integrated territorial welfare. The central question then becomes that of the activation of these latent resources. Why do territories endowed with significant potentialities fail to set in motion processes of endogenous development? The literature identifies several factors: on the one hand, the importance of local institutional capacity is underscored, in which the presence of competent public administrations, networks of actors able to cooperate and adequate planning competences prove decisive (Barca, 2009); on the other, the weakness of local governance and institutional fragmentation constitute significant obstacles (Trigilia and Ramella, 2008); to this is added the lack of a shared strategic vision and of place-based planning tools, which prevents potentialities from being translated into concrete projects (Lucatelli, 2016). The challenge for marginal territories thus consists in constructing pathways of development that, while honestly recognising the structural fragilities, are at the same time able to enhance the specific resources through integrated territorial strategies; this requires the overcoming of standardised approaches in favour of tailored policies, capable of adapting to local specificities and of mobilising the territorial actors in long-term projects. The tension between fragility and potentiality thus defines the field of possibility within which the future of these territories is played out, between the risk of a further marginalisation and the opportunity to construct alternative models of territorial development.

Abandoned heritage as symptom and resource

A tangible manifestation of the marginalisation of the inner areas is represented by the progressive abandonment of built and territorial heritage. Residential buildings, disused schools, former town halls, rural farmhouses and productive infrastructure (mills, workshops, railway stations) constitute a widespread presence in these territories, material traces of the processes of depopulation and deindustrialisation described. According to the most recent permanent census of 2021, more than 27.2% of the buildings in

13 European Landscape Convention, Florence, 20 October 2000; ratified by Italy by Law no. 14 of 9 January 2006. The official texts of the Convention are in French and English, and the wording cited here follows the official English text. Palerm Salazar's contribution appears in the volume devoted by Edizioni Ca' Foscari to the twentieth anniversary of the Convention; the translation of the passages cited is the author's own

the Italian municipalities prove to be empty or under-used[14], equivalent to more than 9 million dwellings (ISTAT, 2024). This disused heritage represents simultaneously a problem and a resource: a problem because it attests to the demographic and economic decline, generates urban blight and absorbs public resources for maintenance and safety works; a resource because it constitutes a physical infrastructure potentially reactivable for new uses (residential, tourist, cultural, productive). As has been highlighted, the reuse of abandoned heritage may take shape as a strategy for countering the cycle of marginalisation: to recover buildings means to create spaces for new economic activities, to attract new residents and to revitalise the social fabric. Nevertheless, as will be seen in Part II, reactivation is not automatic: it requires governance, resources, competences and sustainable management models.

1.3 DEPOPULATION, ACCESSIBILITY, SERVICES: THE CYCLE OF MARGINALISATION

The fragilities and potentialities described do not constitute static characteristics but are the result of dynamic processes that have developed over time. In order fully to understand the current condition of the inner areas, it is necessary to analyse the mechanisms through which marginalisation is produced and perpetuates itself, situating the Italian phenomenon within the broader context of global demographic transformations. According to the projections of the United Nations, whereas in 2018 more than 55% of the world's population was already concentrated in urban settlements, it is estimated that by 2030 urban areas will be home to more than 60% of populations at the global level and one person in three will live in cities with at least half a million inhabitants (United Nations, 2019).

14 The data on unoccupied built heritage must be interpreted with methodological caution: the ISTAT category "unoccupied buildings" includes both permanently abandoned properties and those used only seasonally, second homes and properties awaiting rental or sale. The share of buildings effectively and permanently abandoned in the inner areas is therefore difficult to disaggregate from standard census data, which constitutes one of the cognitive problems that the present research intends to address.

TABLE III.1. POPULATION DISTRIBUTION OF THE WORLD, BY RURAL/URBAN AREA OF RESIDENCE AND SIZE CLASS OF URBAN SETTLEMENT, 1970, 1990, 2018 AND 2030

Area of residence and size class of urban settlement (number of inhabitants)	*Population (millions)*				*Percentage*			
	1970	*1990*	*2018*	*2030*	*1970*	*1990*	*2018*	*2030*
Total	3 701	5 331	7 633	8 551	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Urban area	1 354	2 290	4 220	5 167	36.6	43.0	55.3	60.4
10 million or more	55	153	529	752	1.5	2.9	6.9	8.8
5 million to 10 million	107	156	325	448	2.9	2.9	4.3	5.2
1 million to 5 million	244	467	926	1 183	6.6	8.8	12.1	13.8
500,000 to 1 million	131	208	415	494	3.5	3.9	5.4	5.8
300,000 to 500,000	87	159	275	320	2.3	3.0	3.6	3.7
Fewer than 300,000	730	1 147	1 750	1 971	19.7	21.5	22.9	23.1
Rural area	2 346	3 041	3 413	3 384	63.4	57.0	44.7	39.6

NOTE: The change of the population in each size class from one year to another reflects the growth of the population in existing cities of that size class and the incorporation of the population of new cities into that category.

Figure 6.
Distribution of the world's population by area of residence, rural/urban, and by size class of urban settlements (1970, 1990, 2018, 2030).
Source: United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (UN/DESA/PD). (2019). World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision (ST/ESA/SER.A/420). New York: United Nations. Table III.1, p. 55.

The remaining 45% of the world's population living in rural areas thus finds itself in a condition of growing relative marginality: this mass shift towards the cities is not without repercussions for the rural and peripheral territories, which suffer the effects of what might be termed a double marginalisation—geographical on the one hand, demographic on the other. In the European and Italian context, this global phenomenon is inflected in specific forms that leave the inner areas particularly exposed to processes of depopulation and territorial marginalisation. Territorial marginalisation is not a state, but a process; more precisely, it is a circular and cumulative process in which different dimensions of disadvantage reinforce one another, generating a downward spiral that tends to perpetuate itself (Keeble et al., 1982; Cersosimo and Donzelli, 2020). To understand this cycle of marginalisation is essential in order to identify the possible points of rupture and to design effective policies. Depopulation constitutes the most evident phenomenon and, at the same time, the central node of this circular process. As documented by ISTAT (2024), more than 4,000 Italian municipalities, predominantly located in the Apennine, Alpine and insular inner areas, have registered a constant loss of population over the past fifty years.

Nevertheless, this is not a matter of a simple quantitative decrease: the migratory phenomenon from the inner areas has historically been selective, involving predominantly the younger age groups, persons with higher levels of education, and the more

dynamic components of the population (Golini *et al.*, 2000). Such a dynamic, which forms part of the framework of Italian internal migration in the second post-war period (Bonifazi, 2013), has produced a drainage of human capital, leaving in the territories of origin a strongly imbalanced demographic structure.

The consequences of this selective emigration are manifold and interconnected: in the first place, the loss of population of fertile age accelerates demographic decline through the reduction of the birth rate: in the municipalities of the inner areas the birth rate is today below 6 per thousand, against a national average of 8 per thousand (Billari *et al.*, 2012). In the second place, the departure of qualified young people impoverishes the local economic fabric, reducing the entrepreneurial and innovative capacity of the territory. Qualified emigration feeds a growing gap with respect to the urban centres in terms of capacity for innovation and competitiveness, through the loss of talent from the peripheral areas (Crescenzi et al., 2017). Accessibility represents the second structural element of the cycle of marginalisation. The inner areas are characterised, according to the geographical definition adopted by the National Strategy for Inner Areas, by a significant distance from the centres providing essential services, measured in terms of travel time (Barca et al., 2014). This distance, as underscored by the literature in remoteness studies, is not only physical but also economic and social: the costs of mobility, the travel times, the difficulties in connections represent concrete barriers to access to opportunities for employment, education, healthcare and culture (Copus, 2001). The comparative analysis of European experiences of rural mobility articulates this economic dimension into two distinct notions: transport poverty, produced by the combination of low population density, seasonality of demand and dependence upon the private vehicle, and accessibility poverty, which measures the difficulty of reaching services within reasonable times and at reasonable cost (Junaid et al., 2025). From this condition follows what the authors term forced car ownership: in the absence of practicable alternatives, car ownership ceases to be a choice and becomes an obligatory cost, one that weighs regressively upon lower incomes and penalises in particular the elderly and those unable to drive. Marginality is thereby configured not merely as distance from services, but as an economic burden imposed by that distance itself — a burden that transport policies, historically oriented towards urban centres, have largely left uncovered.

The dimension of digital accessibility today adds a further level of complexity: the delay in the diffusion of ultra-broadband configures a territorial digital divide (Infratel Italia, 2020; Naldi et al., 2015), with significant consequences for enterprises and citizens, increasingly dependent upon online services in order to access administrative, health and educational provisions.

Digital connectivity now represents an infrastructure as essential as the road networks, and its absence precludes the possibility of attracting new residents, especially those who might work remotely.

The desertification of services constitutes the third element of the cycle and, at the same time, both a consequence and a cause of depopulation. The progressive downsizing of the school network in mountain and rural areas represents perhaps the most emblematic case: the closure of school buildings, justified by rationales of rationalisation based on minimum size thresholds, deprives the local communities of an essential service and a fundamental territorial garrison. The presence of a school in one's own municipality constitutes a determining factor in the location choices of families with children, and its closure sets in motion further waves of migration (Urso et al., 2019).

Similarly, the downsizing of health facilities in the peripheral areas has produced a "geographical rationing" of access to health (Vicarelli and Bronzini, 2018). The closure of local hospitals, the reduction of medical on-call points, the difficulties in finding general practitioners willing to operate in marginal contexts [15] create territorial inequalities in access to health services which, in a strongly aged population, represent a particularly critical problem, significantly influencing location decisions, especially those of elderly persons and their families.

15 According to the Fondazione GIMBE (*Gruppo Italiano per la Medicina Basata sulle Evidenze*, Italian Group for Evidence-Based Medicine), an independent, non-profit organisation active since 1996 in research, training and scientific information in the health field, as of 1 January 2025 the National Health Service was short of 5,716 general practitioners, with an uneven distribution that particularly penalises the areas of low population density, where a single doctor often has to cover extensive territories and municipalities distant from one another.

The progressive removal of postal, banking and commercial services from the small centres completes the picture of desertification: the closure of the last commercial establishments, of the post office, of the bank counter represents not only the loss of functional services but also of spaces of sociality and of territorial garrison that contribute to the vitality of the local communities. The domino effect that links these three elements (depopulation, accessibility, services) creates a negative spiral that tends to perpetuate itself. The loss of population reduces the critical mass necessary to sustain local services; the closure of services renders the territory less attractive, accelerating depopulation; the difficulty of accessibility discourages new settlement and investment; the lack of economic opportunities further feeds emigration.

Thus is set in motion a process of cumulative circular causation[16] which Myrdal (1957) describes as a mechanism that tends to perpetuate itself over time (Fig. 7), rendering the reversal of the trend ever more difficult (Partridge et al., 2008).

The factors of production, capital and labour, tend to shift from the areas in decline towards those in growth, accentuating the initial disparities (Myrdal, 1957). In the case of Italy's inner areas, this phenomenon has been amplified by the public policies that have often favoured the concentration of investment in the urban poles, contributing unintentionally to accelerating the cycle of marginalisation in the peripheral areas (Barca, 2006).

Nevertheless, the cycle of marginalisation is not an ineluctable destiny (Barbera et al., 2022). The international literature offers examples of rural renaissance (Bosworth and Atterton, 2012) and of counterurbanisation (Mitchell, 2004) that demonstrate how, under certain conditions, it is possible to reverse demographic trends and revitalise rural territories. In the Italian context too, some inner areas have shown a capacity for resilience, setting in motion processes of repopulation linked to phenomena of return,

16 The concept of cumulative circular causation (circular cumulative causation) was elaborated by Gunnar Myrdal in order to explain regional divergences in economic development. Myrdal argued that market forces, in the absence of corrective interventions, tend to accentuate territorial disparities rather than to reduce them, through backwash effects that drain resources from the peripheral areas towards the central ones. The model was subsequently formalised by Kaldor (1970) and applied to the context of European rural areas by Keeble et al. (1982), confirming regional divergence in the absence of corrective policies.

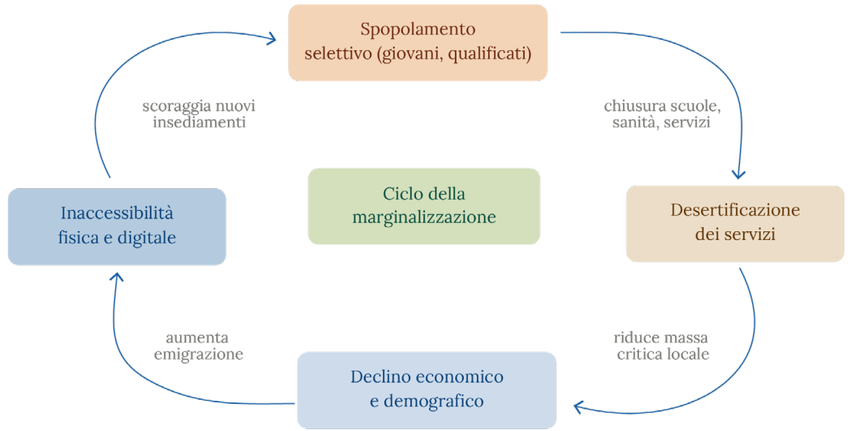


Figure 7.
The cycle of marginalisation in the inner areas: a schema of the cumulative circular causation in which depopulation, inaccessibility, desertification of services and economic decline reinforce one another.
Source: the author's own elaboration.

of the arrival of new residents attracted by the quality of life, and of the settlement of international migrants.

To break the cycle of marginalisation requires integrated interventions capable of acting simultaneously upon several dimensions: improving physical and digital accessibility, guaranteeing an adequate level of essential services, creating economic opportunities, and enhancing the specific territorial resources (Lucatelli et al., 2020). Awareness of the systemic and circular nature of the process of marginalisation orients towards place-based, multidimensional and long-term approaches, capable of constructing the conditions for the reversal of the negative spiral and for the activation of virtuous circles of territorial development. The analysis of the cycle of marginalisation brings to light the systemic nature of the dynamics that affect the inner areas, suggesting how partial or sectoral interventions risk proving ineffective if they are not situated within an overall vision. This awareness has, in recent decades, oriented the elaboration of policies and strategies specifically addressed to the marginal territories, which have progressively abandoned assistance-based or compensatory approaches in favour of place-based rationales and of integrated territorial development. The debate on the most effective means of countering marginalisation and of activating the latent resources of these territories constitutes the heart of the reflections that will be examined in depth in the following chapter, in which the principal policies and strategies elaborated at the European, national and local levels to address the question of the inner areas will be analysed.

2. POLICIES AND STRATEGIES FOR MARGINAL TERRITORIES

2.1 COHESION POLICIES AND EUROPEAN STRATEGIES

The cohesion policies of the European Union have their roots in the Treaty of Rome of 1957, by which the European Economic Community was established and which, already in its original phase, placed among its fundamental objectives the promotion of harmonious development and support for the economic, social and territorial growth of the member states. Such an orientation reflected the awareness that European integration could not be founded exclusively upon the liberalisation of trade, but required an active commitment to the reduction of the structural imbalances between regions, traditionally diverse in their infrastructural endowments, productive capacities and levels of well-being. This redistributive purpose finds a significant parallel in the Italian constitutional order: Article 3 of the Constitution of 1948 attributes to the Republic the task of removing the obstacles of an economic and social order that limit the freedom and equality of citizens, impeding their full participation in the political, economic and social life of the country. The principle of substantive equality [17] that derives from it configures an active obligation of public intervention, which over the course of the decades has inspired numerous policies of territorial rebalancing, both at the national level and in coordination with the European programmes. Within the Community framework, this commitment is further formalised by Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU, 2012), which defines economic, social and territorial cohesion [18] as one of the fundamental objectives of the Union, recognising the need to devote particular attention to the territories characterised by structural or demographic fragilities, among them rural areas, regions subject to industrial transition, and mountain, insular or low-population-density territories. This provision anticipates the perspective of a European planning sensitive to territorial specificities, marking the passage from an idea of cohesion understood predominantly in economic terms to a more nuanced vision, one that incorporates the spatial dimension of inequality.

From the second decade of the 2000s onwards, both in Italy and in Europe, political, institutional and theoretical conditions matured that were favourable to the development of place-based policies, oriented, that is, towards the enhancement of local resources and the reduction of the persistent critical issues in specific territorial contexts. Within this framework, a central role is assumed by the Territorial Agenda 2020 [19], which reinserts territorial cohesion among the priorities of European action, underscoring the importance of guaranteeing to all citizens an adequate access to essential services and proposing a model of development founded upon knowledge, innovation, social inclusion and environmental sustainability. Complementary to this orientation is the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), whose Article 3 reaffirms the need to promote a balanced and solidaristic development, supporting territories and communities through an equitable access to basic services and a deeper integration between levels of government. Cohesion policy, structurally conceived as a medium-term policy, involves both the central and the local levels of government, enhancing economic and social partnership through the financing of multi-scalar programmes, plans and projects, the implementation of which is articulated into cycles of multi-annual programming. In the 2014–2020 period, among the cross-cutting strategies adopted at the national level within the ambit of these instruments, the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) stands out, an emblematic example of a place-based approach oriented towards the socio-territorial regeneration of fragile contexts, which will be analysed in detail in the following sections.

17 The principle of substantive equality enshrined in Article 3, paragraph 2, of the Italian Constitution has inspired a long tradition of policies of territorial rebalancing, from the *Piano Vanoni* (Vanoni Plan, 1955) to the *Cassa per il Mezzogiorno* (Fund for the South, 1950–1984), through to the Cohesion Policies of European Programming. For a critical reconstruction of the relationship between constitutional principle and territorial policies, see Giannini (1974) and, more recently, Cammelli (2011), who has highlighted how the principle of substantive equality implies an active obligation to differentiate the instruments in accordance with the diverse starting conditions of the territories.

18 The concept of territorial cohesion was introduced into European primary law by the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), which added the territorial dimension to the pre-existing economic and social cohesions already present in the Treaty of Maastricht (1992). Article 174 TFEU thus represents the legal foundation for policies specifically addressed to territories with structural geographical or demographic disadvantages. For a fuller discussion of the concept of territorial cohesion in European law, see Faludi (2010), "Cohesion, Coherence, Cooperation: European Spatial Planning Coming of Age?".

19 The Territorial Agenda 2020, adopted during the Hungarian Presidency of the EU in 2011, was subsequently updated with the Territorial Agenda 2030, approved during the German Presidency in 2020, which strengthened the orientation towards a just and green territorial development, explicitly introducing the principle of *no place left behind* as a fundamental political objective. For the full text, see: *Territorial Agenda 2030. A future for all places (2020).*

Figure 8. The evolution of cohesion policies and European strategies
Source: the author's own elaboration.

In the current programming cycle 2021–2027, the European Union has allocated to cohesion policies 392 billion euros [20], equivalent to approximately one third of the overall budget, with the aim of supporting the competitiveness, sustainability and inclusion of the European regions, reducing the territorial disparities that still persist.

Proceeding from these premises, the chapter examines some of the most significant national experiences of governance of marginal territories, with particular attention devoted to the models adopted in Scotland, Switzerland and Italy, analysing their instruments, results and critical issues in relation to the dynamics of spatial planning and to place-based policies.

2.2 EXPERIENCES OF GOVERNANCE IN SCOTLAND, SWITZERLAND AND ITALY

In continuity with the orientations and objectives defined by the European cohesion policies, in recent years numerous member states have developed national strategies specifically addressed to the less accessible territories characterised by conditions of structural fragility. The inner areas, distinguished by low population density, difficulty of access to essential services and fewer economic opportunities with respect to the urban poles, require targeted policies, able to promote socio-economic development, to guarantee territorial equity and to enhance the local resources within a long-term perspective.

20 The 392 billion euros allocated to cohesion policy in the 2021–2027 cycle are distributed among the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) and the Cohesion Fund. For Italy, the overall allocation amounts to approximately 42.7 billion euros, of which approximately 23.5 billion are destined for the regions of the *Mezzogiorno* (southern Italy: Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sicily). Updated data on implementation may be consulted on the OpenCoesione platform (opencoesione.gov.it)..

The national responses have been articulated according to profoundly different models of governance, influenced by the institutional structures, the administrative traditions and the geographical specificities of the individual countries; yet, beyond these differences, three recurrent objectives emerge with a certain constancy: the strengthening of territorial cohesion, support for local economic development, and the guarantee of access to essential services—healthcare, education and mobility—as an indispensable condition for the effective exercise of citizenship.

The three selected experiences—Scotland, Switzerland and Italy—are examined by focusing upon instruments, results and still-open critical issues, with attention devoted to the elements relevant to spatial planning and to place-based policies. The selection responds to criteria both thematic and of empirical accessibility: the periods of research undertaken at the Centre for Mountain Studies of the University of the Highlands and Islands and at ETH Zurich made it possible to complement the documentary analysis with conversations with researchers and experts and with the direct observation of territorial practices, constructing a knowledge base capable of grasping both the formal results of the policies and the processes of local adaptation that have characterised their implementation.

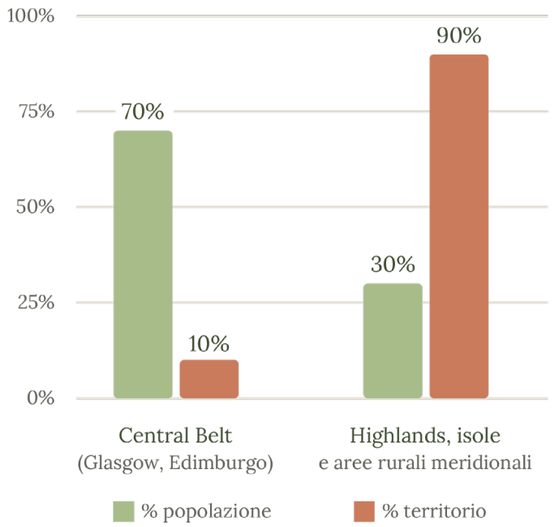
Scotland. Policies for rural and remote areas: community governance and bottom-up development

The system of governance of the Scottish rural and remote areas forms part of the broader process of devolution [21] which, from 1999 onwards with the re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament, has progressively transferred significant competences from Westminster to Edinburgh, conferring upon the Scottish government full legislative autonomy in matters crucial for territorial development, among them urban and rural planning, agriculture, the environment, local economic

21 The re-establishment of the Scottish Parliament in 1999, following the referendum of September 1997 in which 74.3% of the electorate expressed themselves in favour of devolution, represented a constitutional transformation of historic significance within the British political system. The devolved competences include spatial planning, agriculture, the environment, education, healthcare, local economic development and justice, while defence, foreign policy, social security and fiscal policy remain reserved to Westminster.

development, education and healthcare (Keating, 2009). This process created the conditions for the elaboration of territorial policies specifically calibrated to the characteristics of a territory that stands out within the British context for the particular extent and complexity of its rural and remote areas: whereas the Central Belt [22], which includes Glasgow and Edinburgh, concentrates approximately 70% of the population on less than 10% of the territory, the Highlands, the islands and the southern rural areas cover more than 90% of the national surface while being home to barely 30% of the inhabitants (Scottish Government, 2018).

Figure 9.
Distribution of population and territory
Source: the author's own elaboration on data from the Scottish Government, 2018.



This strongly polarised demographic and territorial distribution generates specific challenges in terms of accessibility, provision of public services and local economic vitality, further accentuated by distinctive characteristics with respect to other European contexts, such as: insularity (with more than ninety inhabited islands), the severe climatic conditions, the historical fragmentation of ownership of the territory linked to the feudal system of the estates, the presence of Scottish Gaelic as a minority language, and cultural identities strongly rooted in the different territories. The institutional framework for Scottish rural policies is articulated through multiple complementary agencies and instruments, among which the following assume particular relevance: the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP), which operated until Brexit within the framework of the European Common Agricultural Policy, allocating significant resources, well over 1.4 billion pounds in the 2014–2020 period, in support of agriculture, environmental management, rural economic diversification and the development of local communities (Scottish Government, 2018); Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), a regional development agency founded in 1991, which operates through an integrated approach combining support for local enterprises, infrastructural investment, skills development and the strengthening of community capacities in the Highlands and the islands (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, 2019). Alongside these operate Community Land Scotland, an organisation of representation and support for the communities that have acquired ownership of land through mechanisms of community buyout, and the Scottish Land Commission, established in 2017 with the mandate of promoting a reform of land ownership capable of fostering more democratic and sustainable modalities of territorial management (Glenn *et al.*, 2019).

This articulated institutional system reflects the evolution of Scottish rural policies, which have progressively broadened their focus from mere agricultural production towards a multifunctional conception of rural development, integrating economic, social, environmental and cultural objectives (Shortall *et al.*, 2017).

Classification and challenges of rural and remote areas.

The classification of rural areas in Scotland adopts a sophisticated methodology elaborated by the Scottish Government, which integrates criteria of demographic density, accessibility to urban centres and settlement characteristics, distinguishing eight categories articulated along an urban–rural continuum (Scottish Government, 2018). On the urban side are situated the large centres with a population exceeding 125,000 inhabitants, the other urban centres between 10,000 and 125,000 inhabitants, and the small towns between 3,000 and 10,000 inhabitants; on

22 The Scottish demographic polarisation between the Central Belt and the Highlands reflects long-term historical dynamics linked to nineteenth-century industrialisation in the Lowlands and to the Highland Clearances, the forced expulsions of rural populations from the Highlands in order to make way for extensive sheep farming, which caused a demographic decline of 50–60% in the northern territories. These historical dynamics constitute the context within which the reform of land ownership initiated with the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 is situated.

the rural side, the system distinguishes between accessible areas and remote areas, each further subdivided on the basis of the presence or absence of small inhabited centres. The distinction between accessible and remote is founded upon the travel time by car towards a settlement of at least 10,000 inhabitants: beyond 30 minutes, the condition of remoteness is configured.

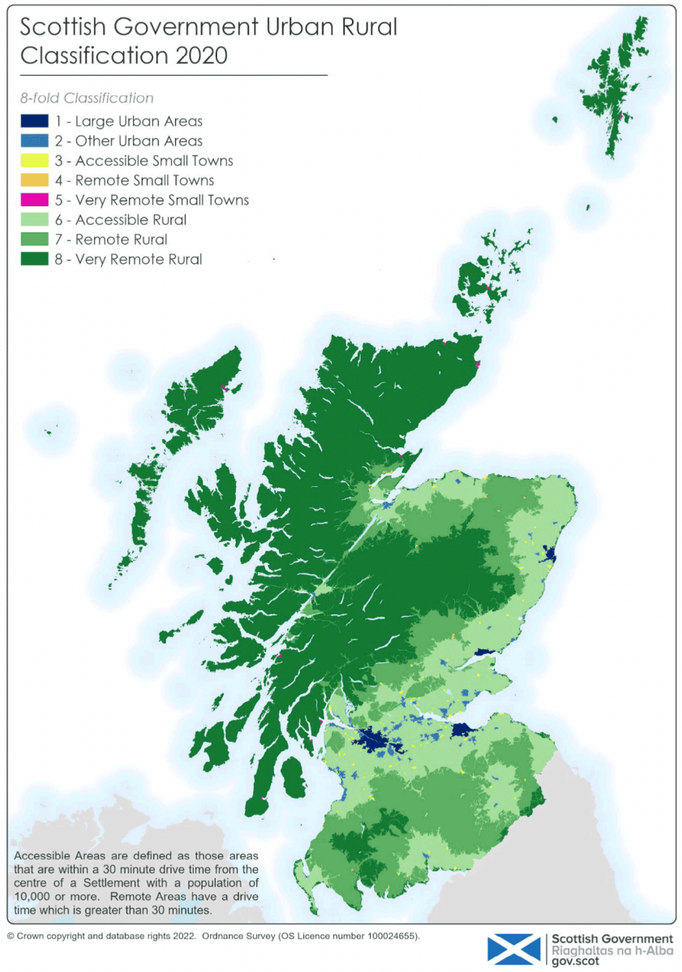


Figure 10.
Urban–rural classification of the Scottish Government
Source: the author's own elaboration on data from the Scottish Government, 2020.

This classification, while sharing with the Italian SNAI the emphasis upon accessibility as a criterion of marginality, employs more stringent temporal thresholds and considers reference centres of larger size. According to the data of the Census 2011 and subsequent elaborations (Scottish Government, 2018), the rural areas cover 98% of the Scottish territory and are home to approximately 1.4 million inhabitants, 17% of the national population, of whom approximately 500,000 reside in areas classified as remote, distributed across the Highlands, the islands and the southern rural areas. The challenges that characterise these territories present elements of convergence with those identified in the other contexts analysed, but also relevant specificities: on the demographic plane, the remote areas experienced, over the course of the twentieth century, considerable processes of depopulation, with certain insular realities having lost, between 1901 and 2001, more than 70% of their resident population (Stockdale, 2004; Copus et al., 2020); from the 2000s onwards, however, some areas have registered reversals of the trend linked to phenomena of counterurbanisation and, to a growing extent, to initiatives of community ownership that have created more favourable conditions for retaining young people (Skerratt, 2013). On the economic plane, the specialisation in primary activities and in tourism, a sector that generates a significant annual economic contribution for the Highlands and the islands (VisitScotland, 2019), coexists with critical issues of seasonality and with growing housing pressures linked to the concentration of real-estate properties for tourist use, which render it difficult for residents, especially the youngest, to access affordable housing (Gallent et al., 2017). A structural specificity of the Scottish context concerns, finally, the concentration of land ownership: as documented (Glenn *et al.*, 2019), approximately 50% of the private rural territory is owned by fewer than 500 proprietors, with significant consequences for territorial governance and for the capacity of communities to steer their own development, a question that has historically fuelled processes of marginalisation and that has found a response in the model of community land ownership (Hunter, 2012).

Figure 11.
Concentration of land ownership in Scotland
Source: the author's own elaboration on data from Glenn *et al.*, 2019.

A system that allows organised local communities to acquire ownership of land and buildings, directly assuming responsibility for territorial management and local development. Although it has historical roots in the Scottish agrarian struggles of the nineteenth century, its legal formalisation is relatively recent: the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 introduced the community right to buy [23], conferring upon registered rural communities the right of pre-emption in the purchase of land and property (Bryden and Geisler, 2007). The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 subsequently broadened these rights, introducing the possibility of acquisition even in the absence of a willingness to sell on the part of the proprietor (where the community demonstrates that the acquisition would generate significant social, economic or environmental benefits) and the extension of community rights to urban areas (Scottish Government, 2015). The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 finally strengthened transparency in land ownership through a public register of proprietors and measures to support the diversification of ownership (Glass et al., 2019).

On the operational plane, the process of community buyout provides for the constitution of a recognised community organisation, the feasibility assessment with the elaboration of a development plan, the raising of funds through community resources and public financing (among which the Scottish Land Fund, which disburses funding—grants—of up to one million pounds), and finally the management of the acquired assets, which may include renewable energy, social housing, community tourism and social agriculture (Skerratt and Steiner, 2013). The results are significant: according to Community Land Scotland (2020), more than 500,000 acres of Scottish land [24] are currently under community ownership, managed by more than 200 community landowners representing more than 100,000 residents, an exponential increase with respect to the approximately 10,000 acres of 2003. The emblematic case of the Isle of Eigg [25], whose community acquisition in 1997 enabled the development of an off-grid electricity system based on integrated renewables and the growth of the population from approximately 60 to more than 100 residents, exemplifies the potentialities of the model (McIntosh et al., 2004), alongside which are situated analogous experiences such as the North Harris Trust in the Outer Hebrides and the Galson Estate Trust on the Isle of Lewis, which has developed one of the largest community-owned wind farms in Scotland. Notwithstanding the documented successes, the model presents critical issues that condition its replicability. The communities most successful in the collective acquisition of land tend, in fact, to be those already endowed with a high level of social capital and technical competences, with the risk of amplifying the disparities between capable territories and more fragile contexts (McKee, 2015). To this is added a financial dependence upon the revenues generated by renewable energy, which exposes the community landowners to the volatility of the energy markets (Munro, 2018). On the plane of governance, community decision-making processes may reproduce forms of exclusion when minority groups are systematically marginalised (Skerratt, 2013). Finally, the scalability of the model towards urban or fragmented-ownership contexts remains an open question (Glass et al., 2019).

Specificity and transferability of the Scottish model

The Scottish case presents elements of significant originality within the European panorama of policies for marginal areas. The emphasis upon community empowerment, the legal formalisation of community rights of land acquisition and the structured institutional support configure a model that effectively transfers decision-making power and control of resources from the

23 The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 introduced three distinct mechanisms: the community right to buy (Part 2), which confers upon registered rural communities the right of pre-emption in the purchase of land; the crofting community right to buy (Part 3), specific to the crofting communities of the Highlands and the islands; and public access to land (Part 1), which formalised the right of responsible access to all Scottish land.

24 The figure of 500,000 acres of land under community ownership (Community Land Scotland, 2020) is to be contextualised with respect to the total extent of the Scottish territory, equal to approximately 19.47 million acres: community ownership therefore represents 2.6% of the national territory, a share still limited but in rapid growth with respect to the outset of the process. The objective declared by the Scottish government was to reach 1 million acres by 2020, a target not fully achieved but which imparted a significant acceleration to the process

25 The community acquisition of the Isle of Eigg in 1997, realised through the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust with a contribution from the Scottish Land Fund and an international fundraising campaign, represented the pioneering case that demonstrated the feasibility of the community-ownership model on an insular scale. Prior to the acquisition, the island had been the object of a series of sales to private proprietors who had imposed strong limitations upon the economic activities of the residents. The off-grid electricity system realised in 2008, which integrates wind, solar and hydroelectric energy, was the first hybrid system of this kind in the British Isles and made it possible to eliminate the dependence upon diesel generators.

traditional proprietary elites to the local communities, radicalising the place-based principles theorised through mechanisms that go well beyond consultative participation (Barca, 2009). Alongside this operates the Scottish Rural Development Programme, which functioned as the principal complementary financial instrument, articulating over the 2014–2020 period a budget of 1.4 billion pounds around objectives ranging from agricultural innovation to the protection of ecosystems, from the promotion of social inclusion to rural economic development; independent evaluations have nonetheless highlighted recurrent critical issues in the bureaucratic complexity and in the tendency to favour the more structured enterprises to the detriment of the smaller and more fragile realities. The withdrawal of the United Kingdom from the European Union has moreover introduced significant uncertainties for the entire system, historically structured around the European frameworks of the CAP and the structural funds, rendering community land ownership a potential mechanism of territorial resilience capable of partially offsetting the changes in the political and financial framework.

The transferability of this model to other national contexts must, however, contend with significant structural differences: the Scottish system develops in the presence of an extreme historical concentration of ownership that renders redistribution towards the communities politically sustainable, of a consolidated tradition of associationism and civic engagement, of contained community demographic dimensions that facilitate participatory decision-making processes, and of significant public financial resources in support of the acquisitions. In the Italian context, characterised by a much more pronounced fragmentation of ownership, by more deeply rooted traditions of proprietary individualism and by municipal institutional fragmentation, direct replication appears problematic; some elements, nevertheless, might be adapted, among them the legal recognition of forms of community management of territorial common goods, mechanisms of public financial support for initiatives of recovery of disused heritage, and structured technical assistance to strengthen local planning capacities. The Scottish context demonstrates, in short, that, in the presence of enabling conditions, rural and remote areas can become active protagonists of processes of sustainable endogenous development: the challenge for other national contexts consists in identifying which elements of this model are transferable and which contextual adaptations are necessary in order to render them effective under different territorial and institutional conditions.

Switzerland. The Confederation's policy for rural areas and mountain regions

The Confederation's Policy for Rural Areas and Mountain Regions represents a turning point in the Swiss approach to territorial governance, configuring itself as a structured response to the growing demographic, economic and environmental pressures that affect the extra-urban territories. Elaborated by the Federal Council in collaboration with the principal regional stakeholders, the policy finds its origin in measure 69 of the 2011–2015 legislature programme and in the Maissen motion (11.3927)[26], which formally charged the federal executive with defining a comprehensive policy for the rural areas. The strategic structure is founded upon two complementary reference documents: the report of the State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) [27], focused upon the economic and employment aspects, and that of the Federal Office for Spatial Development (ARE)[28], centred upon settlement and territorial dynamics, both elaborated by means of participatory processes that made it possible to define a long-term vision and an operational structure articulated into strategic objectives, principles of intervention, a multi-level governance model and a territorial perimeter of action. The relevance of these territories within the national context is highlighted by

26 The Maissen motion, presented to the Swiss Council of States in 2011 by Councillor Theo Maissen, formally initiated the process that led to the elaboration of the Confederation's Policy for Rural Areas and Mountain Regions. The mandate contained in the motion required the Federal Council to define a comprehensive and coordinated policy for these territories, overcoming the fragmentation of the existing sectoral policies. The elaboration process, which required approximately three years, systematically involved the Cantons, the regional organisations and the principal stakeholders through an articulated participatory process

27 State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO (2012): *Rapport des experts pour une stratégie de la Confédération pour les régions de montagne et les espaces ruraux de la Suisse* (available only in French and German). Delivered by the members of the "Maissen Motion" strategic group. Bern, June 2014.

28 Federal Office for Spatial Development ARE (2012): *Rapport pour l'élaboration d'une politique globale pour espaces ruraux et les régions de montagne; Mesure 69 du programme de la législature 2011 – 2015 pour atteindre l'objectif 17 «La cohésion sociale est renforcée et les valeurs communes promues.»*, Bern.

significant data: the rural areas and mountain regions occupy 77% of the national surface and are home to more than a quarter of the Swiss population (Federal Statistical Office, 2024).

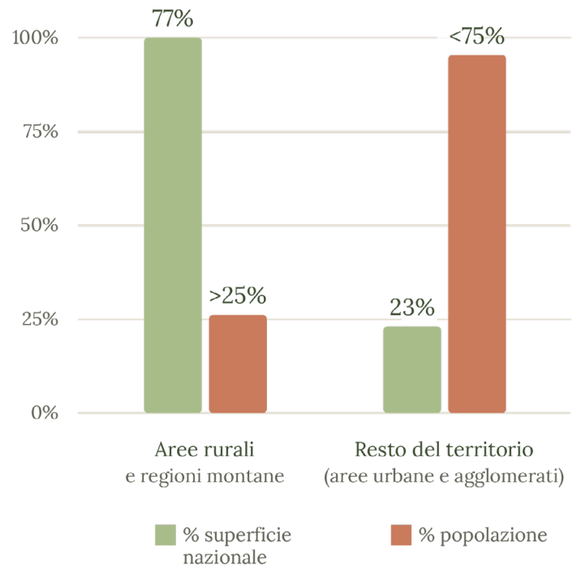


Figure 12.
Distribution of population and territory
Source: the author's own elaboration on data from the Federal Statistical Office, 2024

According to the taxonomy elaborated by ARE (2012), these areas are articulated into three functional macro-categories: peri-urban rural spaces, characterised by strong integration with the metropolitan systems; peripheral rural spaces, distant from the principal axes of development; and Alpine tourist centres, distinguished by economies strongly specialised in the hospitality sector. The report of the Confederation broadens this classification by introducing further territorial categories (among them: rural centres, small- to medium-sized centres, agglomerations in mountain regions, and multifunctional valley floors) in order to represent the polycentric structure and the functional relationships that link the rural and mountain areas to the principal urban centres of the country. This articulation is not merely classificatory, but reflects the structural heterogeneity of the Swiss extra-urban territories and the need to calibrate the instruments of intervention in accordance with profoundly differentiated territorial dynamics (Table 1). The analysis of the transformations under way in the Swiss rural and mountain areas reveals a complex picture of interconnected pressures, which the federal policy articulates into four principal dimensions: demographic, mobility-related, economic and environmental.

Categories of space	Characteristics
Peri-urban rural space	The peri-urban rural space is distinguished by its proximity to an urban centre; the nearest is as a rule reachable by car within 20 minutes at most. The peri-urban rural space is therefore located in the vicinity of agglomerations or isolated cities, for the most part on the Plateau. It constitutes an ideal place in which to live and, in part, to work; moreover, it is usually also particularly suited to agricultural activities.
Peripheral rural space	The peripheral rural space is more than 20 minutes distant (by private motorised traffic, PMT) from the nearest centre of an agglomeration and is located outside the Plateau. It frequently presents a traditional, ecologically rich cultural and natural heritage and is in part affected by stagnation and emigration.
Alpine tourist centres	The Alpine tourist centres are located in the Alpine region, register a high number of overnight stays and are endowed with good to very good infrastructure and services. Characterised by a marked stability of population and of employment, demonstrated in the past, they are of particular relevance within the rural space. In the Alpine space, generally sparsely populated, they perform more or less considerable centre functions.
Small- and medium-sized centres	A small-sized centre must have at least 8,500 inhabitants, while a medium-sized one must count at least 40,000. At the regional and national level, the small- and medium-sized centres fulfil an important central function. These centres must be at a minimum distance of 10 km from a larger centre.
Rural centres	A small-sized centre must have at least 8,500 inhabitants, while a medium-sized one must count at least 40,000. At the regional and national level, the small- and medium-sized centres fulfil an important central function. These centres must be at a minimum distance of 10 km from a larger centre
Mountain region	The definition of mountain region is based on the Federal Act on Investment Aid (Legge federale sull'aiuto agli investimenti, LIM), which expired at the end of 2007 and which distinguished a total of 54 regions within the Alpine space and the Jura. Such a definition is oriented towards the economic potential of an area. Within the framework of the policy for rural areas and mountain regions, the LIM definition is of relevance in particular because, in addition to the Alps, it also includes within the mountain region the Jura arc and the regions of the Pre-Alps.
Agglomerations in mountain regions	Considered as agglomerations in mountain regions are those agglomerations located within the LIM perimeter. They fulfil an important centre function. In the mountain regions the differences between agglomerations and surrounding areas are often more marked than on the Plateau. For topographical reasons, moreover, the connection networks represent a great challenge..
Multifunctional valley floors	The multifunctional valley floors fulfil an important centre function within the Alpine space. They are dynamic economic engines and are intensively exploited..

Table 1.
Characterisation of the categories of space of the Swiss rural and mountain areas
Source: ARE, 2012.

On the demographic plane, the tendencies under way manifest dynamics that are apparently contradictory but in reality profoundly connected: on the one hand, some peri-urban territories experience processes of disorderly growth fuelled by national and transnational migratory flows; on the other, the peripheral areas, especially the Alpine ones, register depopulation and progressive ageing. The process of metropolisation that affected the Confederation between the end of the 1980s and the 2010s profoundly redrew the national settlement geography, determining the incorporation of approximately 430 peri-urban rural municipalities within extended urban agglomerations (Figure 13) [29], with a net loss of 13% of the rural surfaces [30] (ARE, 2012).

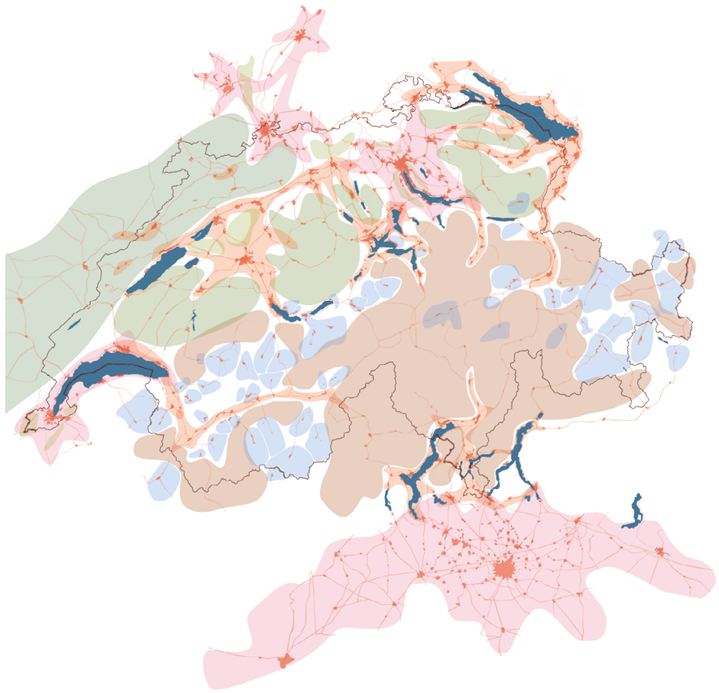


Figure 13. Typology of an urbanised Switzerland. Metropolitan regions, networks of cities, zones of quiet, Alpine tourist localities and marginal Alpine areas.
Source: Switzerland. An Urban Portrait (ETH Studio Basel, 2005).

29 As Figure 13 highlights, the Swiss territory is structured around a polycentric network of agglomerations and functional corridors that link the principal settlement areas to the Alpine and peripheral territories.

30 The loss of 13% of the peri-urban rural surfaces incorporated within the urban agglomerations between the end of the 1980s and the 2010s (ARE, 2012) forms part of the broader phenomenon of land consumption that characterised Switzerland in the second post-war period. The Federal Act on Spatial Planning (*Legge federale sulla pianificazione del territorio, LPT*), profoundly reformed in 2014, introduced stringent measures for the containment of the expansion of the building zones, requiring the Cantons to reduce the oversized building zones. For a fuller discussion, see ARE (2016), "Rapporto sullo sviluppo territoriale".

Paradoxically, notwithstanding this quantitative erosion, the peri-urban rural spaces have continued to register significant demographic growth precisely by virtue of their strategic position with respect to the urban centres, while the peripheral rural space, particularly in the Alpine arc, experiences the selective exodus of the young and qualified population, setting in motion processes of ageing that progressively erode the functional capacities of the local economic, social and political structures. The progressive functional integration between urban and rural spheres tends to blur the traditional distinction between these territorial systems (Lefebvre, 1970) [31]: in the Swiss case, a growing number of individuals choose to reside in the rural areas while maintaining intense functional ties with the urban centres, generating substantial commuting flows and limiting the capacity of the rural communities to internalise the economic and social benefits of their presence, rendering the traditional dichotomous interpretive models ever more inadequate, requiring analytical approaches oriented towards grasping the multidimensionality and the reciprocity of the functional, symbolic and economic exchanges between city and countryside (Figure 14).

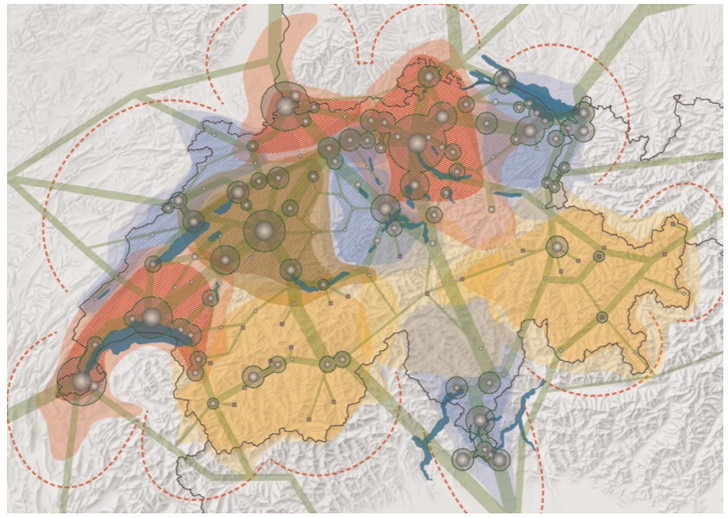


Figure 14.
Areas of intervention and national polycentric network.
In red and brown are represented the metropolitan areas; in blue the areas characterised by small and medium-sized cities; in yellow the Alpine areas; the green connections indicate the functional relationships and the territorial partnerships between cities, agglomerations, rural centres and tourist centres.
Source: Progetto territoriale Svizzera, ARE (2012).

31 The reference to Lefebvre (1970) recalls his thesis on the "complete urbanisation of society", elaborated in *La révolution urbaine,* according to which the process of urbanisation is not limited to the physical growth of cities but transforms the entire organisation of social space, rendering obsolete the traditional distinction between urban and rural. This perspective was systematised by Brenner and Schmid (2015) in a new epistemology of the urban, which proposes to move beyond "city-centric" conceptions through the analysis of planetary urbanisation as a multi-scalar and pervasive process, capable of redefining the contemporary geographies between agglomerations, regions and hybrid landscapes.

On the economic plane, the primary sector registers a constant decline in employment and a progressive concentration of enterprises: since 1980, approximately half of the small-sized agricultural enterprises have disappeared (Federal Statistical Office, 2013), with a consequent reduction of the agricultural and Alpine surfaces and a loss of biodiversity in the agro-ecosystems. Rural industry too, traditionally specialised in niche productions of high added value, contends with growing global competitive pressure, while between 1999 and 2011 innovative activity underwent a generalised decline, with the most pronounced fall precisely in the peripheral rural spaces (Regiosuisse, 2015). On the environmental front, biodiversity, with approximately one third of species threatened with extinction since 1900 (UFAM, 2012), constitutes a fundamental pillar for the quality of life and for tourist attractiveness, while climate change amplifies the risks for settlements and economic activities, rendering the economy of winter ski tourism particularly vulnerable. The settlement pressure originating from the urban centres generates, finally, contradictory phenomena: urban expansion and consumption of agricultural land in the peri-urban areas on the one hand, marginalisation and abandonment in the more remote territories on the other—a polarisation that requires planning instruments able to recognise the rural and mountain areas as territorial systems endowed with their own economic, identity-related and developmental dynamics, and not simply as environmental reserves or recreational spaces. The federal policy defines four interconnected strategic objectives that constitute the normative framework for public action. The first concentrates upon the creation of attractive living conditions through the enhancement of the landscape, of building culture and of the inhabited centres, guaranteeing a universal service of quality and a strategic harmonisation between transport, energy and settlements. The protection and enhancement of natural resources constitutes the second objective, providing for the long-term preservation of soil, biodiversity, forests and water resources through mechanisms of economic valorisation oriented towards adequately remunerating the providers of ecosystem services. The strengthening of economic competitiveness represents the third, calling upon the rural and mountain areas to consolidate the existing activities and develop new ones in accordance with the regional potentialities, strengthening the capacity for cooperation and innovation so that the local enterprises may compete on the global markets. Finally, the promotion of cultural diversity completes the strategic framework, enhancing the dialogue between tradition and modernity as a constitutive element of the attractiveness of the residential, tourist and recreational space, through the active involvement of residents, educational institutions, associations and tourist organisations. Among the most significant elements of the Swiss federal policy is the governance model, constructed around two complementary dimensions: a horizontal one, which concerns the coordination between the different sectoral policies, and a vertical one, which structures the relationships between the institutional levels of the Confederation. On the horizontal plane, the principal challenge is that of bringing into dialogue policies (regional, agricultural, tourist, transport, energy and environmental) that have historically operated in a parallel and often uncoordinated manner. In order to respond to this fragmentation, the Rete Nazionale Spazio Rurale (RNSR, National Rural Area Network) was established, a permanent inter-departmental body that functions as a platform for exchange between the different federal departments, whose role is to foster the exchange of information, to identify synergies and to prevent conflicts between sectoral policies. In practice, however, its capacity to influence operational decisions remains limited by the regulatory constraints and by the consolidated autonomies of each sector. The vertical dimension concerns, instead, the relationship between Confederation, Cantons and Municipalities, particularly delicate in a federal system such as the Swiss one, where the Cantons enjoy extensive competences in matters of spatial planning and regional development. The principal instrument of coordination is the tripartite Conference, a permanent forum of exchange between the three institutional levels, with the task of aligning the federal strategic orientations to the local territorial realities and of feeding the experiences matured in the field back towards the centre. A relevant aspect of the model is the attention devoted to the initiatives that arise from below: the federal policy recognises that the vitality of the rural territories depends in large measure upon their capacity to

elaborate their own visions and to construct local partnerships, and it therefore incentivises processes of regional planning in which the actors of the territory are protagonists.

On the front of resources, the principal financial instrument was the New Regional Policy [32] (NRP), with an endowment of approximately 280 million Swiss francs for the 2016–2023 period, destined to support processes of regional development, to strengthen the local systems of innovation and to provide methodological support. Alongside these are situated the Model Projects for the sustainable development of the territory, experimental initiatives co-financed by the Confederation in order to test innovative approaches, and the Pilot Programme Areas of Intervention (PHR), addressed to regions that face particularly complex structural challenges. It must, however, be underscored that the policy does not have a substantial budget of its own: it operates in large part by coordinating resources already provided by the existing sectoral policies and by the system of financial equalisation between Cantons (NPC), whose logic, predominantly quantitative, does not always succeed in intercepting the specificities of the individual territorial contexts. Notwithstanding the ambitions of the model, the analysis reveals certain structural tensions that limit its transformative capacity. The first concerns coordination itself: the sectoral policies continue to operate in a largely autonomous manner, and the RNSR, while performing a useful role as a forum of exchange, possesses limited decision-making powers, ending by harmonising choices already made rather than orienting them in advance. Alongside this is situated a second contradiction, perhaps more profound: the policy attributes centrality to the capacity of the territories to activate themselves from below, without, however, adequately considering the profound asymmetry in the starting conditions. The peri-urban areas and the tourist centres can count upon structured administrations and dynamic economic fabrics, while the more marginal zones struggle to meet the technical requirements of the calls for tender, with the concrete risk that the public resources may concentrate in the territories already endowed with greater capacities, widening the gaps instead of reducing them. In the Alpine centres of tourist vocation there then emerges a third critical node: the infrastructural investments required by the winter ski economy clash with the objectives of protection of the soil and of biodiversity, generating recurrent conflicts in which the local communities tend to perceive the environmental constraints as obstacles to development. To all of this is added the question of the temporal scale: the four-to-eight-year programmatic cycles around which public interventions are articulated are structurally inadequate with respect to phenomena such as depopulation or demographic ageing, which require continuous policies over multi-decadal horizons. On the whole, the Swiss federal policy constitutes an articulated frame of reference for the governance of rural and mountain territories, with a multi-level model that within the European panorama stands out for the way in which it seeks to combine institutional coordination and the enhancement of local initiatives. Significant structural limits nonetheless persist: the sectoral fragmentation has not been overcome, the territorial capacities remain profoundly unequal, and the absence of an autonomous budget reduces the possibility of concretely influencing the dynamics under way. In comparative perspective, the Swiss case is characterised by the weight of federalism and by the tradition of direct democracy, elements that condition both the decision-making processes and the capacity to construct consensus around long-term visions. It is precisely this capacity—to balance economic development, social equity and environmental sustainability within a shared framework—that constitutes the open challenge which will determine whether the policy succeeds in effectively influencing the processes of marginalisation, or whether the distance between strategic structure and concrete results will remain its unresolved contradiction.

Italy. The National Strategy for Inner Areas: origins, approaches and limits

The National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) represents one of

32 The New Regional Policy (NRP), introduced in 2008 in replacement of the traditional regional policy, is distinguished from the previous approach by the emphasis upon competitiveness and innovation rather than upon the compensation of gaps. The NRP is financed through the Fund for Regional Development, fed by federal and cantonal resources in equal measure, and operates through multi-annual implementation programmes that the Cantons define in accordance with the federal strategic priorities. For an independent evaluation of the results of the NRP in the 2008–2015 period, see Regiosuisse (2016), "Wirkungsanalyse Neue Regionalpolitik".

the most significant innovations in Italian public policy of the past few decades, configuring itself as an intervention of territorial development and cohesion inspired by the place-based approach (Barca, 2009). Initiated in 2013 and operational from 2014, the Strategy proposes to counter the negative demographic dynamics that characterise the marginal areas of the country, contextually promoting territorial rebalancing in access to the essential services of citizenship and endogenous local development (Carrosio, 2016). The founding methodological principle is innovative in its simplicity: territorial marginality is not defined in terms of economic or demographic parameters, but measured through accessibility to essential public services, shifting the focus from the morphological classification of the territory to the dimension of the effective exercise of the rights of citizenship (Lucatelli, 2015). From the operational point of view, SNAI is articulated into a twofold strategy of intervention: to ensure full access to essential services—mobility, education, health—and to promote local economic development by enhancing territorial specificities and guaranteeing the active maintenance of natural and cultural heritage (Carrosio and Faccini, 2018).

The methodological framework: the accessibility indicator and the territorial classification.

The central analytical device of SNAI is constituted by the accessibility indicator [33], an operational instrument that makes it possible to classify the entire national territory in accordance with the temporal distance from the centres for the provision of essential public services (DPS, 2014), transforming the abstract concept of marginality into an objective and territorialised measure, expressed in minutes of travel. The construction of the indicator is based upon the identification of the so-called poles, defined as urban centres, whether single or aggregated into inter-municipal poles, that ensure the simultaneous availability of three typologies of services deemed essential [34] (Barca et al., 2014): on the health front, the presence of a hospital endowed with a first-level Emergency and Admission Department, which guarantees at the same time accident-and-emergency services, functions of observation, short-stay care, resuscitation and interventions in the principal medical-surgical specialities; on the educational front, a complete secondary-school provision for the 14–19 age group, which ensures for young residents access to the entire educational path without the need for excessive commuting mobility; on the mobility front, the presence of a railway station classified at least as Silver according to the typology of Rete Ferroviaria Italiana (the Italian Railway Network), with a footfall exceeding 2,500 users per day and long-, medium- and short-distance services. The choice of these three services reflects a multidimensional conception of active citizenship: health as a fundamental right, education as an investment in human capital and an instrument of social mobility, public transport as a precondition for access to employment and to opportunities.

On the basis of the temporal distance from the poles, the national territory is articulated into six hierarchical categories that configure a continuum of decreasing accessibility: the poles, municipalities that offer the complete set of essential services; the inter-municipal poles, aggregations of municipalities that together guarantee all the services; the belt areas, municipalities less than 20 minutes distant from the poles; the intermediate areas, with a distance comprised between 20 and 40 minutes; the peripheral areas, between 40 and 75 minutes; and finally the outermost areas, beyond 75 minutes of distance.

The last three categories constitute the inner areas in the strict sense, which represent the focus of the Strategy: from the application of this classification a picture of considerable relevance emerges, since the inner areas occupy approximately 60% of the national territory, comprise more than 52% of the Italian

33 The choice to measure marginality through accessibility to services rather than through morphological or demographic criteria represents a significant conceptual innovation that has found recognition in the European debate on territorial policies as well. This choice has, however, also been the object of criticism: Vendemmia, Pucci and Beria (2022) have highlighted how measurement based exclusively upon car travel times underestimates marginality in contexts characterised by low motorisation or by populations without cars, such as the elderly and the young, and ignores the qualitative differences in the provision of the services reachable.

34 The choice of the three criteria for the identification of the poles (first-level DEA, Silver railway station, complete secondary school) was the object of revision in the update of the Mappa Aree Interne 2020, which introduced certain methodological modifications in order to take account of the changes in the distribution of services that occurred between 2014 and 2020. In particular, the number of poles and inter-municipal poles was significantly reduced: from the 339 of 2014 to the 241 of 2020, a reduction of 29%, which attests to the progressive deterioration of accessibility to services in the less central areas.

municipalities and concern approximately 13 million inhabitants, involving predominantly the Alpine and Apennine mountain systems but also extensive portions of the hilly and insular territory (Carlucci, Lucatelli, 2015). This distribution highlights a central question for Italian territorial policies: marginality is not a residual phenomenon, but concerns a significant portion of the country, with profound implications in terms of territorial equity and social cohesion.

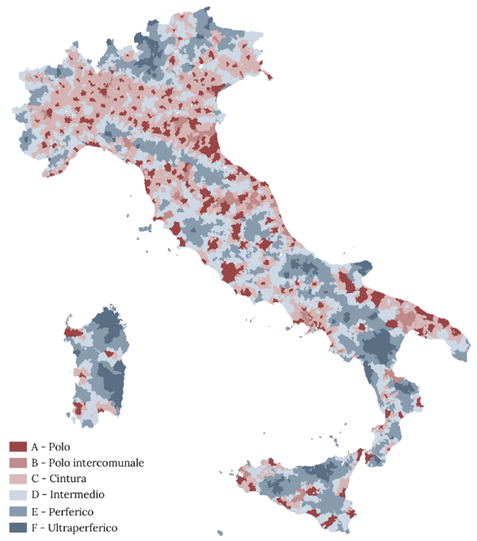


Figure 15. Classification of the Italian municipalities according to the SNAI methodology. Source: the author's own elaboration on data from the Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale (Agency for Territorial Cohesion), Mappa Aree Interne 2020; cartographic base ISTAT 2021.

The National Strategic Plan for Inner Areas (*Piano Strategico Nazionale delle Aree Interne*, PSNAI) confirms this territorial reading (Table 2), highlighting how the inner areas comprise 3,834 municipalities (48.5% of the national total), occupy 59% of the Italian surface and are home to approximately 13.4 million inhabitants (23% of the population).

Table 2. Territorial characteristics according to the classification of the PSNAI (2025) Source: the author's elaboration on data from the Piano Strategico Nazionale delle Aree Interne (2025).

Classification	Municip.	Resident population (2020)	% pop.	Surface (km²)	% surf.	Density (inhab./ km²)
A – Pole	182	20.470.301	35%	24.455,1	8%	837,1
B – Inter-municipal pole	59	1.576.586	3%	3.727,5	1%	423,0
C – Belt	3.828	23.756.465	40%	96.345,0	32%	246,6
Total Centres	**4.069**	**45.803.352**	**77%**	**124.527,6**	**41%**	**367,8**
D - Intermediate	1.928	8.059.454	14%	75.837,0	25%	106,3
E – Peripheral	1.524	4.653.355	8%	79.393,6	26%	58,6
F – Outermost	382	720.052	1%	22.310,1	7%	32,3
Total Inner Areas	**3.834**	**13.432.861**	**23%**	**177.540,7**	**59%**	**75,7**
Total Italy	**7.903**	**59.236.213**	**100%**	**302.068,3**	**100%**	**196,1**

The process of selection of the areas of intervention is articulated into two complementary phases that combine quantitative analysis and qualitative knowledge of the territories. The first phase, termed the desk phase, is founded upon the use of a structured grid of 161 quantitative indicators elaborated by the Comitato Tecnico Aree Interne (Technical Committee for Inner Areas) in collaboration with the Regions (Barca et al., 2014), organised into nine thematic sections (principal characteristics, demography, agriculture and sectoral specialisation, digital divide, cultural heritage and tourism, health, accessibility, education and inter-municipal associationism) that cover complementary dimensions of the territorial reality.

This multidimensional approach makes it possible to construct an articulated diagnosis, which renders a picture of the territorial conditions and constitutes the basis for a comparative assessment of local needs, while at the same time guaranteeing the systematic comparability between very different territories on a national scale. The second phase, termed the field phase, introduces a qualitative dimension essential for the effective application of the place-based approach: through focus groups involving local administrators, school and health managers, and representatives of associations and of civil society, aspects not detectable from quantitative data alone are examined in depth, such as social dynamics, cultural specificities, forms of informal cooperation and emerging local project initiatives (Lucatelli and Tantillo, 2018). The integration between quantitative analysis and situated knowledge represents a distinctive element of SNAI, recognising that the complexity of the territories cannot be entirely captured by statistical indicators, however articulated these may be.

In accordance with the methodological indications of the European Commission, SNAI requires that each result indicator be associated with objectives constructed according to the SMART criteria—specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound (Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale, 2015)—guaranteeing that the objectives of the Strategy are ambitious and concretely monitorable and assessable, creating the conditions for an institutional learning based upon the results effectively achieved.

The process of identification of the areas of intervention is characterised by its public and participatory nature, configuring

itself as the result of a model of multi-level cooperation that involved the Comitato Tecnico Aree Interne, the Regions and the local administrations (Lucatelli, 2015). In the first programming cycle 2014–2020, 72 pilot project areas were identified, comprising 1,060 municipalities with a population of approximately 2 million inhabitants and a territorial extent of more than 51,000 km², with 57.7% of the municipalities classified as peripheral or outermost. For each area, the local administrations defined an Area Strategy (*Strategia d'Area*) that identifies the priorities of intervention, constituting the basis for the stipulation of the Framework Programme Agreement (*Accordo di Programma Quadro*) signed by Regions, Local Authorities and Central Administration. In the 2021–2027 cycle the Strategy was significantly broadened, with the introduction of 56 new areas and the re-perimetration of 30 already existing ones, for a current total of 124 project areas [35], 1,904 municipalities and approximately 4.6 million inhabitants—an expansion that attests both to the recognition of the effectiveness of the methodological approach and to the growing awareness of the magnitude of the phenomenon of territorial marginality in the Italian context. Such an evolution finds further consolidation with the National Strategic Plan for Inner Areas (PSNAI), which moves beyond the logic of project areas alone and takes as its reference the entire national classification of municipalities according to the levels of accessibility to essential services. The adoption of the Plan marks the passage from a predominantly experimental phase of the Strategy to a phase of consolidation of the national policy for inner areas, in which the intervention is situated within a structural and long-term perspective oriented towards the reduction of territorial, demographic and service-access gaps. Table 3 summarises the quantitative evolution of the Strategy, highlighting the distribution of municipalities by category of accessibility in the two programming cycles and in the subsequent frame of reference of the PSNAI.

35 The expansion of SNAI from the 72 areas of the 2014–2020 cycle to the 124 of the 2021–2027 cycle reflects a specific political choice: to extend the coverage of the Strategy to a greater number of fragile territories, increasing the pool of beneficiaries from approximately 2 million to approximately 4.6 million inhabitants. This expansion has, however, raised questions about the capacity of the technical and financial support system to follow so high a number of areas in a capillary manner, with the risk of a dilution of resources and a reduction in the quality of the methodological accompaniment.

Category of municipality[36]	**SNAI 2014-2020 (72 areas)**	**SNAI 2021-2027 (124 areas)**	**PSNAI (national classification)**
A – Pole	1	1	182
B – Inter-municipal pole	0	0	59
C – Belt	127	206	3.828
D – Intermediate	333	595	1.928
E – Peripheral	482	864	1.524
F – Outermost	117	238	382
Total municip.	**1.060**	**1.904**	**7.903**

Table 3.
Evolution of the National Strategy for Inner Areas across the programming cycles and distribution of municipalities by category of accessibility
Source: the author's elaboration on data from the Dipartimento per le Politiche di Coesione (Department for Cohesion Policies) (2023, 2025) and from the Piano Strategico Nazionale delle Aree Interne (PSNAI, 2025).

SNAI identifies three interconnected macro-objectives that configure an integrated vision of territorial development. The first concerns the protection of the territory and the safety of the inhabitants, understood not as passive conservation but as proactive action on the part of the resident communities: the citizens are called to become custodians of their own territories [37], carrying out daily actions of care and maintenance that configure a process of community empowerment through which the local populations acquire the capacities necessary for the sustainable management of the territorial heritage (Barbera, 2015). The second objective focuses upon the promotion of natural and cultural diversity, recognising within Italy's inner areas an extraordinary richness—the territorial diversification and the settlement polycentrism—that many European nations are artificially seeking to recreate (Bevilacqua, 2012): peripherality, traditionally understood as a geographical limit, is reinterpreted as an opportunity for the development of forms of quality tourism and of innovative economic models that enhance local specificities (Barbera, 2021). The third macro-objective concerns the relaunch of development within a broader dimension that

36 Categories A–F derive from the classification of the *Mappa nazionale delle Aree Interne* (National Map of Inner Areas, 2020), constructed on the basis of accessibility to essential services (education, health and mobility). The first two columns refer exclusively to the municipalities included in the SNAI project areas of the respective programming cycles; the third column reports, instead, the distribution of the entire national territory according to the classification adopted by the National Strategic Plan for Inner Areas (PSNAI).

37 The concept of custodians of the territory recalls the broader literature on the commons systematised by Ostrom (1990) in Governing the Commons, which demonstrates how local communities are able to manage common resources sustainably without resorting either to privatisation or to centralised state management, provided that shared rules, monitoring mechanisms and systems of sanction exist. This perspective constitutes the theoretical foundation of the community-based approach to the care of the territory promoted by SNAI.

integrates social, cultural and environmental aspects, with the objective of creating the conditions whereby residing in the inner areas may become an attractive and sustainable choice, generating diversified employment opportunities and ensuring quality of life through the overcoming of merely economistic visions of territorial development.

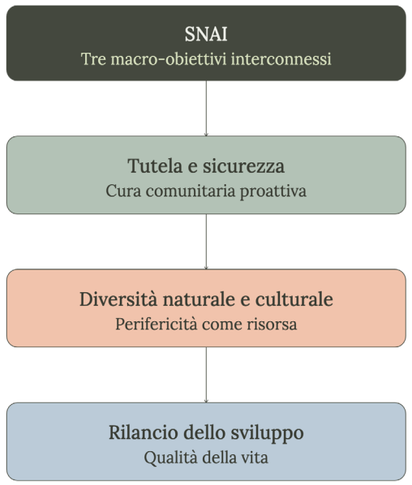


Figure 16.
The macro-objectives of the National Strategy for Inner Areas.
Source: the author's elaboration

Territorial experiences: two project areas compared.

The implementation of SNAI has generated profoundly differentiated territorial experiences, which attest both to the potentialities of the place-based approach and to the operational critical issues that condition its effectiveness. The analysis of two representative project areas, the Alta Carnia in Friuli-Venezia Giulia and the Madonie in Sicily, makes it possible to understand the concrete dynamics of implementation of the Strategy, highlighting the results achieved, the obstacles encountered and the lessons learned.

The comparison between Alta Carnia and Madonie highlights how the implementation of SNAI generates strongly differentiated outcomes in accordance with the pre-existing institutional capacities, the quality of local governance and the socio-economic context of departure. Alta Carnia benefited from enabling conditions—consolidated inter-municipal governance, an active associative fabric, qualified technical support—that facilitated implementation and the generation of first tangible

results, although structural limits persist that suggest the need for long-term interventions. The Madonie represent, instead, a situation in which institutional weakness, political fragmentation and the shortage of technical competences hindered effective implementation, highlighting how the mere availability of financial resources and the quality of the methodological framework are not sufficient in the absence of adequate capacities of territorial governance.

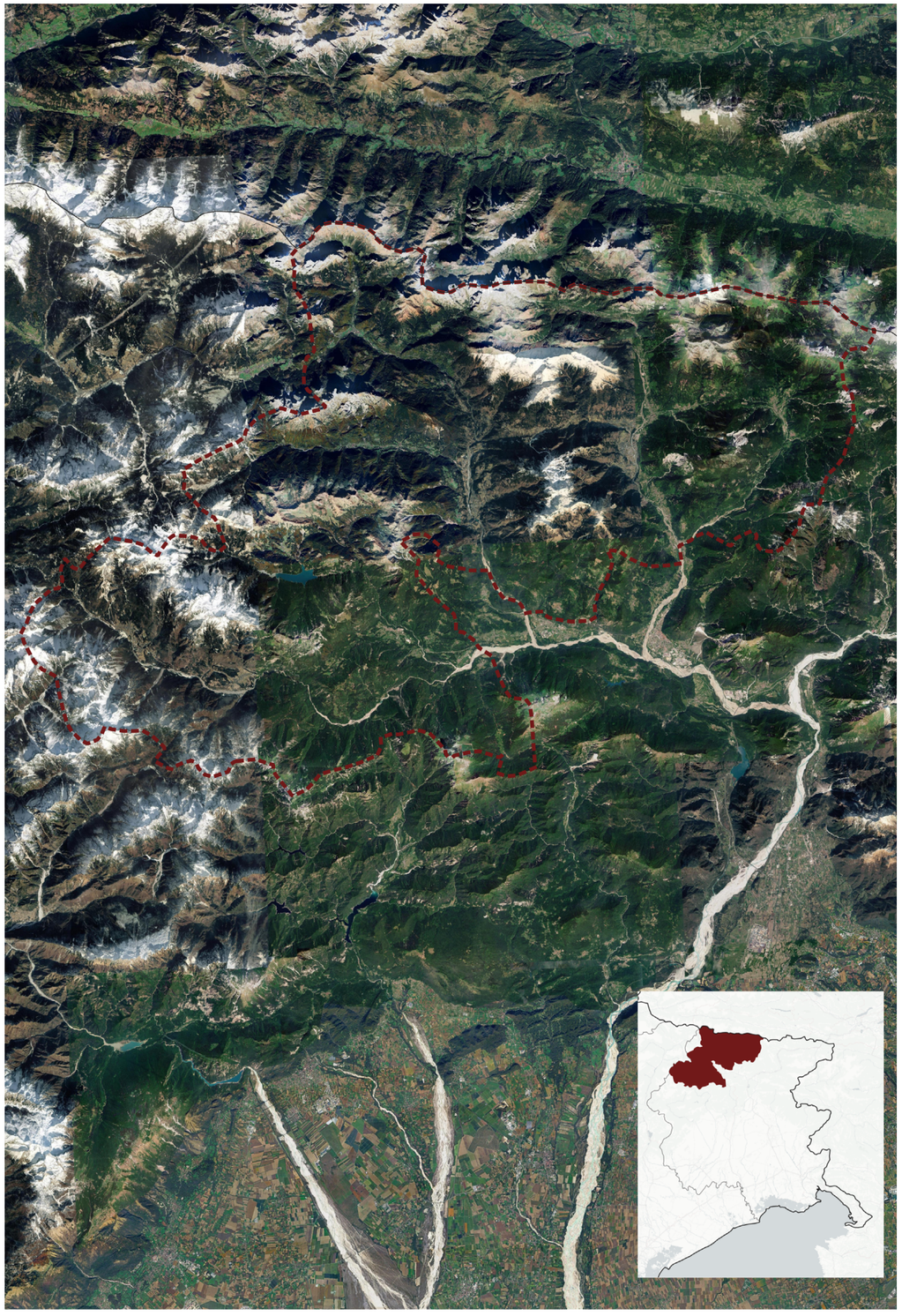
Dimension	Alta Carnia	Madonie
Region	Friuli-Venezia Giulia	Sicily
Municipalities involved	28	21
Territorial character	Alpine area	Mediterranean hill/ mountain area
Principal critical issue	Depopulation and accessibility	Institutional weakness
Prevalent resource	Natural heritage and forestry supply chains	Historical-cultural and agri-food heritage
Governance	Consolidated Mountain Community	More fragile coordination
Dominant strategy	Services + local economy	Heritage + tourism

Table 4.
Comparative analysis of the Alta Carnia and Madonie project areas
Source: the author's elaboration on data from the Dipartimento per le Politiche di Coesione (Department for Cohesion Policies)

L'analisi comparativa suggerisce che la SNAI, per massimizzare la propria efficacia, richiederebbe una differenziazione degli strumenti di supporto in funzione delle capacità istituzionali locali, con investimenti preventivi in *capacity building* nei territori più fragili; una maggiore flessibilità temporale, poiché i cicli settennali della programmazione europea mal si conciliano con i tempi lunghi necessari per costruire governance territoriale e consolidare i risultati; una più efficace integrazione con politiche di secondo welfare che sostengano direttamente le persone riducendo i costi sociali della marginalità; e una più sistematica attenzione alla dimensione abitativa, poiché entrambi i casi evidenziano come la disponibilità di alloggi accessibili rappresenti un fattore critico spesso trascurato dalle strategie d'area. Quest'ultima considerazione anticipa una delle questioni centrali della seconda parte di questo lavoro: il rapporto tra politiche di rivitalizzazione territoriale e gestione del patrimonio edilizio esistente, che costituisce al tempo stesso una risorsa latente sottoutilizzata e un vincolo all'attrattività residenziale delle aree interne.

Figure 17.
Location of the Alta Carnia project area within the framework of the National Strategy for Inner Areas
Source: the author's elaboration on SNAI data and regional cartography.

Figure 18.
Location of the Madonie project area within the framework of the National Strategy for Inner Areas
Source: the author's elaboration on SNAI data and regional cartography.



BOX no. 1 - Alta Carnia (Friuli-Venezia Giulia): territorial governance and local project capacity. The Alta Carnia project area comprises 21 municipalities distributed across a mountain territory of approximately 650 km² in the north-eastern sector of Friuli-Venezia Giulia, with a population of approximately 20,000 inhabitants. The area is characterised by a significant geographical marginality—with more than 70% of the municipalities classified as peripheral or outermost—and by critical demographic dynamics: between 1971 and 2011 it lost more than 30% of its population, with an old-age index exceeding 230% and a birth rate below 5 per thousand (Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale et al. 2018). From the economic point of view, the territory presents a residual manufacturing specialisation in a phase of structural decline, a marginal mountain agricultural sector and a seasonal tourism concentrated in the ski localities, vulnerable to climate change. The Area Strategy, approved in 2015 and implemented through a Framework Programme Agreement signed in 2016, identified three strategic axes: the strengthening of essential services, through the reorganisation of the school network with models of scuola diffusa (dispersed school) and innovative multi-grade classes, the reinforcement of local health services with telemedicine and integrated home care, and the improvement of public transport connections; the enhancement of natural and cultural heritage, with the development of an integrated system of sustainable tourist provision based upon the Parco Naturale delle Dolomiti Friulane (Friulian Dolomites Nature Park) and upon the recovery of disused historic buildings; economic diversification and innovation, with support for the bioeconomy, for local forestry supply chains and for youth and female entrepreneurship. The implementation produced differentiated results: the interventions on the school system made it possible to keep open buildings that risked closure, although difficulties persist in finding teachers willing to operate in remote mountain contexts; the telemedicine services improved accessibility to specialist consultations, though critical issues remain in continuous care in some of the more remote municipalities. The recovery of some historic buildings—among them the former social dairy of Sutrio transformed into a ostello diffuso (dispersed hostel)—generated new opportunities for cultural tourism, although the flows remain strongly seasonal (Osservatorio sul turismo in Friuli-Venezia Giulia, 2021). Approximately 20 entrepreneurial projects were initiated in the agri-food and artisanal sectors, but the capacity to generate stable employment for young people remains limited and the migratory tendency, though slowed, has not yet been reversed (Comunità di montagna della Carnia, 2021).

Among the factors that favoured the implementation, there emerge the presence of the Comunità Montana della Carnia (Carnia Mountain Community) as an aggregating body, a lively associative fabric and the technical support of the University of Udine; among the principal obstacles, the bureaucratic complexity that discouraged some potential beneficiaries, the fragmentation into 28 municipalities and the poor synchronisation between SNAI interventions and other regional policies.

BOX no. 2 - Madonie (Sicily): challenges of governance and widespread cultural heritage.

The Madonie project area comprises 21 municipalities of the Parco Naturale delle Madonie (Madonie Nature Park), with a population of approximately 60,000 inhabitants distributed across 160,000 hectares in the north-central part of Sicily. The territory is characterised by a high landscape and naturalistic value and by an exceedingly rich historical-cultural heritage, with numerous medieval villages, Norman churches and consolidated artisanal traditions (Strategia d'Area Madonie, 2017). From the demographic point of view, between 1961 and 2011 the population diminished by more than 40%, with an old-age index exceeding 200% and a strongly negative net migration rate; the local economy presents a weak structure, with a prevalence of marginal agriculture, an underdeveloped tourist sector notwithstanding its potential, and an unemployment rate exceeding 20%.

The Area Strategy, approved in 2017, identified four strategic lines: the reinforcement of the services of citizenship through innovative school hubs and the reorganisation of health services; the enhancement of cultural heritage through the recovery of disused historic buildings and the promotion of intangible heritage; the strengthening of quality agri-food supply chains, with particular attention to local DOP/IGP (PDO/PGI) productions; the development of an integrated tourist provision that combines nature, culture and food-and-wine.

The implementation encountered significant difficulties. Unlike the Alta Carnia, the Madonie did not possess a consolidated inter-municipal coordination structure: the attempt to constitute a Unione di Comuni (Union of Municipalities) clashed with political resistance and fragmentation of the local leadership, slowing the decision-making processes (Lucatelli et al., 2020). The shortage of technical competences in the small-sized municipalities rendered insufficient the technical assistance provided for by the Strategy, while the bureaucratic complexity generated significant delays in the commencement of the works: several building-recovery projects approved in 2018–2019 had still not been initiated in 2022.

Notwithstanding the critical issues, some interventions produced appreciable results: the school hub of Petralia Sottana successfully experimented with innovative didactic approaches, becoming a regional point of reference; the recovery of Palazzo Pottino in Gangi partially revitalised the historic centre of the village; and some social-agriculture projects contributed to the recovery of abandoned land. Significant missed opportunities nonetheless persist: the disused historic built heritage—estimated at more than 200 buildings of value—remains for the most part unused; the agri-food supply chains struggle to become structured and to reach remunerative markets; and tourism remains concentrated in a few villages without generating widespread employment benefits (Osservatorio Turistico Regione Siciliana, 2022).

Potentialities and limits of the system of indicators

The system of indicators elaborated within the framework of SNAI represents a significant innovation in the panorama of Italian territorial policies, since it objectivises the measurement of territorial marginality through explicit and verifiable criteria, guarantees comparability between very different territories on a national scale, supports decision-making processes based upon empirical evidence and creates a common information base for the dialogue between different levels of governance. The integration between desk phase and field phase constitutes, moreover, a significant attempt to overcome the dualism between purely quantitative approaches and qualitative methodologies, recognising the need to combine analytical rigour and situated knowledge. Notwithstanding these potentialities, the operational use of the system presents critical issues that limit its effectiveness as an instrument of ordinary territorial governance.

The grid of 161 indicators, while guaranteeing a high analytical articulation, renders extremely complex and onerous the systematic collection and updating of the information, especially at the municipal level (Rossitti et al., 2021); many indicators are not easily obtainable in open-data format or are not systematically collected on a local scale, requiring the coordination of multiple public bodies with consequent problems of timeliness and comparability; the management and interpretation of the data requires technical competences not always present in local contexts, with the risk of a bureaucratisation of knowledge in which the production of data becomes a formal fulfilment rather than an effective instrument of institutional learning.

Specific critical issues emerge, moreover, in the section on cultural heritage and tourism, which limits itself substantially to the measurement of tourist flows, neglecting the state of conservation of the built heritage and the intangible cultural practices, and in that on inter-municipal associationism, which considers exclusively the institutionalised relationships between local authorities, ignoring the forms of informal cooperation that often constitute the most precious resource for the implementation of the place-based approach. There finally emerges a structural tension between the requirement of national standardisation necessary in order to guarantee comparability and accountability and the need to adapt the indicators to local specificities in accordance with the place-based principle, with the current system privileging the former dimension to the detriment of the latter.

Potentialities	Critical issues
National comparability	Complexity of the system
Evidence-based approach	Updating costs
Desk/field integration	Local operational difficulties
Support for governance	Risk of bureaucratisation
Territorial measurement	Standardisation/local-adaptation tension

Table 5.
Potentialities and critical issues of the system of indicators of the National Strategy for Inner Areas
Source: the author's elaboration on data from the Dipartimento per le Politiche di Coesione (Department for Cohesion Policies)

The evolution towards a system of second-generation indicators, more dynamic, sensitive to contexts and integrated with local knowledge, represents a crucial challenge for the future of the Strategy. Such an evolution would require the introduction of process indicators that make it possible to assess the final results, the dynamics of implementation and the quality of governance; the strengthening of the integration between quantitative and qualitative dimensions through participatory methodologies and narrative approaches; the adoption of multi-level measurement models that combine the municipal scale with the inter-municipal one; and significant investments in the training of local public operators and in the construction of communities of practice that foster learning between territories. From this perspective, the evolution towards a system of second-generation indicators does not represent a mere technical adjustment: as Barca (2009) underscores, the success of place-based policies depends upon the capacity to construct institutions and instruments that enhance local knowledge and promote institutional learning, and a revision of the measurement instruments therefore constitutes a strategic step in order to transform SNAI from an innovative public policy into a model of territorial governance that is effectively participatory and oriented towards change.

2.3 COMPARATIVE SYNTHESIS: MODELS OF GOVERNANCE AND PROSPECTS FOR TERRITORIAL REUSE

The analysis of the policies adopted in Scotland, Switzerland and Italy in order to address the challenges of the marginal areas reveals a progressive convergence towards place-based approaches, albeit with significant differences in the instruments, in the mechanisms of governance and in the results achieved. This comparative synthesis makes it possible to identify common elements, national specificities and transferable lessons, devoting particular attention to the dimension of built and territorial heritage, a theme that will constitute the analytical focus of the second part of this work.

All three national contexts share the recognition of the systemic and multidimensional nature of territorial marginalisation. The policies analysed move beyond sectoral or merely compensatory approaches, recognising the interdependence between demographic dynamics, accessibility, provision of services, economic vitality and environmental quality, translating this awareness into the pursuit of integrated interventions that bear upon several dimensions rather than isolating specific problems. A second common element concerns the emphasis upon the active role of local actors: Scotland with the model of community ownership, Switzerland through the regional strategic territorial processes, and Italy with the Area Strategies of SNAI all enhance endogenous project capacity, recognising that the most effective solutions emerge from the mobilisation of local knowledge and resources rather than from the imposition of standardised models from above. Notwithstanding these strategic convergences, the three cases present profoundly different governance architectures, conditioned by their respective institutional arrangements and by the national administrative traditions. The Scottish model is characterised by a strong bottom-up orientation and by the legal and financial recognition of community initiatives: community land ownership and the buyout mechanisms represent instruments that effectively transfer the ownership and the control of territorial resources to the local communities, configuring forms of territorial self-government that go well beyond mere consultative participation. The Swiss model adopts a strongly proceduralised multi-level governance approach, which balances federal, cantonal and municipal competences through mechanisms of horizontal coordination (the Rete Nazionale Spazio Rurale, National Rural Area Network) and vertical coordination (the tripartite Conference), with a systemic capacity that resides in the sophisticated institutional articulation but presents limits in the persistent sectoral fragmentation and in the asymmetries in territorial project capacities. The Italian model of SNAI configures itself as a solution of mediation between centralisation and local autonomy: it maintains a central role of the State in the definition of the methodological framework and in the allocation of resources, while at the same time requiring a territorial co-design through the Area Strategies and the Framework Programme Agreements; this approach has the merit of constructing bridges between institutional levels traditionally little inclined to dialogue, but risks being transformed into a complex bureaucratic process that penalises the territories with lesser technical capacities. The divergences in the models of governance are reflected also in the operational priorities. Whereas the Italian approach primarily emphasises the restoration of accessibility to essential services—mobility, education, health—the Scottish and Swiss models devote greater attention to the enhancement of the specific territorial resources and to the management of the natural and built heritage. This distinction is not accidental but reflects the different phases of development of the policies: Italy, with SNAI, still contends with gaps of territorial citizenship so marked as to require priority interventions on the front of fundamental public services, while Scotland and Switzerland, having already reached higher standards of coverage of basic services, are able to concentrate upon more sophisticated questions linked to territorial competitiveness and quality of life. The question of disused or under-used built heritage nonetheless represents a dimension transversal to all three contexts, albeit addressed with different instruments and priorities: the Scottish community buyout frequently includes the recovery of abandoned public or private buildings to be assigned to community functions; Switzerland integrates the management of built heritage within the strategies of containment of land consumption; Italy, while not yet having developed systematic instruments for the reuse of heritage in the inner areas, displays a growing awareness of

the relevance of this theme. A critical node common to the three contexts concerns the asymmetries in territorial institutional and project capacities: in all three cases, the policies tend to reward the territories already endowed with greater cognitive, technical and relational resources, potentially amplifying the gaps rather than reducing them [38]. Scotland has attempted to address this problem through dedicated support structures that provide technical assistance and methodological accompaniment; Switzerland has institutionalised mechanisms of support through the Rete Nazionale Spazio Rurale; Italy provided for the technical assistance of the Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale (Agency for Territorial Cohesion) [39], whose effective capacity to support 124 project areas in a capillary manner nonetheless remained limited. On the plane of evaluation and institutional learning, the Swiss model stands out for a systematic approach with periodic revisions of the operational instruments and structured mechanisms of feedback between institutional levels; the Scottish model integrates forms of participatory evaluation that directly involve the beneficiary communities; the Italian SNAI has elaborated a sophisticated system of indicators which, as highlighted in the critical analysis, nonetheless presents operational limits that reduce its effectiveness as an instrument of ordinary governance. Beyond the national specificities, the experiences reported bring to light a transversal element often underestimated: the question of the existing built heritage. All three contexts contend with apparently contradictory dynamics: on the one hand, the presence of a considerable stock of disused, abandoned or under-used buildings in the inner areas; on the other, persistent problems of access to housing for those who would wish to reside or invest in these territories [40]. This paradox—an abundance of physical heritage and a scarcity of affordable housing solutions—represents a crucial challenge for the sustainability of territorial revitalisation policies: it is not sufficient to improve accessibility to services or to create economic opportunities if there is a lack of adequate and affordable housing availability (De Rossi, 2018).

The policies analysed in this chapter have addressed the theme of built heritage in a still fragmentary and often indirect manner, subordinating it to other priorities or integrating it indirectly within instruments conceived for other purposes, without developing systematic approaches oriented specifically towards the reactivation of the built environment in the peripheral areas. This strategic gap proves particularly significant in a context of growing attention to environmental sustainability and to the containment of land consumption, which would require privileging the regeneration of the existing over new construction, and in which disused heritage represents a latent resource that, if adequately reactivated, might contribute significantly to the objectives of economic, social and demographic revitalisation of the inner areas.

It is precisely to this dimension—still marginal in public policy but central in the concrete territorial dynamics—that the second part of this work is addressed, analysing the morphologies of building abandonment, the causes that determine it and, above all, the emerging practices of reuse and reactivation that, often from below and in experimental forms, are attempting to transform abandoned heritage from a problem into an opportunity for the rebirth of the marginal territories.

38 The theme of the asymmetries in the institutional and project capacities of the territories has been systematised in the literature on territorial governance through the concept of administrative capacity (Charron et al., 2014), which measures the quality of local public institutions in terms of efficiency, impartiality and absence of corruption. European comparative research shows a significant correlation between local administrative capacity and effectiveness in the use of European structural funds, with the regions of Southern Europe presenting the lowest levels of institutional capacity and the highest rates of non-utilisation of the available resources (Rodríguez-Pose and Garcilazo, 2015).

39 The Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale, established in 2014 with the task of coordinating and supporting the implementation of SNAI and of the cohesion policies, was abolished by the Prime Ministerial Decree (DPCM) of 10 November 2023 within the framework of a process of reorganisation of the governmental structures. Its functions were transferred to the Dipartimento per le Politiche di Coesione (Department for Cohesion Policies) of the Presidency of the Council of Ministers. This institutional transition, which occurred at a crucial phase of the launch of the 2021–2027 programming cycle, raised concerns among the operators of the sector regarding the continuity of the technical support to the 124 project areas and the preservation of the competences accumulated in almost a decade of work.

40 The paradox between an abundance of disused physical heritage and a scarcity of affordable housing solutions in the inner areas has been defined by some authors as the vacancy paradox (PWagani, 2020) or housing paradox (Gallent et al., 2017) and represents one of the most complex challenges for territorial revitalisation policies. In the Italian context, this phenomenon is amplified by the fragmentation of ownership of private heritage, by the complexity of the procedures of sale and rental for properties in low-demand contexts, and by the difficulty of finding operators willing to invest in real-estate markets with scarce liquidity.

Tabella 6.
Modelli di governance delle Models of governance of marginal areas compared: Scotland, Switzerland and Italy.
Source: the author's elaboration on institutional sources relating to the Scottish land reform, the Swiss New Regional Policy and the Italian National Strategy for Inner Areas.

	Scozia	Svizzera	Italia
Quadro istituzionale	Devolution (1999); Parlamento scozzese; Community Land Scotland; Scottish Land Commission (2017).	Sistema federale articolato su Confederazione, Cantoni e Comuni.	Governance multilivello della SNAI con CTAI e amministrazioni regionali e locali.
Approccio territoriale	Empowerment delle comunità e ampliamento dei diritti di acquisto e gestione comunitaria della terra.	Coordinamento tra livelli di governo e cooperazione interistituzionale per lo sviluppo regionale.	Approccio place-based orientato alla riduzione della marginalità e al rafforzamento dei servizi essenziali.
Strumenti principali	Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015; Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016; Scottish Land Fund.	Rete Nazionale Spazio Rurale (coordinamento orizzontale); Conferenza Tripartita (coordinamento verticale); Nuova Politica Regionale (NPR)	Indicatore di accessibilità ai servizi; Strategie d'Area; Accordi di Programma Quadro (APQ).
Finanziamento	Finanziamenti dedicati tramite Scottish Land Fund e programmi di sviluppo rurale.	NPR 2016-2023: circa 320 milioni CHF di contributi federali e 400 milioni CHF di prestiti.	Fondi europei, Fondo Sviluppo e Coesione e risorse nazionali dedicate alla SNAI.
Ruolo delle comunità	Coinvolgimento diretto nella proprietà e gestione di terreni e beni immobili attraverso strumenti di community ownership.	Partecipazione attraverso processi di sviluppo regionale coordinati da Cantoni e attori locali.	Co-progettazione territoriale nella definizione delle Strategie d'Area.
Patrimonio edilizio	Possibilità di acquisizione comunitaria di terreni e immobili mediante gli strumenti di land reform.	Inserito nelle politiche territoriali e di sviluppo regionale, senza uno specifico programma NPR dedicato.	Presenza nella programmazione territoriale locale, ma senza un dispositivo specifico della SNAI dedicato esclusivamente al patrimonio edilizio.
Punti di forza	Forte sostegno normativo alla partecipazione e alla proprietà comunitaria.	Elevata integrazione tra livelli di governo e continuità della politica regionale.	Approccio integrato ai problemi di accessibilità, servizi e sviluppo locale.
Criticità documentate	Necessità di capacità organizzative e finanziarie da parte delle comunità locali.	Complessità del coordinamento tra politiche e livelli istituzionali.	Differenze nelle capacità amministrative dei territori e complessità procedurale.
Evoluzione recente	Prosecuzione delle politiche di land reform e del supporto alla proprietà comunitaria.	Avvio del nuovo programma pluriennale NPR 2024-2031.	Passaggio da 72 aree del ciclo 2014-2020 a 124 aree di progetto nel ciclo 2021-2027.

PART TWO

INHABITING THE VOID: BETWEEN ABANDONMENT AND REUSE

On the preceding page *Homage to Giacomelli*, Scanno, Abruzzo, Italy.
Photograph by M. Kenna, 2016

In Part I, policies for inner areas were analysed across three national contexts — Scotland, Switzerland and Italy — bringing to light a recurrent systemic gap: abandoned built heritage is mentioned, yet it is never addressed through specific operational instruments. In Scotland, community ownership practices occasionally encompass the recovery of disused buildings, but only as a side effect of broader territorial strategies; in Switzerland, despite the sophistication of policies for rural and mountain areas, the reuse of built heritage in peripheral areas is not explicitly thematised; while in Italy, the National Strategy for Inner Areas has prioritised the strengthening of essential services, leaving the question of disused heritage in the background.
This gap is not incidental but reflects the absence of a shared understanding of the phenomenon of abandonment: what, precisely, does it mean for a building to be "abandoned"? What forms does abandonment assume across different territorial contexts? What causes generate and sustain it? Which regulatory and planning instruments exist to address it, and which are lacking?
Before the reuse practices that seek to reactivate this heritage are examined (Ch. 5), an analytical framework of abandonment as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon must be constructed, moving beyond simplistic readings that reduce it to a mere absence of inhabitants or to an outcome of depopulation. Abandonment is instead the outcome of systemic processes in which demographic, economic, regulatory and cultural dynamics are interwoven, producing a differentiated geography of buildings, spaces and territories withdrawn, temporarily or permanently, from their original functions.

3. THE ABANDONMENT OF TERRITORIES: MORPHOLOGIES, CAUSES AND INSTRUMENTS

The chapter is organised into three sections. The first (Defining abandonment: morphologies and concepts) addresses the definitional question, highlighting the absence of a shared national regulatory framework and proposing an operational systematisation of the morphologies of abandonment, distinguished by building typology, degree of disuse and ownership regime. The second section (Causes and dynamics of

abandonment) examines in greater depth the causes and dynamics that generate and perpetuate abandonment, situating them within the interpretive framework of the cycle of marginalisation discussed in Part I (Depopulation, accessibility, services: the cycle of marginalisation), and critically analyses national and regional spatial planning instruments, highlighting their limits and their potential. The third section (Towards reuse practices) anticipates the analytical framework developed in Chapter 5 (Practices and projects of reactivation), exploring the conditions through which abandoned heritage may be transformed into a territorial resource.

3.1 DEFINING ABANDONMENT: MORPHOLOGIES AND CONCEPTS

When abandoned buildings in Italian inner areas are discussed, three preliminary questions arise which are interwoven and mutually conditioning. The first concerns the definition of the phenomenon itself: what exactly does it mean for a building to be "abandoned"? Which criteria allow it to be distinguished from a property that is temporarily vacant or underused? The second question pertains to the forms that abandonment assumes: disused heritage displays profoundly differentiated morphologies according to building typology, territorial context, and the timing and modality of disuse. The third question, finally, concerns the knowledge available: how much is genuinely known about the quantitative dimension of the phenomenon? What data exist, and how reliable are they?

These three nodes — definitional, morphological and epistemic — are not independent but feed one another in a vicious circle: the absence of a shared definition obstructs the construction of reliable inventories, while the fragmentation of data prevents the elaboration of targeted policies which might, in turn, help to clarify operational criteria. Untangling this knot constitutes a necessary step if abandonment is to be transformed from a generic question into an operable object of analysis.

The definitional problem: the absence of a national regulatory framework

One of the principal difficulties in addressing the phenomenon of building and territorial abandonment in Italy, both analytically and operationally, lies in the absence of a univocal and shared national legal definition. Unlike other planning phenomena — such as blight, land take or unauthorised building — for which consolidated regulatory frameworks exist (Decreto del Presidente della Repubblica n. 380, 2001; ISPRA, 2023; Salzano, 1998; Settis, 2010), abandonment remains an elusive concept, defined in a fragmentary and often contradictory manner by regional legislation, case-law interpretations and local administrative practice. This definitional deficiency produces significant operational consequences, since in the absence of shared criteria for establishing what constitutes an "abandoned asset", public administrations have no uniform methodological instruments with which to survey disused heritage, assess its extent, define intervention priorities or activate recovery and acquisition procedures. In this sense, no guidelines exist that might orient public administrations in the methodology to be adopted in order to map abandoned heritage (buildings and open spaces) and return it to circulation.

The legal approach concentrates primarily on the ownership dimension and on the configuration of the asset's status, distinguishing between res derelicta, assets voluntarily abandoned by the owner with a manifest intention of relinquishing the property right, and res nullius, assets devoid of title either because they have never belonged to anyone or because the owner has ceased to exist without heirs or entitled parties. Article 827 of the Civil Code establishes that immovable property owned by no one accrues to the patrimony of the State, thereby invoking the category of res nullius, yet without clarifying under what conditions a private asset may be considered legally "belonging to no one", and rendering this form of acquisition very rare in practice, since the effective absence of title is difficult to prove[1]. More significant in operational terms is the situation

1 Italian case law has progressively restricted the applicability of the 'res nullius' category to immovable property, making it, in practice, very rare for a private building to be acquired by the State on the grounds of lack of ownership. The Council of State (judgement no. 2951/2016) reiterated that mere prolonged non-use does not constitute an implicit renunciation of the right of ownership, confirming the need for an explicit expression of intent on the part of the owner. For a critical review of the legal framework governing abandoned buildings, see Mazzoleni (2019), 'Abandoned properties and public authorities: existing instruments and prospects for reform'.

in which the owner voluntarily renounces the asset; mere non-use or protracted inactivity, however, cannot be regarded by the legislator as sufficient conditions. Indeed, in the absence of an explicit expression of intent, the property remains formally owned even where it is in fact unused, generating a form of "phantom ownership" and an interpretive uncertainty that raises recurrent questions — may a building uninhabited for years but registered to a traceable owner be considered abandoned? And what occurs when the owner is deceased and the heirs have not yet accepted the inheritance? — and that significantly limits the capacity of administrations to intervene.

Regional definitions and operational limits

On the planning side, some regions have attempted to fill this definitional void by introducing operational criteria within spatial planning instruments, as in the case of Regione Lombardia, which, at Article 40-bis, defines as abandoned those buildings disused for more than one year that give rise to danger to public safety, health or physical integrity, or to detriment to urban decorum and quality, or that contain asbestos or other chemical hazards to health (Regione Lombardia, 2005)[2].

This definition provides a useful methodological reference, in that it introduces an objective temporal criterion and verifiable risk parameters, yet it proves at the same time limited: it concerns buildings exclusively, excluding open spaces such as agricultural land or disused productive areas, and it subordinates the designation of "abandoned" to the presence of situations of danger or blight, thereby excluding vacant but structurally sound properties which, although causing no harm to public health, constitute a significant share of unused heritage.

The regional nature of such definitions produces inevitable territorial disparities, whereby a building considered abandoned according to Lombard criteria might not be so considered in other regions, making it difficult to construct comparable national statistics, to coordinate supra-regional policies and, ultimately, to elaborate effective strategies for countering abandonment and reactivating existing heritage.

To this complexity is added the need to distinguish abandonment from contiguous but non-coincident phenomena, such as temporary disuse, underuse, seasonal vacancy or physical blight. A building may be temporarily uninhabited without being abandoned (as in the case of second homes in tourist localities); conversely, a formally occupied property may be in such a state of blight as to be substantially dysfunctional. This distinction is not merely terminological, since it entails significant operational consequences: modes of intervention and maintenance obligations change considerably according to the condition in which the asset is situated.

Disciplinary interpretations of abandonment

Alongside these regional definitions, the planning literature interprets abandonment as a problem of inefficiency in the use of territorial resources and as a generator of negative externalities: deterioration of the urban landscape, safety risks, depreciation of property values, and loss of vitality in settlement fabrics. Law 158/2017 on small municipalities incorporates this approach by distinguishing between the abandonment of land — with repercussions in terms of hydrogeological instability and loss of biodiversity — and the abandonment of buildings, associated with conditions of blight and situations of danger.

More recent research has further broadened the scale of observation, showing how abandonment may concern both individual artefacts and entire territorial systems such as villages and highlands, valley floors, foothills and basins, productive and urbanised countryside, coastlines and peripheries (Lanzani and Curci, 2018).

Finally, the socio-economic approach interprets abandonment as a process rather than a state, situating it within the broader framework of the demographic, economic and social transformations affecting inner areas. Building abandonment is the visible outcome of interconnected and mutually reinforcing dynamics of depopulation, ageing, deindustrialisation and the thinning-out of services, and is thereby configured as a gradual trajectory leading from full functionality to underuse, from

2 Similar definitions, with significant variations in the time-related and performance-related criteria, were subsequently adopted by other regions, including Emilia-Romagna (Regional Law 24/2017) and Abruzzo (Regional Law 58/2023), but always without any national coordination to ensure consistency in the criteria.)

temporary vacancy to disuse, and ultimately to irreversible blight (Macchi Janica and Palumbo, 2019). Recognising the processual nature of abandonment is essential if the moments at which intervention may prove most effective and economically sustainable are to be identified with greater precision, intercepting the phenomenon before it becomes irreversible.

Table 7.
Differing interpretations of the phenomenon of abandonment.
Source: elaboration by the author.

Approach	Principal focus	Interpretive limits
Legal	Title to the asset, ownership re-gime, availability and formal con-straints	Does not necessarily consider the actual state of use, conservation or transfor-mation of the asset
Planning	Physical blight, loss of function, settlement void and non-use of spaces	Risks oversimplifying complex phenome-na; comparison is hampered by the varia-bility of territorial contexts and regional legislation
Socio-economic	Processes of marginalisation, de-population, demographic decline and loss of local functions	The social and economic effects of aban-donment prove difficult to measure and to translate into univocal indicators
Operational (proposed)	Integrated condition based on use, maintenance, material blight and the absence of design prospects	Requires direct verification in the field and the integration of quantitative and qualitative data

Towards an integrated operational definition

Regulatory fragmentation and the plurality of disciplinary interpretations render the elaboration of a shared operational definition complex, yet they simultaneously underscore the need for an integrated approach. For the purposes of this work, an operational definition integrating the various perspectives is proposed:

An immovable asset (building or open space) is considered abandoned where it cumulatively displays the following characteristics:
(a) absence of effective use for a continuous period exceeding 12 months;
(b) absence of documentable routine maintenance;
(c) presence of elements of physical or functional blight which limit or preclude its use without recovery works; or which constitute risks to public safety or impairments of urban decorum such as to warrant the adoption of mayoral orders pursuant to the legislation in force, with the possible activation of compulsory acquisition procedures in the event of non-compliance;
(d) absence of a formalised reactivation project at the implementation stage.

This definition introduces a verifiable temporal criterion, emphasises the maintenance dimension, includes physical and functional blight (as well as risk profiles relating to public safety and urban decorum) as distinguishing elements, gives weight to the presence or absence of design intent, and applies to both buildings and open spaces. Although it constitutes an analytical framework rather than a legal norm in the strict sense, it offers a useful operational basis for constructing comparable inventories, identifying intervention priorities and supporting public bodies in activating the administrative instruments available[3].

The lack of a shared national definition reflects the absence of an overall strategic vision of existing built heritage as a territorial resource to be actively managed. With over 7 million vacant dwellings (ISTAT, 2021) and 15% of public properties uninventoried, this strategic void has relegated abandoned historic heritage (and, more generally, disused built heritage) to a residual question, addressed through case-by-case emergency measures rather than through coherent policies of management, monitoring and enhancement. Within this framework, the fragmentation of Italian landscape and cultural protection has contributed to consolidating this episodic and non-structural vision of existing heritage (Montanari, 2017).

Morphologies of abandonment: a typological and operational reading

If definitional difficulties render the very identification of the phenomenon complex, no less significant is the fact that

3 The proposed operational definition is partly inspired by the definitions adopted in other European contexts, in particular the classification used in Germany (Leerstand) and the Netherlands (Leegstand), where there are national registers of vacant properties with standardised definitions and reporting obligations for owners. The German model, in particular, distinguishes between temporary Leerstand (vacant for less than 6 months), structural Leerstand (over 12 months) and Schrottimmobilien (derelict properties, with advanced structural deterioration), providing a useful basis for comparison when developing national classification systems.

abandonment, once identified, assumes profoundly differentiated territorial and building forms, which reflect the variety of geographical contexts, settlement typologies, local economies and demographic trajectories of Italian inner areas. Constructing a taxonomy of the morphologies of abandonment constitutes a necessary step towards understanding the specific nature of processes of disuse, identifying the most appropriate instruments of intervention, and assessing the potential and the constraints of reuse.

The proposed classification articulates the forms of abandonment according to three intersecting analytical dimensions: building and functional typology (what is abandoned), degree of disuse (for how long and in what condition), and ownership regime (who formally owns the disused asset). Each of these dimensions opens up specific questions and conditions the possibilities for intervention.

Morphologies by building and functional typology

The first dimension asks what, concretely, is being abandoned in Italian inner areas, and which typologies of buildings and spaces compose this disused heritage. A distinction based on six principal categories is proposed (Table 8), in the awareness that in territorial reality these boundaries are frequently blurred.

Table 8. Typologies of abandoned heritage, critical issues and potential for reuse. Source: elaboration by the author.

Heritage typology	Examples	Principal critical issues	Potential for reuse and enhancement
Historic centres and inhabited nu-clei	Medieval borghi, small historic settlements, residential buildings in minor centres	Fragmentation of own-ership, difficulty of co-ordinated intervention, loss of residential func-tions	Residential recovery, dispersed hospitality, community services, cul-tural tourism
Rural architecture	Cascine, baite, malghe, traditional agricultural buildings	Territorial isolation, high recovery costs, loss of original functions	Multifunctional agricul-ture, agritourism, sus-tainable hospitality, en-hancement of traditional practices
Ecclesiastical he-ritage	Churches, convents, chapels, religious com-plexes	Historic and artistic constraints, manage-ment difficulties, reduc-tion of religious func-tions	Cultural spaces, event venues, social services, training activities
Productive herita-ge	Workshops, mills, kilns, disused artisanal and industrial structures	Need for remediation, structural upgrading and difficulty of functional conversion	Coworking, artisanal workshops, business in-cubators, cultural and creative spaces
Tourist accom-modation heritage	Hotels, mountain holi-day colonies, obsolete	Oversizing relative to current demand, high refurbishment costs	New models of slow tourism, temporary resi-dency, integrated terri-torial services
Agricultural and landscape herita-ge	Fields, pastures, ter-races, abandoned culti-vated areas	Loss of maintenance, hydrogeological instabil-ity, reduction of tradi-tional agricultural prac-tices	Innovative agriculture, local supply chains, eco-system services, sustain-able land management

Wholly or partially abandoned historic centres

This category probably represents the most visible form of abandonment in Italian inner areas: historic settlement nuclei, often of medieval origin, which have undergone processes of depopulation such as to produce residential vacancy rates exceeding 50%, configuring an urbanism of the void (Teti, 2017).

The emblematic cases of complete abandonment (wholly uninhabited villages such as Craco in Basilicata, Roscigno Vecchia in Campania and Pentedattilo in Calabria) represent extreme but not isolated situations. In the 2011 census, ISTAT recorded over 200 historic centres with a resident population of fewer than 10 inhabitants, thereby constituting de facto situations of complete or near-complete abandonment[4].

More widespread, and perhaps still more interesting from the standpoint of the possibilities for intervention, is the phenomenon of partial abandonment, in which buildings still inhabited — often by an elderly population — coexist alongside substantial shares of disused built heritage. This condition, particularly frequent in Apennine and Alpine historic centres, generates specific and concatenated critical issues: the remaining residents find

4 The ISTAT census data (2011) on historic centres with fewer than 10 resident inhabitants should be interpreted with methodological caution: the census records the population registered as resident, not those actually present. In many cases, registered residence persists even after the area has been physically abandoned, with the result that the data significantly underestimates the extent of actual abandonment.

themselves living in contexts that are increasingly desolate and devoid of services, further accelerating the exodus; the presence of fragmented and often unidentifiable ownership renders any strategy of coordinated recovery complex; and the coexistence of inhabited and abandoned buildings complicates infrastructural works (networks, roads, safety), since it requires differentiated solutions across contiguous fabrics.

From a typological standpoint, abandoned historic centres display predominantly aggregate building, with compact fabrics characterised by high building density, an absence of private appurtenant spaces, and the sharing of structural elements (party walls or unitary roofs), which render the individual recovery of single property units technically complex and economically onerous, requiring coordinated approaches to intervention that involve several ownerships simultaneously — an aspect which, as will be seen, is closely interwoven with the dimension of the ownership regime.

Dispersed rural architecture

The heritage of dispersed rural architecture — farmhouses, cascine, masserie, baite, masi, stazzi, trulli — constitutes a quantitatively significant yet frequently underestimated component of abandonment in inner areas. Unlike historic centres, which retain a visibility in the landscape and in the collective imagination, abandoned rural architecture tends to become rapidly invisible, reabsorbed by vegetation and erased from the mental maps of local communities (Agnoletti et al., 2019).

This form of abandonment is closely tied to the crisis of traditional agricultural economies: the decline of mountain agriculture and the concentration of holdings have rendered functionally obsolete thousands of rural buildings which constituted the settlement fabric of agro-pastoral economies. The disuse of these buildings responds primarily not to demographic dynamics but to structural transformations of productive systems: even where agriculture persists, it requires buildings whose characteristics (dimensions, accessibility, technological provision) differ profoundly from those of historic heritage.

The dispersed and often isolated location of this architecture generates significant specificities: difficulties of accessibility (rural roads frequently no longer maintained), the absence of connections to technological networks (electricity, water, sewerage), and high recovery costs relative to market value. Nevertheless, it is precisely the dispersed location and the direct relationship with the open rural landscape that confer upon this heritage specific potential for forms of rural tourism, creative residencies, or projects of social agriculture and return to the land.

Disused ecclesiastical heritage

A significant yet frequently neglected component is represented by ecclesiastical heritage. According to a study conducted by Scenari Immobiliari (2023) for Il Sole 24 Ore, it is estimated that approximately 46,000 ecclesiastical properties exist in Italy, of which 30–40% are reportedly vacant or heavily underused[5]. These comprise churches, convents, monasteries, presbyteries, oratories and parish works, whose presence is particularly concentrated in inner areas, where the ecclesiastical network has historically constituted a fundamental territorial armature.

The disuse of these assets raises peculiar legal, regulatory and symbolic questions. From a legal standpoint, ecclesiastical assets are governed by the Villa Madama Accords of 1984–1985 between the Italian State and the Holy See, which establish a specific regime for ecclesiastical property, complicating procedures for alienation or allocation to non-religious uses. Law 158/2017 on small municipalities introduced, at Article 7, the possibility of concluding agreements between municipalities and dioceses for the enhancement of disused ecclesiastical properties, representing a first attempt to address the question; the application of this provision, however, remains limited.

Alongside the legal questions, disused ecclesiastical heritage presents a strong symbolic dimension: churches and religious

5 The estimate by Scenari Immobiliari (2023), which puts the value of the Catholic Church's property portfolio in Italy at around 46,000 units, should be regarded as indicative, given the absence of a systematic public census of ecclesiastical property. The State Property Agency does not have complete data on this property, as ecclesiastical assets mostly fall within the remit of legally private bodies and are not subject to the registration and management obligations applicable to public property. The issue of the lack of transparency regarding the Catholic Church's real estate assets has recently been highlighted by various studies and analyses, which show that the lack of transparency concerning the ownership and use of these assets hinders informed spatial planning.

complexes frequently constitute fundamental elements of identity for local communities, even where they no longer serve worship, and their abandonment is often perceived as a tangible sign of communal decline, generating resistances that complicate proposals for reuse for non-religious functions. Such resistances require complex processes of symbolic negotiation that open up the possibility of reformulating the collective meanings associated with these places without compromising their value as markers of identity.

Disused productive heritage

The abandonment of productive buildings and complexes — factories, workshops, mills, sawmills, hydroelectric plants, railway stations — constitutes a direct manifestation of the processes of deindustrialisation that have affected inner areas, in particular those Alpine and Apennine areas characterised by forms of dispersed industrialisation linked to the exploitation of local resources (hydraulic energy, timber, food production).

Unlike residential or religious building, disused productive heritage is characterised by generally larger dimensions, specific typological features (large volumes, robust load-bearing structures, significant internal heights) and often strategic locations, in proximity to watercourses, infrastructural nodes or communication routes.

These elements confer upon such buildings specific potential for innovative reuses such as cultural spaces, coworking, business incubators or forms of social housing, thanks to their distributive flexibility and their capacity to accommodate collective functions.

Alongside this potential, however, significant critical issues emerge: the frequent presence of polluting or hazardous materials (asbestos, industrial residues), the need for environmental remediation works, the structural complexity requiring costly consolidation operations and, not least, the stringent regulatory constraints governing changes of use render the recovery of disused productive heritage a process that is often complex and costly, and that requires integrated strategies and strong coordination between public and private actors.

Disused tourist and accommodation infrastructure

Abandoned tourist infrastructure constitutes a specific and particularly significant category in Alpine areas and in seaside resorts, where hotels, mountain and seaside holiday colonies, cable cars, ski facilities and campsites bear witness to now-exhausted economic cycles of tourism — from the social tourism of the post-war period to the mass ski tourism of the 1970s to 1990s. This is a peculiar form of abandonment linked not to demographic decline but to the transformation of models of tourist consumption.

These structures are frequently concentrated in localities that retain a degree of tourist vitality, though in modes profoundly altered with respect to the past, generating a kind of stratigraphy of abandonment in which, alongside structures still in operation, the ruins of earlier cycles coexist, creating complex landscapes in which evident traces of the different phases of tourist development are superimposed.

The recovery of these infrastructures proves complex for several reasons: dimensions frequently oversized relative to current demand, the high costs of upgrading to contemporary standards (safety, accessibility, energy efficiency), and locations that are at times marginal with respect to present-day tourist flows. These factors render tourist abandonment one of the most difficult forms to reverse, requiring reuse strategies that promote a radical redefinition of functions, target users and models of enjoyment, rather than a simple conservative recovery.

Abandoned agricultural and forest land

Although the prevailing focus of this work is on built heritage, it must be acknowledged that the abandonment of cultivation on agricultural and forest land represents a quantitatively significant component of territorial abandonment, with direct implications for the stability of built heritage and for the overall liveability of inner areas.

The abandonment of cultivation produces significant territorial effects: loss of biodiversity in traditional agroecosystems, the spontaneous advance of woodland with a consequent reduction of open surfaces, an increased hydrogeological risk owing to the failure to maintain slopes, and the transformation and progressive

disappearance of historic cultural landscapes.
Law 123/2017, in establishing the Banca delle Terre Agricole Abbandonate e Incolte (Bank of Abandoned and Uncultivated Agricultural Land) for eight regions of the Mezzogiorno, implicitly acknowledged the diffusion and persistence of the phenomenon. As highlighted by Article 5 of Law 158/2017, the abandonment of agricultural and forest land in inner areas represents not merely an economic question but constitutes a problem of territorial safety and risk management, with direct implications for slope stability, fire prevention and the conservation of the rural landscapes that constitute the very identity of these territories.

The six typologies described do not constitute rigid or mutually exclusive categories. In territorial reality the boundaries are frequently blurred and situations tend to overlap: an abandoned historic centre is almost always flanked by rural architecture that is likewise disused; ecclesiastical heritage is distributed across compact nuclei as much as across dispersed territory; productive infrastructure may be found both near inhabited areas and in isolated locations. This morphological complexity requires that the reading by building typology be accompanied by the other two analytical dimensions — degree of disuse and ownership regime — which allow the phenomenon to be better understood and the most appropriate operational strategies to be identified with greater precision.

Morphologies by degree of disuse

The dimension of the degree of disuse complements the typological classification by introducing a temporal perspective: not all instances of abandonment display the same intensity of blight or the same possibilities of reversibility. This distinction assumes crucial significance from an operational perspective, since it defines thresholds of intervention, orients the selection of priorities and significantly conditions the cost–benefit ratios of recovery strategies. As highlighted by studies on processes of building deterioration (Campanella, 2004; Musso, 2016), abandonment does not constitute a binary state (abandoned/not abandoned) but a gradual and progressive process, characterised by distinct phases with differentiated rates of deterioration, in which the temporal thresholds identifying such phases — although necessarily indicative and conditioned by contextual variables such as climate, construction materials and exposure — are conventionally set at around 10–15 years for the transition from recent disuse to advanced blight, and at 30–40 years for the transition towards conditions of structural irreversibility (Fiorani et al., 2017).
On the basis of these criteria, four fundamental categories may be identified along the continuum of abandonment: (i) total and irreversible abandonment; (ii) advanced but reversible abandonment; (iii) recent disuse; and (iv) underuse.

Total and irreversible abandonment

This category comprises buildings in a state of advanced blight, characterised by partial or total collapse, the extensive presence of invasive vegetation and the loss of fundamental structural elements such as floors, roofs and significant portions of load-bearing masonry. Under such conditions, recovery would require substantial reconstruction works, frequently disproportionate to the potential use value of the property.
This category includes the majority of villages wholly abandoned for over 40–50 years — such as the cases already cited of Craco, Roscigno Vecchia and Pentedattilo — and a significant share of rural architecture disused before the 1980s. In these contexts, the level of structural impairment is such as to render technical recovery complex and, in the majority of cases, unjustifiable in relation to the investment required. For these buildings, intervention strategies must necessarily engage with the question of conserving ruins as historic and landscape testimony, rather than with the (often unrealistic) objective of complete functional recovery. The moment at which a building is inhabited is regarded as a phase of transition between construction and ruin, both of which are evolutionary phases in the transformation of territory into built-up area and vice versa (Angelidakis, 2011).
The concept of the contemporary ruin thus invites recognition of the cultural, symbolic and commemorative value of abandonment itself.
Within this perspective are situated experiences of conservative stabilisation or of the enhancement of ruins, such as the Parco

Letterario di Craco or the partial recovery of Consonno in Lombardy, which propose forms of intervention that restore new legibility and usability to residual matter while at the same time preserving its material substance and cultural value.

Advanced but potentially reversible abandonment

This category comprises buildings disused for approximately 10–30 years, characterised by significant blight — deterioration of roofs, missing fixtures, widespread damp, localised subsidence — but with load-bearing structures still substantially intact. Under such conditions, recovery is technically possible through restoration and consolidation works, although it requires considerable investment, often approaching the costs of an equivalent new construction (Della Torre, 2018).

This is the most recurrent situation in the partially abandoned historic centres of inner areas, where processes of gradual depopulation have produced instances of disuse distributed over time. Legambiente (2005) records 5,308 small centres at risk of abandonment — 72% of Italian municipalities with fewer than 5,000 inhabitants — delineating a potentially reactivable critical mass which nonetheless requires public policies of economic support.

From an operational standpoint, this category represents a genuine field of tension: the buildings are situated in a "grey zone" between recoverability and definitive abandonment, and the absence of timely intervention accelerates the transition towards irreversible conditions, whereas minimal securing measures, such as the restoration of roofs, may significantly halt or slow degenerative processes (Musso, 2016).

Recent disuse

Buildings vacant for less than ten years, still in good or fair structural condition, constitute the most promising category for reactivation works at contained cost; while they generally require extraordinary maintenance operations — such as the upgrading of building services and/or energy efficiency improvements — they do not necessitate significant structural works and retain a potential habitability that is substantially intact.

This condition is particularly widespread in contexts of partial abandonment, where residential units still occupied coexist with units recently vacated. In such cases, disuse derives not so much from advanced physical blight as from a progressive inadequacy of performance: energy shortcomings, obsolete systems, difficulties of accessibility. This is therefore a predominantly "functional" form of abandonment, linked to the building's loss of competitiveness in relation to contemporary residential requirements rather than to structural deterioration.

From the standpoint of policies for countering abandonment, this category requires timely intervention if the transition towards more advanced stages of blight is to be avoided.

Underuse

Buildings formally inhabited but used only sporadically — seasonally, at weekends, or by elderly persons who progressively lose the capacity to ensure active maintenance — constitute a peculiar condition which does not technically fall within the definition of abandonment but represents a preliminary phase of it. In the absence of intervention, this situation frequently evolves towards manifest abandonment at the moment when the conditions sustaining residual use cease, as with the death of the inhabitants or the cessation of seasonal use. This phenomenon is particularly widespread in mountain second homes and in the seasonal residences of Apennine rural areas.

An elaboration carried out by Openpolis on ISTAT data (2021) shows that, in the municipalities of inner areas classified as peripheral and ultra-peripheral, dwellings that are unoccupied or occupied only occasionally represent a very significant share of the total, confirming that underuse constitutes a widespread phenomenon which frequently anticipates definitive abandonment.

The significance of this category resides in its processual nature and its preventive potential: intercepting situations of underuse before they evolve into definitive abandonment permits reactivation strategies that are less onerous and more effective. The measurement and monitoring of the phenomenon, however, present significant methodological difficulties.

Intersections between degree of disuse and building typology

The four categories just described are not distributed uniformly across the various building typologies identified in the preceding section, but display significant correlations that merit emphasis.

Dispersed rural architecture tends to pass more rapidly towards conditions of total and irreversible abandonment: the isolated location, the absence of continuous residential oversight and the direct exposure to atmospheric agents accelerate processes of deterioration, reducing the duration of the phase of "potential reversibility". By contrast, built heritage in historic centres — even where wholly abandoned — tends to conserve its load-bearing structures for longer, thanks to the physical continuity of the urban fabric and the mutual protection afforded by aggregate building.

Ecclesiastical heritage presents a peculiar situation: constructional solidity and the quality of materials generally guarantee good resistance to deterioration even under conditions of prolonged abandonment, but typological complexity (vaults, articulated roofs, decorative apparatus) renders recovery works particularly onerous.

It is not infrequent to find churches abandoned for 30–40 years still in fair structural condition, but whose functional recovery would require investment disproportionate to the size of the local communities.

Disused tourist infrastructure, finally, tends to be situated predominantly in the categories of recent disuse or advanced reversible abandonment: being structures built in the post-war period with modern technologies (reinforced concrete, large spans), they generally display good structural conditions even after decades of abandonment, but they require costly regulatory upgrading works for any hypothesis of reuse.

This dimension of the degree of disuse, cross-referenced with building typology, allows an operational matrix to be constructed (Table 9) which orients the selection of intervention priorities and the definition of differentiated strategies: not all instances of abandonment merit the same investment of public resources, nor do they present the same potential for reactivation.

Heritage typology	Underuse	Recent disuse	Advanced abandonment	Irreversible abandonment
Historic centres	●●	●●●	●●●	●●
Rural architecture	●	●●	●●●	●●●
Ecclesiastical heritage	●	●	●●●	●
Productive heritage	●	●●●	●●	●
Tourist infrastructure	●●	●●●	●●	○
Agricultural and forest land	●	●●	●●●	●●●

Table 9.
Relationship between building typology and degree of disuse of abandoned heritage.
Source: elaboration by the author on the basis of the literature on abandoned heritage and of the typological classifications of territorial heritage.

Legend

○ Marginal presence
● Low presence
●● Medium presence
●●● High presence

Morphologies by ownership regime

The third dimension concerns the question of ownership: who formally owns abandoned buildings? The ownership regime decisively conditions the legal instruments that may be activated, the administrative procedures applicable, the time required for any intervention, and even the very possibility of envisaging recovery projects.

This dimension is closely interwoven with the two already analysed: a historic centre in a state of advanced abandonment with fragmented private ownership presents a level of operational complexity enormously greater than that of the same historic centre were it in public ownership; an isolated rural building, already difficult to recover on account of the costs of accessibility and infrastructure provision, becomes practically irrecoverable where title is uncertain or contested among several parties.

Five principal configurations of the ownership regime may be identified, each with specific characteristics, opportunities and critical issues. In the table that follows, an attempt has been made to summarise these aspects comparatively, so as to render the operational differences between the various situations more evident:

Regime	Characteristics	Opportunities	Critical issues
Public	Owned by public bod-ies (State, Regions, Municipalities)	More readily acti-vated	Administrative, accounting and regulatory constraints

Table 10.
Morphologies by ownership regime.
Source: elaboration by the author.

Individual private	Most frequent situa-tion	Potentially avai-lable	Fragmented ownership, conflict-ual co-ownership, dis-persed/ untraceable heirs
Collective private	Non-profit bodies, foundations, coopera-tives	More open to in-novative reuses	Limited financial capacity
Ecclesiastical	Owned by dioceses, religious orders	Capillary presence across the territo-ry	Legal (Villa Madama Accords) and symbolic specificities
Mixed/contested	Uncertain, contested, fragmented title	—	Operationally the most complex case

Some considerations on each category may assist in a fuller understanding of the operational implications.

Public heritage — owned by the State, the Regions or the Municipalities — theoretically represents the most favourable situation for activating recovery projects, since the administration may allocate the property directly to public functions, grant it through competitive calls, or alienate it. For years the Agenzia del Demanio (State Property Agency) has managed a portal dedicated to the enhancement of disused heritage, yet with limited results owing to the highly stringent administrative, accounting and regulatory constraints weighing upon public heritage: complex disposal procedures, public tendering obligations and rigid accounting rules that make it difficult to accept proposals that are economically advantageous but generate no immediate revenue. To this is added the fact that many small municipalities lack the technical competences necessary to manage complex enhancement procedures.

Individual private heritage constitutes the most frequent situation but also one of the most complex, since the principal difficulty resides in ownership fragmentation: a building may be registered to dozens of co-owners — often heirs dispersed across other regions or abroad — who formally retain all rights but no longer have any connection with the asset, thereby making the unanimous agreement of all these parties necessary for any intervention, an undertaking that is frequently impossible. To this fragmentation are added conflictual co-ownerships and the presence of untraceable heirs, factors which together represent the principal obstacle to the coordinated recovery of historic centres.

Collective private heritage — belonging to non-profit bodies, foundations and cooperatives — is typically more open to innovative reuses with social or cultural aims; financial capacities, however, are frequently limited and consequently require forms of partnership with public or private parties able to provide the necessary economic resources.

Ecclesiastical heritage presents legal specificities linked to the Villa Madama Accords and the symbolic resistances already discussed, yet the capillary presence of the Church in inner areas could represent an important resource were more flexible modes of enhancement to be found.

Mixed or contested heritage — with uncertain or extremely fragmented title — represents the most complex case from an operational standpoint, constituting a significant share of abandoned heritage, especially in historic centres, where it is not uncommon to find buildings with partly public and partly private ownership, or subject to decades-long litigation. In such cases, a lengthy work of reconstructing and recomposing ownership would be required, which frequently discourages any initiative before recovery projects can even be envisaged.

Intersections and operational implications

The three analytical dimensions — building typology, degree of disuse and ownership regime — do not operate independently but intersect, generating specific configurations that pose profoundly differentiated operational problems. A mountain village in fragmented private ownership and in a state of advanced disuse presents challenges radically different from those of an underused public building or a disused industrial area in State ownership, and consequently requires wholly different instruments, timescales and resources.

This morphological articulation makes it possible to construct structured inventories that classify heritage according to characteristics relevant to intervention, moving beyond location alone; to identify priorities based on the degree of disuse and the ownership regime, concentrating resources on the most

reversible and accessible cases; to differentiate reactivation instruments, recognising that private buildings require fiscal incentives whereas public heritage may be enhanced directly; and to anticipate specific critical issues, such as the need for land recomposition in cases of ownership fragmentation, or for structural consolidation in situations of advanced blight.

The construction of this morphological typology therefore represents a necessary methodological step if abandonment is to be transformed from a generic phenomenon into an operable object of analysis, orienting territorial policies towards targeted and sustainable interventions. As will be seen in the following sections, this typological reading constitutes the premise for understanding the causes that generate the various forms of abandonment and for critically assessing the adequacy of existing regulatory and planning instruments.

Table 11. Indicative intervention priorities for abandoned heritage in relation to degree of disuse and ownership regime. Source: elaboration by the author.

Degree of disuse	Ownership regime	Intervention priority
Recent disuse	Public ownership	**Very high**
Recent disuse	Cooperative individual private ownership	**High**
Advanced abandonment	Public ownership	**Medium**
Advanced abandonment	Fragmented private ownership	**Low**
Irreversible abandonment	Mixed or contested ownership	**Very low**

Knowledge gaps concerning building abandonment

The quantification of building abandonment in Italy represents a significant methodological and operational challenge, rendered problematic by the absence of shared definitions, the fragmentation of administrative competences and the lack of systematic and up-to-date national databases.

The most authoritative statistical source at national level is represented by ISTAT census data on unoccupied dwellings. The 2011 Population and Housing Census (the last census with complete enumeration prior to the transition to the permanent census) recorded approximately 7 million unoccupied dwellings in Italy, equivalent to 22% of the total housing stock (ISTAT, 2011). ISTAT provides no disaggregations allowing these various situations to be distinguished, making it impossible to use the raw

figure as an estimate of effective abandonment. Moreover, the census enumeration does not record the state of conservation of buildings, confining itself to verifying the presence or absence of occupants, with the consequence that a building in excellent condition but temporarily vacant and a collapsing ruin are counted within the same category.

From a territorial standpoint, the elaborations conducted by Fondazione Symbola (2020) on census microdata show that in municipalities classified as "peripheral" and "ultra-peripheral" by the SNAI the non-occupancy rate reaches 28%, against 18% in hub municipalities, confirming a significant correlation between territorial marginality and the incidence of residential vacancy, although it remains impossible to distinguish effective abandonment from other forms of non-occupancy. In order to convey the fragmented picture of the inventory and monitoring initiatives currently available, Table 12 summarises the principal instruments activated at national, regional and local scale.

Table 12. Principal instruments of inventory and monitoring of abandoned heritage in Italy. Source: elaboration by the author.

Instrument	Territorial scale	Strengths	Limits
ISTAT	National	High statistical comparability and availability of homogeneous data on a national scale	Does not distinguish the various forms of abandon-ment nor permit a qualita-tive reading of the state of properties
Regione Lombar-dia	Regional	Introduction of a mandatory in-ventory of disused heritage and greater attention to knowledge of the phenomenon	Inconsistency in implemen-tation by municipalities and difficulty of systematic up-dating
Emilia-Romagna / Abruzzo	Regional	Availability of public databases aimed at knowledge and regen-eration of existing heritage	Voluntary participation by local authorities and non-uniform territorial coverage
ICCD – Census of Rural Architecture	National	Scientific approach to the cata-loguing of historic rural heritage and enhancement of typological and cultural characteristics	Project still incomplete and not specifically oriented to-wards measuring abandon-ment

Agenzia del De-manio – Piano Città degli Immo-bili Pubblici	National	Mapping of public heritage and the possibility of identifying properties for enhancement or refunctionalisation	Limited to publicly owned assets, excluding the greater part of abandoned private heritage
Ri.M.E.Di.A. (Pavia)	Municipal	High level of territorial detail and capacity to integrate quali-tative and spatial information on disused heritage	Experience circumscribed locally and difficult to repli-cate on a national scale

Regional inventories: fragmentation and inconsistency

In the absence of a national database, some Regions — such as Lombardy, Emilia-Romagna, Abruzzo and Apulia — have activated specific inventories, with markedly differentiated methodologies and results.

Regione Lombardia, through Regional Law 11/2021, introduced an obligation for municipalities to identify and inventory "properties with hygienic-sanitary and structural critical issues and in a state of abandonment" by 31 December 2021. This legislation represents a significant attempt but displays operational limits: the obligation falls upon municipalities, many of which lack the necessary technical competences; the provision does not precisely define identification criteria; and no unitary regional platform has been established for data collection, limiting the possibilities for aggregate analysis.

Regione Emilia-Romagna, through Regional Law 24/2017 (Art. 15), established the Register of properties made available for urban regeneration, in which public and private owners may voluntarily enter disused or blighted properties available for recovery projects. This instrument, subsequently replicated by Regione Abruzzo (Regional Law 58/2023, Art. 21), has the merit of creating an accessible database, potentially useful in facilitating the matching of supply and demand for heritage to be reactivated; the voluntary character of registration, however, significantly limits its representativeness.

Regione Puglia, through Regional Law 21/2008 on urban regeneration, has promoted inventories of built heritage in blighted urban contexts as a preliminary stage for access to regional funding. These inventories, conducted at municipal level,

have produced local mappings that are at times highly detailed but have not been integrated into a unitary regional database, limiting their usability for coordinated policies.

Faced with these institutional gaps, initiatives of inventory-taking promoted by municipalities, student committees, foundations and citizens' associations have emerged in recent years which, notwithstanding limitations of methodology and territorial coverage, furnish significant contributions to knowledge.

In the first place, mention must be made of the project "Censimento delle Architetture Rurali Italiane" (Census of Italian Rural Architecture), launched by the Istituto Centrale per il Catalogo e la Documentazione (ICCD) within the framework of the PNRR, which sets out to construct a systematic mapping of abandoned rural architectural heritage, including information on the state of conservation and the possible disuse of assets.

The project, still at the implementation stage, employs consolidated cataloguing methodologies and intends to provide for the establishment of a searchable national database of rural buildings. If brought to completion, it could represent the first coherent attempt at quantifying abandoned rural heritage on a national scale.

In several municipalities, such as Rome, Bologna, Rimini, Ravenna, Riccione, Milan, Pavia and Turin, processes of collective mapping have been initiated with the express intent of identifying disused or unused buildings and developing public–private collaborations, in order to promote the refurbishment and reuse of blighted or unused properties by coordinating supply and demand.

It was precisely with this aim that, from 2016 onwards, the municipality of Pavia launched the Ri.M.E.Di.A. project (Riuso: Mappatura Edifici Dismessi e Abbandonati — Reuse: Mapping of Disused and Abandoned Buildings) in order to inventory and recover unused built heritage.

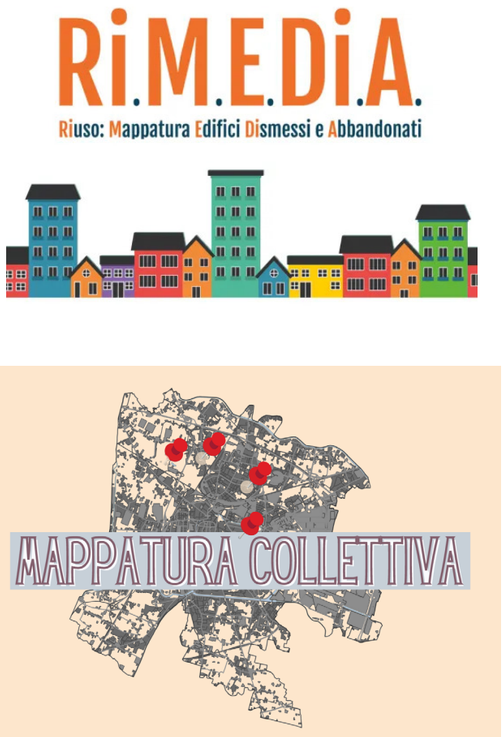


Figure 19.
Examples of platforms for the participatory mapping of abandoned assets: the cases of Pavia and Padua.
The "Ri.M.E.Di.A." map of abandoned assets, (above);
Collective Mapping of abandoned spaces, (below);
Source: Comune di Pavia; Rete Beni Comuni Padova.

Towards a national monitoring system

The fragmentation and incompleteness of knowledge concerning building abandonment represent a significant obstacle to the definition of effective policies. Indeed, as highlighted by ANCE in its hearing before the 8th Committee of the Senate on the Urban Regeneration Bill (2024), complex compliance requirements across institutional levels risk blocking regenerative processes, calling for clear and coordinated procedures. The construction of a national monitoring system would require a shared national definition of building abandonment; standardised protocols for inventory-taking; a national body responsible for data collection and validation; and an accessible digital platform. In the absence of these developments, the quantification of abandonment will inevitably remain approximate, based on indirect estimates which, while furnishing indicative guidance, do not permit the precise knowledge necessary to orient targeted and effective recovery policies.

BOX 3 – The Piano Città degli immobili pubblici and the new policies for the enhancement of public heritage

The *Piano Città degli immobili pubblici* (City Plan for public properties) represents one of the most innovative instruments recently introduced by the Agenzia del Demanio in the field of urban policy and of the management of public property holdings. It is configured as a model of integrated planning directed towards constructing shared territorial strategies through the enhancement, reuse and refunctionalisation of public properties, moving beyond a merely patrimonial or economic logic and according to property holdings an active role in processes of urban regeneration and of sustainable development of cities.

PIANO CITTÁ
DEGLI IMMOBILI PUBBLICI

The approach proposed by the Piano Città is founded upon the idea that public properties may constitute a lever for urban transformation, contributing to the rationalisation and efficiency of public functions and to the construction of economic, social, cultural and environmental value. From this perspective, public buildings, disused areas and underused holdings are regarded as components of a broader territorial strategy, directed towards the reduction of land take, the qualification of urban space, the improvement of services and the promotion of environmental and energy sustainability.

The model is developed through a pathway structured into four principal moments:

1. an epistemic phase, directed towards the analysis of public property holdings and of territorial requirements;
2. a concertation phase, based upon the construction of institutional agreements between the Agenzia del Demanio, local authorities and other public parties;
3. a programming phase, in which the property Action Plan is defined;
4. an implementation phase, relating to the design, realisation and monitoring of the interventions.

The objective is to construct a shared vision of urban development, in which each individual property operation constitutes part of an overall strategic design rather than an isolated intervention.

From a disciplinary standpoint, the Piano Città may be interpreted as an emerging form of heritage-based urbanism, in which public heritage becomes territorial infrastructure and an operational instrument for the pursuit of objectives of urban regeneration, ecological transition, social innovation and cultural enhancement.

The centrality accorded to the reuse of existing heritage, to the limitation of land take and to the construction of partnerships between public and private parties situates this experience within the most recent European policies oriented towards urban sustainability and the circular city.

The diffusion of the programme at national scale is particularly significant, since the Agenzia del Demanio has announced the launch of 24 Piani Città across the Italian territory, identifying the objective of reaching 65 agreements by 2028. Among the cities included in the first phase of programming are: Ancona, Ascoli Piceno, Bari, Belluno, Benevento, Cagliari, Civitavecchia, Gaeta, L'Aquila, Lodi, Messina, Modena, Naples, Novara, Palermo, Piacenza, Pizzighettone, Potenza, Reggio Calabria, Rimini, Siena, Turin, Udine and Verona. The programme was subsequently extended to further urban centres of particular significance, among them Mantua, Bologna, Florence and Genoa, where specific inter-institutional agreements have been concluded directed towards the construction of integrated strategies of enhancement of public heritage and of urban regeneration.

The scholarly interest of the Piano Città resides precisely in its capacity to bring into relation urban policy, the management of property holdings, environmental sustainability and territorial governance. Through the recovery of historic properties, disused military complexes, unused productive areas and other public holdings not fully drawn upon, the Plan tests a model of urban transformation based upon the reuse of existing resources and upon the construction of a shared vision between institutions and local communities. In this sense it represents one of the most interesting national laboratories for the integration of planning, heritage management and strategies of sustainable urban development.

From this perspective, the Piano Città may be read as a first testing of instruments of heritage governance oriented towards territorial regeneration and founded upon the construction of agreements between institutions, local communities and economic actors.

The present research is situated within this interpretive strand, developing its theoretical premises with reference to the contexts of inner areas, in which the extent of unused public heritage is frequently accompanied by phenomena of demographic contraction and territorial marginality. Proceeding from these conditions, the hypothesis of a Pact for Disused Heritage is proposed, understood as an instrument of collaborative governance directed towards the construction of shared strategies of recovery, reuse and enhancement of abandoned public heritage, as a resource for territorial regeneration and for the strengthening of local communities.

Figure 20.
Identification of the Piani città degli immobili pubblici.
Source: elaboration by the author on data from the Agenzia del Demanio.

3.2 CAUSES AND DYNAMICS OF ABANDONMENT

Interpretive framework: abandonment as a systemic process

Building abandonment cannot be understood as an isolated event or as the outcome of contingent individual decisions; it must instead be interpreted as a systemic process, situated within the broader framework of the territorial, economic and demographic dynamics that characterise Italian inner areas. This approach takes up the concept of the "cycle of marginalisation" (Figure 20) discussed in Part I (Ch. 1.3): building abandonment is not a cause but a consequence — and, at the same time, a factor of acceleration — of cumulative circular processes involving depopulation, demographic ageing, the desertification of services, economic decline and the loss of social capital. These elements reinforce one another, generating downward spirals that tend to be self-perpetuating.

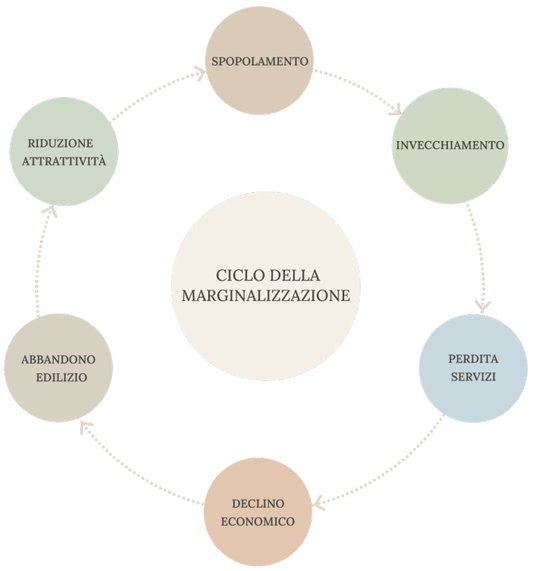


Figure 21. The cycle of territorial marginalisation in inner areas.
Source: elaboration by the author on the basis of the theoretical framework discussed in Chapter 1 and of the literature on inner areas.

To concentrate exclusively on the abandoned building as a "problem to be solved" risks inverting the causal nexus and producing ineffective interventions. It is not primarily building abandonment that generates the decline of marginal territories; rather, it is the structural dynamics of territorial marginalisation that produce, among their manifold effects, building abandonment as well. Consequently, policies confined to the physical recovery of buildings without addressing systemic causes risk producing "empty containers": refurbished buildings destined once again for disuse in the absence of sustainable functions and stable populations.

Hence the need for integrated approaches combining interventions on built heritage with broader territorial policies oriented towards countering marginalisation.

The sections that follow analyse the principal causal dimensions of abandonment — demographic, economic, regulatory, environmental and cultural — not as independent factors but as interconnected components of complex systemic processes.

Demographic causes: depopulation, ageing and residential transitions

The demographic dimension represents one of the most immediately recognisable factors in processes of building abandonment: over 4,000 Italian municipalities have recorded constant demographic losses over the past fifty years (ISTAT, 2021), with particular intensity in Apennine, Alpine and insular areas.

This is not, however, a simple quantitative decrease in population but a selective migratory phenomenon involving above all the younger and more highly qualified cohorts, leaving territories characterised by unbalanced demographic structures and by a progressive impoverishment of human capital.

This drain of human capital determines the dissolution of the original family units, while the elderly who remain continue to inhabit the family home for as long as conditions permit; upon their death or transfer to care facilities, the properties pass to heirs who are by then stably and for the most part resident elsewhere, generating widespread forms of ownership at a distance which further reduce the capacity for oversight and maintenance and trigger processes of progressive abandonment.

The ageing of the resident population — with old-age indices which, as documented by ISTAT, exceed 300% in many municipalities, and median ages above 55 — produces a growing loss of maintenance capacity: elderly populations maintain high rates of residential occupancy but with ever more limited possibilities of ensuring the routine and extraordinary maintenance of buildings (Golini et al., 2003; Reynaud and Mingione, 2005). What results are forms of

abandonment in presence, in which formally inhabited buildings are found in conditions of increasing blight; when the elderly resident is no longer there, the property is already impaired and the heirs, often distant, are disincentivised from investing in recovery.

To these dynamics is added the growing diffusion of second homes, particularly significant in inner areas with a tourist vocation. Here the transformation of the principal dwelling into seasonal use does not technically constitute abandonment, but it generates forms of underuse with significant territorial effects: reduced maintenance, the social desertification of historic centres, the closure of neighbourhood services, and the limited participation of non-resident owners in community life. As the Scottish and Swiss cases show (Part I, §2.2.1 and §2.2.2), the increase in second homes may produce the paradox of territories with high formal building occupancy but low effective residency, with pressures on the property market that penalise permanent residents and seasonal workers.

The economic dimension of building abandonment

The economic dimension of abandonment is articulated through interconnected mechanisms which render the upkeep of built heritage in inner areas onerous or irrational from the owners' standpoint. The costs of routine and extraordinary maintenance are no lower than in urban contexts and may indeed prove higher owing to difficulties of access, the scarcity of specialised labour and constraints on historic buildings, while the average incomes of resident populations are significantly lower. The crisis of traditional productive sectors has further eroded the economic bases that historically sustained the maintenance of built heritage, generating conditions in which the reduction or absence of maintenance works becomes an obligatory choice.

To this is added the structural weakness of local property markets: in many inner contexts the supply of buildings far exceeds demand, producing market values close to zero or even negative. What is thereby configured is an ownership trap, in which owners find themselves bound to properties they can neither use nor sell, burdened by fiscal obligations and legal liabilities yet devoid of any prospect of economic enhancement[6]. Under such conditions, abandonment becomes a rational strategy of disinvestment, in which the owner ceases all maintenance expenditure and delegates the progressive dissolution of the building to time and to nature. The economic marginality of inner areas is also reflected in the scarcity of public and private investment oriented towards the recovery of built heritage; bureaucratic complexities, ownership fragmentation, the absence of sustainable economic models and the limited design capacity of local administrations obstruct the activation of recovery works. Private investors perceive these contexts as characterised by high risks and modest returns, preferring to direct resources towards consolidated urban or tourist areas; public incentive policies frequently prove insufficient to bridge this gap.

Environmental causes and territorial risk in building abandonment

The dimension of environmental and natural risk constitutes an increasingly significant factor in processes of abandonment, both as a direct cause — catastrophic events rendering entire settled areas uninhabitable — and as a disincentive to the recovery of buildings located in high-risk zones. According to ISPRA data (2021), over 90% of Italian municipalities are subject to hydrogeological (landslide, flood) or seismic risk, with particularly intense concentrations in Apennine areas. Recent events dramatically confirm this vulnerability: the flood that struck Niscemi (Sicily) in January 2026 caused mass evacuations and extensive damage to built heritage, and reignited public debate on the failure to maintain the territory. The case of Niscemi — a peripheral municipality on the margins of the Calatino inner area — demonstrates how hydrogeological fragilities affect both territories formally classified as inner areas and contiguous contexts which share their morphological characteristics and structural vulnerabilities.[7]

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6 This concept draws on the economic literature on shrinking areas, where property owners find themselves in a 'lock-in' situation: tied to properties that they can no longer sell or enhance in value (Döringer et al., 2020).

7 The reference to the Niscemi flood (January 2026) is based on news reports published after the bibliography for this work was finalised and is cited as a recent emblematic case, not as a scientific source.

As in the case of earlier hydrogeological disasters in inner areas, the Niscemi tragedy highlights how pre-existing hydrogeological fragility, the abandonment of slope maintenance and the intensification of extreme weather events combine to produce ever more devastating impacts, further fuelling processes of abandonment in a vicious circle that is difficult to interrupt[8].

Alongside hydrogeological events, catastrophic seismic events — such as those of L'Aquila (2009) and Central Italy (2016) — have likewise produced massive and often definitive abandonment, with reconstruction slow or halted in contexts already fragile from an economic and demographic standpoint (Alexander, 2019). Climate change further amplifies these vulnerabilities, reducing the economic sustainability of certain local economies — such as ski tourism — and increasing the frequency of extreme events that bear upon the locational choices of inhabitants and investors. The growing perception of risk contributes to making it ever more difficult to attract populations and capital, fuelling processes of selective abandonment.

Cultural and social causes: lost functions and interrupted knowledge

Alongside the material and economic dimensions, abandonment is influenced by cultural and social factors concerning the meanings, representations and expectations associated with marginal territories and their built heritage. Many of the buildings abandoned today were constructed for specific functions — byres, hay barns, mills, rural schools, small artisan workshops — which have fallen away with the economic transformations of recent decades. The crisis of mountain agriculture, deindustrialisation and the reorganisation of public services have rendered obsolete thousands of buildings which cannot readily be converted on account of their typological, dimensional or locational characteristics. This functional obsolescence is not reversible through mere physical restoration works but would require the identification of new economically and socially sustainable functions, an operation that presupposes strategic vision, design capacity and investment which are frequently lacking. Demographic discontinuity has interrupted the intergenerational transmission of ownership as much as of the knowledge, skills and meanings bound up with traditional built heritage; generations raised outside inner areas possess neither the practical knowledge required for the maintenance of traditional rural buildings nor the emotional ties that would motivate investment in their conservation. Traditional built heritage is embedded within systems of local knowledge that account for its constructional logic and its symbolic meanings, and the loss of this contextual knowledge renders the buildings substantially illegible for generations raised far from these places, transforming them from vital components of a coherent territorial system into incomprehensible ruins devoid of meaning. The cultural construction of inner areas as territories of decline generates a territorial stigma that discourages private investment, fuels spirals of mistrust among residents and produces self-fulfilling prophecies. The celebratory rhetoric of abandonment, which aestheticises ruins and turns abandoned villages into ephemeral tourist destinations, moreover risks consolidating rather than countering this stigma, constructing inner areas as veritable open-air museums of decline rather than as living territories with the possibility of a future (Barbera et al., 2022).

The absence of protagonists of local development (Trigilia, 2005) limits the capacity of local communities to elaborate innovative reuse projects. This deficiency reflects a crisis of collective imagination: in contexts marked by decades of decline, it becomes progressively difficult to imagine alternative futures, to construct positive narratives of the territory, and to mobilise design energies.

3.3 TOWARDS REUSE PRACTICES

The analysis conducted in this chapter has shown how building abandonment in Italian inner areas represents a complex, systemic and multidimensional phenomenon, which cannot be traced back to single causes or addressed through sectoral interventions. Abandonment is at once the outcome of long-term demographic, economic and social processes, the physical manifestation of

8 The causes of the incident are still being investigated by the relevant authorities; among the hypotheses under consideration is the possibility of seismic activity, which would make this case an even more telling example of the complexity of the natural risks affecting inland areas.

the cycle of marginalisation, and a factor accelerating territorial decline. Nevertheless, the presence of a substantial stock of disused or underused built heritage also configures — potentially — a latent territorial resource which, if adequately reactivated, could contribute significantly to the objectives of demographic, economic and social revitalisation of inner areas. The paradox of an abundance of empty buildings in contexts characterised by a scarcity of affordable housing solutions suggests that the problem resides not primarily in the physical availability of heritage but in the capacity to activate the processes, governance, resources and visions that would transform abandoned buildings into opportunities for territorial development.

Over the past two decades, practices of reuse of abandoned heritage have emerged, frequently in an experimental and bottom-up manner, which attempt to address this challenge. These practices — ranging from social and community reuse to tourist, cultural and productive reuse — display profoundly differentiated characteristics, rationales and outcomes, and require a critical analysis assessing their potential, limits, sustainability and transferability.

Chapter 5 will analyse these practices in the light of the interpretive framework constructed here, considering how the various experiences address the systemic causes of abandonment identified, to what extent they succeed in constructing economically sustainable models, how they relate to existing regulatory frameworks, what role local design capacities play in determining success, and how they are situated within broader territorial strategies for countering marginalisation.

The passage from the problem of abandonment to the opportunity of reuse is neither automatic nor assured, but requires the construction of enabling conditions (regulatory, economic, social and cultural) which are frequently lacking or prove insufficient. It is within this framework of prerequisites that the most promising practices are situated: namely, those that move beyond mere building restoration and integrate physical recovery within broader territorial projects introducing a substantial transformation of functions, target users and models of enjoyment, thereby contributing ultimately to a reversal of the cycle of marginalisation.

4. CONTEMPORARY TERRITORIAL DYNAMICS

The analysis conducted in Part I has shown how Italian and European inner areas are traversed by processes of systemic marginalisation manifested through depopulation, demographic ageing, the desertification of services and the decline of traditional economies. In parallel with these dynamics, however, territories — urban as much as rural — are affected by broader transformations that redefine the meanings, uses and values associated with space and with dwelling.

This chapter analyses two contemporary territorial dynamics that are particularly significant for understanding the contradictions characterising the question of built heritage in inner areas: touristification (see Touristification and the transformation of territorial use) and the housing emergency (see The housing emergency and the paradoxes of existing heritage).

These processes, apparently distant from one another, are in fact profoundly interconnected and configure a central paradox: while in some territories tourist pressure transforms residential buildings into accommodation facilities, reducing the housing supply for permanent residents, in other contexts thousands of buildings remain vacant and abandoned notwithstanding the ever-greater difficulties of accessing housing faced by broad segments of the population.

Touristification represents one of the most pervasive and contradictory forms of contemporary territorial transformation, and in some contexts — urban (Venice, Florence, Rome) as much as rural (historic villages, Alpine localities) — tourist success translates into processes of commodification of space, the expulsion of residents and the loss of non-tourist urban functions, producing what Milano et al. (2019) define as a permanent transformation of residential lifestyles and of access to local services: in other words, a conversion of the urban fabric from a space of life into a space of consumption.

Such processes, far from being a neutral strategy of revitalisation, frequently delineate forms of unsustainable development that progressively erode the permanent residential dimension and functional complexity in favour of short-term tourist profitability.

In parallel, Italy, like many European countries, is undergoing a growing housing emergency affecting ever broader segments

of the population: young people unable to access either the ownership market or affordable rentals, vulnerable families at risk of eviction, and precarious workers devoting growing shares of their income to housing.

This emergency manifests itself with particular intensity in urban contexts but affects, in specific ways, inner areas as well, where the presence of abundant yet inaccessible built heritage generates the paradox already anticipated: thousands of empty buildings coexist with the impossibility, for many — local young people, potential new residents, workers — of accessing dignified and sustainable housing solutions.

The analysis of these two dynamics, touristification and the housing emergency, does not respond to a merely descriptive requirement but serves to elucidate the context within which the question of the reuse of abandoned heritage is situated. Indeed, as will be argued, reuse practices (see Practices and projects of reactivation) operate within this contradictory context, oscillating between the risk of fuelling exclusionary touristification and the potential to offer solutions to the housing emergency through the reactivation of disused heritage.

4.1 TOURISTIFICATION AND THE TRANSFORMATION OF TERRITORIAL USE

Defining touristification: from tourism to the commodification of space

Scholarly debate on touristification has developed significantly in recent years (Capocchi et al., 2019; Dodds and Butler, 2019a, b; Milano et al., 2018, 2019; Perkumienė and Pranskūnienė, 2019), accompanying the unprecedented growth of global tourist flows and the progressive emergence of its negative effects upon territories.

The term overtourism, of Anglophone origin and with a strong media resonance, has rapidly acquired significance in public as much as in academic debate, catalysing the attention of residents, operators, policy makers and tourists themselves (Koens et al., 2018).

The literature converges in identifying overtourism as a complex phenomenon that exceeds the merely quantitative dimension of

Figure 22.
Anti-tourism graffiti in Barcelona.
(top left)
Photograph by C. Milano;
Barcelona, Spain; Crowds on the Rambla in Barcelona.
(top right),
Photograph by C. Milano;
Crowds of tourists in Venice.
(bottom left)
Photograph by L. van Leeuwen;
Overtourism at Polignano a Mare.
(bottom right)
Source: web; Focus.it; web; Fondazione Grins.

tourist flows, identifying it rather as a condition in which hosts or guests, locals or visitors, feel that there are too many visitors and that the quality of life in the area, or the quality of the experience, has deteriorated unacceptably, thereby placing the emphasis on the subjective perception of the deterioration of places for residents and visitors alike (Goodwin, 2017).

The impacts, however, are not only perceptual but also structural: the overcrowding induced by temporary and seasonal tourist peaks produces permanent transformations in lifestyles, in access to services and in the general well-being of local communities (UNWTO, 2018). The phenomenon is moreover framed within the broader field of development policy, as a condition requiring reflection on the limits to growth and on possible strategies of tourism degrowth (Namberger et al., 2019). From a similar perspective, the relative nature of overtourism emerges clearly: its quantification is subjective and dependent upon the specificities of each context, in relation to the number of residents, tourists and tourist activities present (Visentin and Bertocchi, 2019).

Although the quantitative dimension remains a significant element, analysis of the literature reveals that overtourism cannot be reduced to a merely numerical question but, as recent studies underline, the phenomenon also encompasses inappropriate behaviours and practices on the part of visitors that undermine residents' quality of life and compromise the experience of

other tourists, thereby configuring a multidimensional process of territorial transformation affecting the spatial, functional, economic and social arrangements of places (Colomb and Novy, 2016; Milano et al., 2019).

Understanding this multidimensional nature requires that touristification be sharply distinguished from tourism as such. Tourism, understood as a temporary flow of visitors making use of territorial resources (landscapes, cultural heritage, recreational services), may be configured as an economic activity compatible with other urban and territorial functions, generating employment, income and the enhancement of local resources; touristification, by contrast, denotes a condition in which the tourist economy becomes so dominant as to modify structurally the functions, meanings and social composition of a territory, redefining the hierarchies of use of urban spaces and altering the balance between residential, productive and tourist-accommodation functions.

This transformation is articulated along five principal dimensions. The first concerns a process of progressive monofunctionalisation, through which the local economy tends to depend structurally upon tourism, while other activities (from manufacturing to non-tourist services, and forms of agriculture not oriented towards accommodation) are progressively marginalised or disappear altogether. Such extreme specialisation produces a condition of systemic vulnerability, since it exposes territories to the fluctuations and crises of the tourism sector, reducing the overall resilience of the local socio-economic system.

Second, the commodification of space: urban and territorial spaces are increasingly transformed into tourist products, optimised for consumption by visitors rather than for use by residents. Squares such as San Marco in Venice, Piazza di Spagna in Rome and Piazza del Duomo in Florence become backdrops for selfies; historic buildings are emptied of their original functions and reconverted into accommodation facilities; rural landscapes, from the Val d'Orcia to the Cinque Terre, are staged so as to conform to stereotyped imaginaries (MacCannell, 1976; Urry, 1990), thereby contributing to a progressive symbolic and functional redefinition of places.

The third dimension concerns residential substitution: the

growing profitability of tourist uses (hotels, B&Bs, short-term lets, restaurants) fuels a property pressure that increases values and rents, rendering housing progressively inaccessible for permanent residents, especially those on middle and low incomes, and thereby configuring processes of tourism gentrification (Gotham, 2005) in which residents are displaced by wealthier new residents — as in classic gentrification — and by temporary tourist flows[9].

The fourth dimension concerns the loss of authenticity and identity, whereby transformation oriented towards tourist consumption tends to simplify, stereotype and folklorise local identities, producing pseudo-events and forms of staged authenticity (Boorstin, 1964; MacCannell, 1973), in which places lose complexity and become caricatures of themselves, configuring veritable tourist non-lieux (non-places) devoid of genuine and rooted identity (Augé, 1992).

Finally, the fifth dimension concerns the emergence of forms of socio-territorial conflict and the consequent erosion of community cohesion. The tourist reconfiguration of places alters consolidated equilibria, generating tensions between social groups with divergent interests: on the one hand residents, who experience a deterioration in quality of life and a progressive loss of control over their everyday space; on the other, tourist operators and economic actors who benefit from the tourist rent and assert the legitimacy of their activities.

This generates conflicts between differing representations of the territory, understood alternatively as a place of dwelling or as an economic resource to be exploited. The interweaving of these tensions produces a weakening of the local social fabric, undermining the bonds of trust, reciprocity and belonging that sustain community life.

Touristification is not a new phenomenon — it suffices to recall that cities such as Venice have experienced forms of mass

9 The concept of 'tourism gentrification' developed by Gotham (2005) differs from the classical gentrification theorised by Glass (1964) in that it emphasises the central role of temporary tourist flows – rather than new permanent residents – in driving up property values and displacing low- to middle-income groups. In the Italian context, Celata and Coletti (2019) analyse the case of Rome, highlighting how short-term rental platforms have accelerated residential displacement in central neighbourhoods, hastening processes that would otherwise have taken decades. For a critical review of the literature on tourism gentrification.

tourism for over a century — but over the past two decades it has undergone an unprecedented intensification and diffusion attributable to a combination of factors: the liberalisation of low-cost air transport, which has made previously remote destinations accessible; the spread of digital platforms (Airbnb, Booking) which have facilitated the commercialisation of private housing stock; the growth of the global middle class in emerging countries; and the strategies of city branding and of the construction of a marketable urban identity (Zukin, 1995) adopted by many cities in order to attract investment and visibility. The overall outcome is a process which, in many contexts, has produced the displacement of residents, commercial gentrification, the loss of place identity and the impairment of quality of life, configuring a profound commodification of urban space in the service of the logics of tourist consumption.

Geographies of touristification: empirical evidence in Italian contexts

The theoretical mechanisms described operate with differing intensity and in differing forms according to territorial context, generating articulated geographies of touristification that affect consolidated cities as much as villages and inner areas. The analysis of certain emblematic cases makes it possible to grasp both the recurrent elements and the local specificities that modulate the phenomenon across different settlement configurations.

Within this framework, the Overall Tourist Overcrowding Index (Indice Complessivo di Sovraffollamento Turistico, ICST) elaborated by Demoskopika (2025) offers a quantitative reading useful for contextualising tourist pressure at national scale: among the 107 provincial tourism systems analysed, ten display levels of overcrowding classified as "Very High" (among them Rimini, Venice, Bolzano, Livorno, Naples, Trento, Verona, Milan, Rome and Trieste), while provinces such as Aosta, Florence and Siena are situated in the "High" band, indicating significant pressure upon local resources.

The most recent dynamics confirm the structural tendency towards the growth of tourism in Italy, with the third quarter of 2025 recording an overall increase in overnight stays (+2.5% relative to 2024) (ISTAT, 2025) against a slight decline in arrivals. The gap between arrivals and overnight stays suggests a lengthening of average stays, a phenomenon which amplifies pressure upon territories already exposed to advanced processes of touristification.

Within this scenario of consolidated growth and differentiated pressure, certain contexts emerge as emblematic cases in which touristification assumes particularly advanced forms. Among these, Venice represents the most complete and most studied expression of touristification in Europe: a process in which tourist pressure progressively erodes civic memory and the right to the city (Settis, 2014), transforming the city into an involuntary laboratory of urban unsustainability. The demographic decline that has affected the historic centre, which has fallen from almost 175,000 residents in 1951 to the present 48,000, is accompanied by a constant growth in tourist overnight stays, which exceeded 5 million visitors annually in the pre-pandemic period (2019 data) and reached over 13 million in 2024 (Comune di Venezia).

Figure 23.
E. Street art interventions in Venice.
Source: web / vez.news.

These data confirm the structural disproportion between resident population and tourist load (almost 16,000 overnight stays per square kilometre and 47 tourists per inhabitant), already evidenced by the Demoskopika indicators, and show how the pressure exerted by tourism has progressively compromised the social and residential sustainability of the historic city. In parallel, the rise in property values and the greater profitability of short-term lets (three to five times higher than residential tenancies) have made it increasingly difficult for middle- and low-income

groups to remain, contributing to the progressive displacement of residents (seven people out of ten have left the city on account of the cost of housing — Coses). Moreover, the pandemic made evident the vulnerability of a heavily monofunctional economy, with a 70% collapse in flows in 2020, while civic movements denounced the distortion of the city's character, prompting the administration to introduce in 2024 an experimental system of booking and paid contribution for day visitors — the first such case in Italy, albeit with results still uncertain as to its actual regulatory capacity.

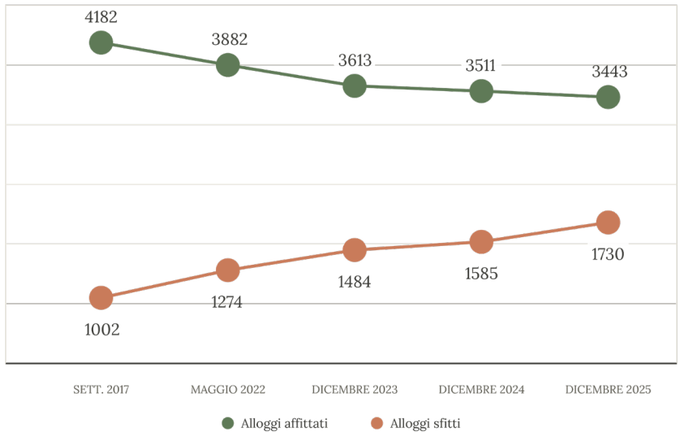


Figure 24. Municipality of Venice, dwellings let and vacant dwellings owned by Ater. Source: elaboration by the author on data from Ocio, Venice.

Rimini, which according to the ICST displays the highest level of overcrowding at national scale, constitutes an example of seasonal tourist monofunctionalisation. With a density of overnight stays exceeding 17,000 per square kilometre and a per capita production of tourist waste of over 76 kilograms per visitor, the Riminese seaside model concentrates environmental and infrastructural pressures of extraordinary intensity within a narrow time span, with effects that reverberate upon the quality of life of permanent residents well beyond the summer months. Unlike Venice, where touristification has produced a progressive and structural demographic hollowing-out, in Rimini the problem manifests itself predominantly as cyclical saturation: the city is not emptied of inhabitants, but is periodically exposed to loads exceeding the absorptive capacity of its infrastructure and its social fabric.

Florence displays dynamics analogous to those of Venice, albeit quantitatively less extreme, and is situated at the "High" level of the ICST index. The historic centre has recorded a halving of its resident population over little more than forty years, falling from 120,000 inhabitants in 1980 to the present 65,000, against an estimated influx of approximately 9 million visitors annually. In emblematic areas such as Santa Croce and San Lorenzo, over 50% of apartments are today given over to short-term lets, configuring a condition of almost total functional reconversion of the housing stock and effectively sanctioning the marginalisation of stable residency as a form of urban land use. The municipal administration has attempted to stem the phenomenon through limitations on new tourist-oriented commercial openings and the introduction of constraints on short-term lets — measures which have nonetheless proved of limited efficacy in the face of the structural pressure exerted by the market.

Rome and Milan, included for the first time in 2025 among urban systems with "Very High" overcrowding (Demoskopika, 2025), display, by virtue of their scale and metropolitan complexity, more selective forms of touristification, concentrated in specific areas rather than diffused across the entire city. In the Roman case, the historic centre, together with districts such as Trastevere and Monti, evidences mechanisms analogous to those already described for cities of greater tourist intensity: Trastevere, which until the 1990s retained a marked working-class identity, is today among the most touristified urban contexts in Italy, having undergone a radical transformation of its social, commercial and residential fabric within a relatively short period. Milan, by contrast, evidences a more recent touristification, accelerated over the past decade by the city's establishment as a destination for cultural, trade-fair and conference tourism: growing international attractiveness has generated a progressive property pressure upon central districts such as Brera, Navigli and Porta Romana, altering their social composition and commercial provision.

A case of particular interest is represented by Bolzano, which is confirmed in first place nationally for tourist intensity with almost 69 tourists per inhabitant (Demoskopika, 2025), a figure that acquires particular significance when it is considered that this is a medium-sized city lacking the extraordinary international renown of Venice or Florence. Tourist pressure is distributed relatively

continuously across the year, articulated between a summer tourism linked to Alpine walking and a winter tourism dependent upon skiing, with effects upon the property market and upon the availability of accommodation for sector workers analogous to those already described for other Alpine destinations. The context, however, accentuates a specific vulnerability: structural dependence upon a seasonal tourist economy exposed to the risks of climate change, which progressively reduces snow cover and calls into question the long-term sustainability of a model built around ski tourism, with the concrete risk of obsolescence of the infrastructural investments accumulated over recent decades. Inner areas and minor villages present specificities that merit attention, since touristification assumes in these contexts paradoxical connotations that call into question the dominant narratives which identify tourism as an effective strategy of territorial revitalisation.

At the opposite extreme of the ICST ranking are situated systems such as Rieti, Benevento, Reggio Calabria, Isernia, Avellino and Campobasso, territories at the margins of mass tourism with barely significant levels of overcrowding (Demoskopika, 2025). Nonetheless, certain villages within these provincial systems have experienced intense forms of touristification at local scale which the aggregate data are unable to capture fully.

The case of Santo Stefano di Sessanio, in Abruzzo, is strongly representative of these contradictions. The village, situated at the foot of the Gran Sasso at an altitude of 1,250 metres, numbered around a thousand inhabitants at the beginning of the twentieth century, falling to little more than a hundred by the century's end as a result of prolonged economic decline and repeated natural disasters, among them the 2009 earthquake. In 1999 the Italian-Swedish entrepreneur Daniele Kihlgren launched the Sextantio project, which transformed the village into one of the first Italian examples of an albergo diffuso (dispersed hotel) of international standing: approximately 3,500 square metres of historic buildings were recovered and given over to luxury accommodation functions, with the reopening of artisan workshops and cultural spaces, within the framework of what was proposed as a project of cultural and economic development capable of reversing the trend towards abandonment (Ugolini and Mariotti, 2021).

Some twenty years on, however, the balance sheet reveals significant contradictions: the resident population has declined further, falling from 130 to 115 inhabitants, while over 60% of the recovered buildings has been given over to accommodation functions rather than to permanent residency. The increase in property values, estimated at between 200 and 400%, has rendered the built heritage inaccessible to potential new residents, consolidating a form of symbolic expropriation: the village has been preserved as an architectural object, but not as a living community[10]. What is thereby configured is a scenographic space for tourist consumption, emptied of the ordinary life that had historically produced it (Teti, 2017).

Likewise, Alberobello, in Apulia, a UNESCO heritage site on account of its characteristic trulli, evidences how even small centres may experience forms of structural overtourism. With approximately 10,000 residents and over 300,000 visitors annually recorded in the pre-pandemic period, the historic centre has progressively been transformed into a monofunctional environment: over 70% of commercial activities is today oriented exclusively towards tourist demand, while the traditionally inhabited trulli have been reconverted into holiday homes, small museums and commercial premises. The consequent pressure upon property values has rendered this heritage inaccessible for young residents, fuelling in the summer months a widespread perception of congestion and of deterioration in quality of life. Attempts at regulation by the municipal administration, through limitations on new commercial licences and incentives for stable residency, have produced modest results, confirming the difficulty of reversing processes of touristification once these have become structurally consolidated.

Alpine localities subject to intense tourism display in turn specific forms of seasonal touristification, which are interwoven with growing climatic vulnerabilities. In many ski resorts

10 The case of Santo Stefano di Sessanio has been the subject of critical analysis, which has highlighted the contradictions between its stated objectives and actual results. Ugolini and Mariotti (2021) document how the Sextantio model, whilst having generated significant media attention and contributed to the enhancement of the architectural heritage, has not led to stable repopulation: the expected population growth has not materialised, and dependence on the tourism economy has left the village vulnerable to external shocks, such as the collapse in visitor numbers during the pandemic.

(Cortina d'Ampezzo, Courmayeur, but also Swiss localities), over 60% of properties consists of second homes occupied for a few weeks a year, with the result of generating "ghost villages" outside the tourist season. This concentration of built heritage in discontinuous use withdraws resources from the permanent residential market, while sector workers struggle to find affordable accommodation in the very localities in which they work, frequently being compelled to commute daily from surrounding municipalities. What is thereby configured is a condition of "tourism without residents", in which localities are seasonally saturated with visitors yet are progressively emptied of stable population. The fragility of these excessively specialised economies is further accentuated by climate change, which threatens the sustainability of ski tourism through the progressive reduction of snowfall, raising the prospect of scenarios of obsolescence of infrastructural investments and the risk of new cycles of abandonment at the point at which the winter model becomes structurally unsustainable.

Minor Tuscan centres such as San Gimignano and Volterra, although situated within provincial systems — that of Siena — classified as having "High" overcrowding, manifest the phenomenon on a reduced scale but with proportionally analogous effects: the historic centres are progressively transformed into backdrops for day-tripping tourist consumption, are emptied of permanent residents and assume the characteristics of what are described, not without a certain critical irony, as "medieval theme parks".

This polarised geography of touristification finds quantitative confirmation in the available comparative data. In 2024, five large cities (Verona, Venice, Florence, Rome and Naples) concentrated over 23 million arrivals and 72.1 million overnight stays, a volume almost equivalent to that generated by the whole of Italy's more than 2,600 small municipalities with a tourist vocation, which in the same year recorded 19.5 million arrivals and 71.4 million overnight stays (Demoskopika, 2025). A few urban hubs therefore absorb a demand comparable to that distributed across a vast territorial network, while minor villages, although collectively possessing 17.7% of accommodation establishments and 21.4% of national bed places, intercept flows well below their potential, in a condition of structural marginality with respect to the dominant tourist circuits which Demoskopika terms "undertourism". The figure is not neutral: if overtourism erodes quality of life in saturated destinations, undertourism perpetuates the economic and demographic fragility of the very territories that tourism was theoretically supposed to revitalise, yielding the image of a national system profoundly unbalanced in the distribution of the benefits and costs of tourism.

The comparative analysis of the cases examined reveals a substantial coherence in the processual mechanisms of touristification (monofunctionalisation, residential substitution, economic vulnerability, erosion of local identity) which operate with variable intensity but according to convergent logics, in large cities as much as in minor villages. Territorial specificities concern principally the quantitative scale of the phenomenon, the speed of the processes of transformation, the regulatory capacity of local administrations and the forms of social resistance that emerge. Across all these contexts, however, one element imposes itself as a recurrent critical node: built heritage and the question of dwelling constitute the terrain on which touristification produces its most profound and least reversible effects, transforming the physical form of the city and the material conditions within which local communities can (or cannot) continue to reproduce themselves.

It is upon this plane that the analysis in the following sections will be concentrated.

Touristification and built heritage: structural nexuses and implications for inner areas

For the purposes of this work, it is crucial to highlight the structural nexus between touristification and the management of built heritage, particularly significant in inner areas where housing scarcity and an abundance of abandoned buildings configure paradoxical conditions which tourist pressure may accentuate rather than resolve.

As has emerged from the cases analysed, touristification effects a systematic withdrawal of heritage from permanent residency through the transformation of residential buildings into accommodation facilities, reducing the housing supply available to permanent residents. At the same time, the spread

of digital platforms (Airbnb, Booking) has drastically reduced the transaction costs of this tourist commodification of private heritage, democratising access to the tourist market but intensifying pressure upon residency. Examples are furnished by the already cited cases of Florence and Santo Stefano di Sessanio, in which building recovery has translated not so much into housing availability for stable residents as into a paradoxical form of "abandonment through success", in which residents, displaced by rising housing costs and by the deterioration in quality of life induced by tourist congestion, voluntarily abandon their properties, selling to tourist operators or to purchasers of second homes. What is thereby configured is an "abandonment of the second kind", distinct from that discussed in Chapter 3 but with analogous effects upon community vitality: buildings physically recovered yet socially empty, villages saved as architectural objects but not as living communities, generating an illusion of recovery without demographic and/or social revitalisation. This is particularly problematic in inner areas, where the rhetoric of the "enhancement of villages" through tourism frequently masks processes of commodification that transform territories into consumable products, emptying them of community authenticity.
The touristification–built heritage nexus raises profound questions concerning the sustainability of tourism as a development strategy, above all for inner areas. Public and scholarly debate, however, evidences polarised positions: a significant proportion of administrators, economic operators and residents perceives tourism as a possible development strategy for marginal territories, one that creates employment, generates economic resources reinvestable in services, enhances cultural and landscape heritage, and alters the external perception of territories from "places of abandonment" to "attractive destinations"; on the other hand, a proportion of residents, researchers and social movements criticises touristification as an unsustainable form, since it creates precarious and poorly remunerated employment, displaces permanent residents and thereby accelerates depopulation, devalues local identities by reducing them to stereotypes, generates economic vulnerability through excessive specialisation, and sacrifices the long-term future for short-term profits. There is a risk that the rhetoric of tourism as salvation may mask processes of commodification that reproduce extractive logics analogous to those which generated the original abandonment (Barbera et al., 2022).
Certain experiences nonetheless suggest possibilities of equilibrium, demonstrating that where tourist growth is gradual and controlled, where accommodation provision remains contained in scale relative to the resident population, where public policies safeguard residency (constraints on short-term lets, reserved residential quotas, incentives for residents), where tourism is integrated with other economies (agriculture, crafts, services) rather than monofunctional, and where governance is genuinely participatory with the involvement of the local community, then tourism may contribute positively without generating exclusionary touristification. Touristification and the housing emergency thus prove to be two faces of the same crisis in the use and management of built heritage, in more heavily urbanised areas and in inner areas alike.

4.2 THE HOUSING EMERGENCY AND THE PARADOXES OF EXISTING HERITAGE

Framing the Italian housing emergency

Italy, like many European countries, is undergoing a growing housing emergency affecting ever broader segments of the population, configuring a housing question of structural rather than contingent scope (Tosi, 2017). According to data from the Ministry of Infrastructure and Transport, it is estimated that approximately 650,000 Italian households live in conditions of severe housing hardship (absence of housing, inadequate dwellings, critical overcrowding), while over 2 million households devote more than 40% of their disposable income to housing costs, configuring situations of significant economic vulnerability.
The housing emergency manifests itself not through a single dimension but through plural and interconnected forms. Economic inaccessibility represents the most evident dimension: purchase prices and rents have grown over the past twenty years significantly more than incomes, rendering housing progressively inaccessible for growing segments of the population. Housing difficulties in Italy intensified between 2000 and 2025, with the ratio of average house price to average household income rising

from 5.2 to 8.7 in the large cities, while rents grew by 35% against an increase in real incomes of less than 10%. The gap between property prices and incomes has rendered purchase inaccessible for many households, pushing them towards renting as the only practicable option, with rents rising sharply relative to average economic capacity. In 2025, economic tensions accentuate the crisis: 53.6% of households in rented accommodation regard it as a necessity owing to a lack of resources for ownership, with the share of households renting for over 6 months rising from 3.3% to 5.5% within a year, affecting above all young people, entrepreneurs and self-employed professionals (Nomisma, 2026). This dynamic particularly affects young people unable to leave the parental home and compelled to postpone the formation of new households; single-parent families, over-represented among those evicted and among applicants for social housing; precarious workers whose discontinuous incomes render access to mortgages or ordinary tenancy agreements difficult; and migrants subject to discrimination in the rental market and segregated in blighted or overcrowded dwellings.

The shortage of social housing further aggravates an already critical picture: Italy displays one of the lowest percentages of public residential housing in Europe, with an incidence of approximately 4% of the total housing stock against European averages oscillating between 15 and 25%, and waiting lists for public housing numbering over 600,000 households, with waiting times exceeding a decade in some cities.

This unmet demand is accompanied by a production of new public dwellings that has been substantially at a standstill for decades, while existing heritage is frequently in a state of blight and proves partially underused owing to a chronic lack of maintenance. As regards evictions, pre-pandemic data recorded approximately 40,000 enforcements annually, arising predominantly from morosità incolpevole (blameless rent arrears) attributable to job loss or income contraction; the moratoria introduced during the COVID-19 emergency contained the phenomenon only temporarily, generating upon their expiry waves of enforcements concentrated in time, with social consequences of particular gravity.

Among the most extreme manifestations of housing hardship, it is estimated that approximately 50,000 people are in conditions of severe marginality (homeless, living in unauthorised occupations, settled in shanty towns or informal camps), a dimension predominantly concentrated in the large urban centres but not absent from smaller-scale contexts.

The housing emergency in Italy does not derive from an absolute shortage of dwellings, since the country has approximately 32 million dwellings against 26 million households, configuring a theoretical surplus approaching 23%, but rather from structural dynamics that prevent an effective matching of supply and demand. This imbalance originates in the progressive financialisation of the property market, a process initiated in the 1990s which has redefined the sector, transforming it from a field oriented towards the satisfaction of housing need into a field for the financial valorisation of assets[11] (Aalbers, 2016).

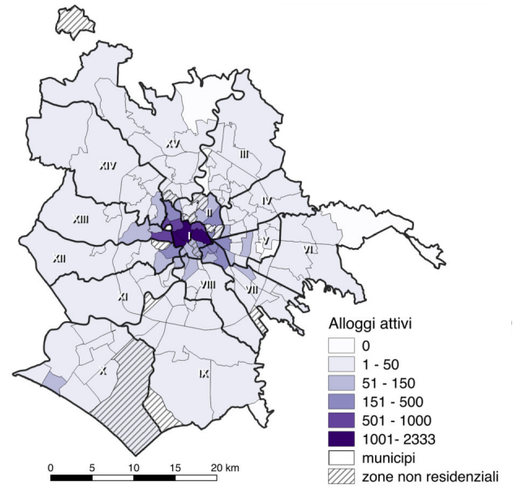
This transformation has produced convergent effects upon the functioning of the market: it has incentivised speculative practices such as purchase for resale and the deliberate retention of vacant properties in anticipation of appreciation; it has oriented building production towards the more remunerative middle and upper segments, at the expense of social housing and of the most vulnerable segments of demand; and it has fuelled recurrent cycles of expansion and contraction that have amplified the overall instability of the sector.

In parallel with the financialisation of the market, Italian public housing policies have undergone, from the 1990s onwards, a progressive dismantling that has assumed multiple forms: the disposal of public heritage, a drastic reduction in investment in new social housing, the decentralisation of competences to Regions and Municipalities unaccompanied by adequate financial resources, and the progressive privatisation of the bodies responsible for housing management.

11 The process of financialisation of the property market was systematised by Aalbers (2016) in the concept of the 'financialisation of housing', which describes the transformation of housing from a commodity for use into a financial asset subject to speculation and value appreciation. In the Italian context, this process takes on specific characteristics linked to the high proportion of homeowners (72 per cent) and the culture of viewing a home as a multigenerational investment: property ownership has historically been perceived as the main form of family savings, leading to resistance to renting and the accumulation of vacant properties.

This process has determined a progressive withdrawal of the State from the housing question, with the consequent transfer to the private market of functions which it structurally struggles to discharge in an equitable and universal manner (Padovani, 2011).
Superimposed upon this has been a fiscal policy that has historically privileged access to ownership through deductions on mortgage interest and exemptions on first homes, sedimenting a social model centred upon home ownership as the prevailing aspiration and horizon of individual security. What has resulted are ownership rates among the highest in Europe, standing at around 72%, against a private rental market that is structurally underdeveloped and culturally devalued, widely perceived as a residual choice rather than as a legitimate housing option.
The subsequent liberalisation of the rental market has further aggravated this picture: by eliminating forms of rent control without constructing alternative mechanisms for tenant protection, it has produced significant increases in rents, further eroding housing affordability for middle- and low-income groups. To this has been added, as already noted, the spread of short-term tourist lets through digital platforms, which has withdrawn significant portions of housing stock from the long-term rental market, accentuating pressure in high-demand urban areas (Congiu et al., 2025).

Figure 25.
Rome, tourists at the Trevi Fountain. Rome, Italy.
Source: web.



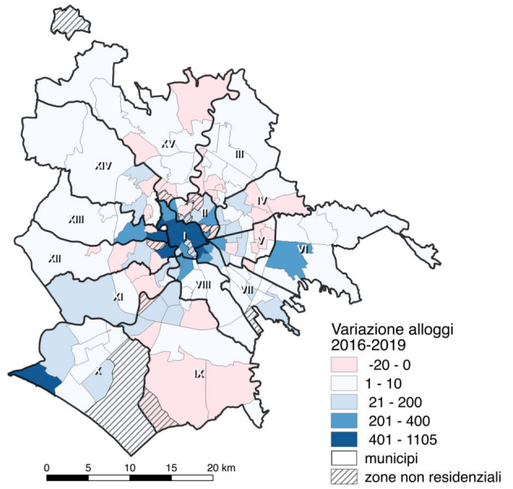


Figure 26.
Mapparoma. Number of active listings with at least one review per month – May 2018 and May 2019 (above); Variation in number of listings (below).
Source: Mapparoma elaborations on data from Inside Airbnb and ISTAT (2011 Census).

It is in inner areas, however, that this crisis assumes its most paradoxical features: here the housing question is posed not in terms of a quantitative shortage, but as a structural failure in the capacity to transform an abundant built heritage — albeit frequently blighted and inaccessible — into an effective resource for residency. The contradiction between building abundance and effective residential inaccessibility constitutes in these contexts the distinctive hallmark of housing hardship and requires analytical and policy instruments distinct from those elaborated for urban contexts.

The paradox of inner areas: empty houses and housing shortage

If the housing emergency in the large urban centres constitutes a recognised and widely debated phenomenon, that affecting inner areas presents specific and profoundly paradoxical characteristics.

As highlighted in Chapter 3, in municipalities classified as peripheral and ultra-peripheral by the SNAI over 28% of dwellings is unoccupied, against 18% for the national average: hundreds of thousands of empty buildings, many in a state of abandonment or advanced blight, others maintained as second homes in sporadic use. In parallel, those who would wish to settle or return to these territories — local young people, return migrants, remote workers, seasonal employees — encounter significant difficulties in accessing dignified and economically sustainable housing solutions. What emerges is a stark paradox: territories with an abundance of empty buildings which at the same time suffer from a structural shortage of affordable housing.

The paradox is explained through structural factors which combine and mutually reinforce one another. The first concerns the physical inadequacy of the built heritage: many abandoned properties are in a state of advanced blight, lack contemporary comforts and do not comply with the seismic, energy and hygienic-sanitary regulations in force.

Their recovery would require substantial investment, difficult to sustain in the absence of an active property market guaranteeing a return on investment; to this is added the poor locational appeal of many buildings, situated in contexts perceived as excessively isolated, with difficult accessibility, a lack of neighbourhood services, or exposure to seismic and hydrogeological risks entailing stringent building constraints.

A further structural factor is the misalignment between the characteristics of supply and those of demand: the buildings available are frequently large rural houses conceived for extended family units and oversized relative to the requirements of the single people and young couples who constitute the prevailing component of potential demand, yet their subdivision into smaller residential units is obstructed by building constraints and entails significant conversion costs. There is moreover lacking, in the majority of contexts, an effective intermediation between owners of empty buildings and potential new residents. The regional registers of available properties, as will be seen in the following section, have not filled this structural gap.

A significant share of statistically "empty" dwellings is in reality represented by second homes in occasional use, whose owners have no interest in placing them on the permanent rental market, for reasons ranging from their own future availability to a fear of management problems. This form of voluntary underuse withdraws substantial heritage from the stable residential market. In localities with a marked tourist vocation, properties occupied for a few weeks a year coexist with the impossibility for residents and workers of finding affordable primary homes: a contradiction which in some European contexts has produced systematic restrictive policies that Italy has never adopted with comparable coherence.

These dynamics generate qualitative contradictions that accentuate the quantitative paradox: the problem resides not solely in the numerical availability of buildings, but in the capacity of existing heritage to translate into a housing supply that is effectively accessible and adequate. The question is therefore not reducible to a merely quantitative reading of stocks, but requires an analysis of the structural conditions that determine the real accessibility of dwellings. As highlighted in section 4.1.3, when built heritage is recovered it is moreover frequently given over to tourist rather than residential functions, configuring that abandonment through success in which physically restored buildings remain socially empty, withdrawn from permanent residency precisely in those contexts in which it would be most needed.

Unmet housing demand in inner areas

Defining unmet housing demand in inner areas requires that the interpretive categories elaborated for urban contexts be transcended and that the specificities characterising housing need in these territories be recognised, where housing marginality manifests itself in less visible but no less structural forms, articulated around populations distinct in profile, trajectory and type of exclusion.

A first recurrent figure is that of local young people who would

wish to remain in their territory of origin upon completion of their education or in the initial phases of working life, but who come up against a housing supply that is economically inaccessible or inadequate to their requirements. Prolonged residence in the family home is very often not a choice but an adaptive response to this structural shortage, with effects that reverberate upon the formation of new households and further aggravate already declining demographic dynamics.

A second figure is that of return migrants: former emigrants motivated to return to their territory of origin who, having sold or lost their dwelling during the period of emigration, find no adequate housing solutions upon their return, with the result that some processes of return triggered by emerging employment opportunities fail precisely on account of the impossibility of finding accommodation, configuring a paradox in which the success of certain local development initiatives does not translate into effective repopulation for want of housing infrastructure.

Remote workers and the so-called neo-rurals constitute a numerically contained but strategically significant presence: people attracted by the environmental quality of inner areas and oriented towards long-term tenancies at sustainable rents, who contribute to introducing skills, incomes and cultural vitality into these territories, but who encounter structural difficulties in accessing stable solutions by reason of a housing supply systematically oriented towards short-term tourist letting rather than towards stable residency.

In areas with a consolidated tourist vocation, seasonal workers find themselves in an analogous condition: the absence of a medium-term rental supply compels them to commute from distant localities, confirming that model of tourism without residents in which the development of the tourist economy produces not territorial rootedness but commuting mobility and settlement precarity.

Vulnerable families and international migrants represent, finally, a component that is frequently invisible in analyses of the marginality of inner areas: the former, households with low or unstable incomes, frequently live in inadequate housing conditions amid blighted buildings and situations of overcrowding, while the latter, predominantly agricultural workers, industrial employees or care workers, are often confined to precarious or informal solutions, the combined outcome of discrimination in the rental market and of insufficient incomes.

Both these populations share a condition of structural housing exclusion which the scarcity of public residential housing in inner areas systematically leaves unanswered, and which could be addressed by recognising in international migrants a demographic resource for these territories (Ferrario, 2025), on condition that targeted housing policies favour their stable settlement, transforming a presence that is today frequently precarious and invisible into effective territorial rootedness.

Public policies: limits, experimentation and possible directions

Italian public policies have addressed the housing emergency in inner areas in a fragmentary and largely inadequate manner, configuring a structural disconnection between the housing problem and the potential of existing built heritage. No integrated national strategy exists connecting the housing emergency and the reuse of abandoned heritage: traditional housing policies remain concentrated upon the large urban centres, while the National Strategy for Inner Areas has considered the housing question only marginally, privileging interventions on essential services and on local economic development.

This disconnection configures a structurally missed opportunity, since the abandoned heritage of inner areas could contribute significantly to addressing the national housing emergency were there to exist policies capable of facilitating the encounter between underused building resources and unmet housing needs.

Certain legislative initiatives, such as Law 158/2017 on small municipalities, although acknowledging the theme of building abandonment, have not developed specific instruments to facilitate housing access for new residents: what is lacking are fiscal incentives for owners willing to let to permanent residents at affordable rents, dedicated funds for the co-financing of building recovery, procedural simplifications for refurbishment in marginal contexts, and structured programmes for bringing together owners and potential residents. The regional registers of available properties, established in some regions such as Emilia-Romagna and Abruzzo, are founded upon the voluntary

participation of owners, which rarely materialises, and function as inert databases rather than as active platforms of mediation between supply and demand.

Notwithstanding this picture of structural deficiencies, some local administrations have experimented with innovative policies that indicate viable directions.

The "One-euro houses" initiatives, based upon the symbolic transfer of abandoned buildings to private individuals who undertake to refurbish them within defined timescales, have produced inconsistent results: alongside some cases of effective building recovery and the attraction of new residents, frequent defaults on the part of purchasers and speculative dynamics are recorded, confirming the structural limit of a model that selects purchasers with significant economic means without responding to the needs of the most vulnerable groups.

More promising are the experiences of social housing in villages, from the controversial case of Riace to more recent municipal initiatives such as those of Grottole and Bova, which offer dwellings at symbolic rents to remote workers, migrants and refugees, configuring forms of flexible residency potentially capable of attracting new stable populations, although these experiences remain local initiatives, neither systematised nor replicated on a national scale.

Addressing the housing emergency in inner areas effectively would require integrated policies capable of acting on several fronts: facilitating access to abandoned heritage for permanent residency through fiscal incentives and mechanisms of facilitated public acquisition; regulating tourist uses in order to safeguard the residential function, limiting conversions to short-term letting and introducing minimum residential quotas in projects benefiting from public funding; developing forms of social housing in villages by recovering disused public buildings in partnership with the third sector; and experimenting with innovative models of access to housing — residents' cooperatives, community land trusts[12], cohousing — that redefine the traditional dichotomy between ownership and rental. The nexus between touristification and the housing emergency highlights how both phenomena are expressions of a single crisis in the use of the built heritage of inner areas: addressing it requires a rethinking of territorial priorities that places the residential function at the centre relative to tourist valorisation and property rent, recognising that the residential function cannot be subordinated to tourist valorisation and property rent.

4.3 THE CONTRADICTIONS OF CONTEMPORARY DWELLING

The joint analysis of the two dynamics addressed — touristification and the housing emergency — brings to light a set of profound contradictions traversing Italian territories, in urban and rural areas alike. On the one hand, the growth of tourism produces divergent effects: some territories suffer from an excess of success, where tourist pressure ends by displacing residents and radically transforming local economies; others, although possessing significant tourist resources, remain at the margins of the flows and fail to translate potential into development.

Tourism is thereby configured as a structurally ambivalent resource — on the one hand an opportunity for income, employment and territorial enhancement, on the other a factor of vulnerability, erosion of residency and economic dependence — with respect to which no universally valid measure exists, but rather the need for place-based governance capable of balancing benefits and risks in relation to local specificities.

In parallel, the national housing picture presents an equally evident contradiction: the presence of a quantitative surplus of dwellings is accompanied by a deficit of quality and accessibility involving 650,000 households in severe emergency and over 2 million in conditions of vulnerability. This paradox shows clearly that the

12 The community land trust (CLT) is a model for managing the housing stock that originated in the United States in the 1960s as part of the civil rights movement. It separates ownership of the land – held collectively by the trust – from that of the buildings, which are sold to residents at affordable prices with resale restrictions that guarantee their long-term affordability. In Europe, the model has spread significantly over the last twenty years, with well-established schemes in London (Community Land Trust), Brussels and Amsterdam. In Italy, the first pilot schemes are still very limited, but some initiatives, such as the Co-City project in Turin and a number of schemes in Bologna, point to growing interest.

problem resides not in the production of new dwellings but in the capacity to render existing heritage accessible, adequate and usable; this is an objective requiring policies profoundly different from the traditional logic of building production, oriented instead towards regeneration, redistribution and the management of uses.

The two dynamics are not independent: the conversion of residential heritage to tourist uses contributes to aggravating the housing emergency, while the lack of housing solutions for permanent residents obstructs those processes of demographic revitalisation that would be necessary in order to counter abandonment. The nexus between touristification and the housing emergency therefore has a structural nature and requires policies that govern the uses of built heritage by orienting them towards permanent residency, limiting tourist or speculative uses wherever these produce distortive effects.

It is within this framework that abandoned heritage assumes a crucial role, situated precisely at the crossroads of these contradictions: on the one hand it represents a potentially significant resource for responding to housing needs, both nationally and locally; on the other, a series of structural obstacles prevents this potential from translating into real opportunities, while the public policies available prove insufficient to facilitate, sustain and orient processes of reactivation in the direction of permanent residency. Overcoming these contradictions requires integrated policies addressing simultaneously the various dimensions of the problem: the regulation of property markets and of tourist uses in order to safeguard residency; the facilitation of access to abandoned heritage for those with housing needs; the integration of the housing dimension into broader territorial strategies, such as those promoted by the SNAI; experimentation with innovative forms of collaborative dwelling; and a balancing of tourist development with social and demographic sustainability. The absence of such policies configures what may be termed a veritable crisis of dwelling, which concerns not only the physical availability of buildings but bears upon the very meaning of dwelling: who has the right to dwell where, on what economic terms and with what functional priorities.

These are questions that traverse urban policies as much as those for inner areas, and that require answers taking as their primary reference the right to dignified housing rather than the maximisation of property rent, recognising that without stable residents territories, however physically recovered, remain devoid of social life and of demographic prospect.

5. PRACTICES AND PROJECTS OF REACTIVATION

The analysis carried out in the preceding chapters has shown how building abandonment in inner areas represents a systemic phenomenon, the outcome of long-term demographic, economic, regulatory and cultural processes. Nevertheless, the presence of a substantial stock of disused or underused heritage also configures, potentially, a territorial resource which, if adequately reactivated, could contribute to the revitalisation of contexts otherwise destined for irrelevance. Over the past two decades, practices of reuse of abandoned heritage have emerged, frequently in an experimental manner and through initiatives promoted by local actors among others, which attempt to transform the problem of abandonment into an opportunity for territorial development. These practices present profoundly differentiated morphologies, rationales and outcomes, responding to differing economic, social and cultural rationalities and mobilising heterogeneous actors, resources and forms of governance.

The chapter critically analyses four principal typologies of practice for the reactivation of abandoned heritage: socially based reuse through community economies (see Socially based reuse: community economies); tourism-based reuse through temporary dwelling and the albergo diffuso model (see Tourism-based reuse: temporary dwelling and the albergo diffuso); culturally and creatively based reuse (see Culturally and creatively based reuse); and productively and industrially based reuse through the transformation of disused industrial sites into hubs for new economies (see Productively and industrially based reuse).

The analysis is conducted in the light of the interpretive framework constructed in the preceding chapters, verifying to what extent these practices address the systemic causes of abandonment rather than confining themselves to the physical recovery of buildings, whether they generate economically sustainable models, what impact they produce upon demographic dynamics and upon the social cohesion of local communities, and what risks they entail in terms of gentrification, touristification or the exclusion of residents. The objective is not to construct a celebratory survey of best practices (a widespread but frequently uncritical rhetoric) but rather to develop a realistic assessment acknowledging both the potential and the structural limits of these approaches, identifying the conditions necessary if they are effectively to contribute to the sustainable revitalisation of inner areas.

5.1 SOCIALLY BASED REUSE: COMMUNITY ECONOMIES

Community cooperatives represent one of the most innovative and potentially transformative forms of reuse of abandoned heritage to have emerged in the Italian context over the past fifteen years. These are cooperative enterprises constituted by residents of a territory, often joined by new inhabitants, return migrants or city users, who organise themselves in order to manage collectively assets, services or economic activities directed towards the well-being of the local community. Unlike traditional cooperatives, these entities do not operate on open markets but are oriented towards the production of value for a territorially defined community; they involve in their membership workers, consumers, residents, local administrations and associations, within a logic of broadened and participatory governance; and they rarely concentrate upon a single activity but integrate different functions in response to the articulated needs of marginal territories (AICCON, 2022, 2025; Mastronardi, 2020; Mastrolonardo and Monetti, 2022).

Figure 27.
Levels of transformative action upon which community cooperatives bear.
Source: AICCON, 2025

These mutualist models are founded upon principles of solidarity, active participation and sustainability, configuring themselves as veritable engines of territorial change that contribute to improving quality of life and to reconstituting the social fabric in contexts otherwise destined for abandonment.

The genesis of the model in Italy is situated in the mid-2000s, in

response to the crisis of public and commercial services in inner areas, in which the closure of neighbourhood shops and health facilities produced conditions of functional desertification which neither the market nor public institutions proved able to counter effectively, generating the premises for forms of cooperative self-organisation oriented both towards the provision of essential services and towards the reactivation of disused built heritage for collective functions. This model has proved particularly effective in areas at risk of depopulation, where the collective management of common assets such as agricultural land, historic buildings and natural spaces has contributed to relaunching the local economy and to enhancing heritage otherwise destined for abandonment (Confcooperative, 2025).

The role accorded to these enterprises with respect to local development pathways presents a threefold articulation: the cooperative responds to specific needs emerging from the territory; it sustains the maintenance and reconstruction of bonds within the local community as a whole and between the community and its spaces of life; and it offers employment opportunities to members of the community itself, thereby strengthening local rootedness and countering phenomena of abandonment (Euricse, 2016).

Community cooperatives in Italy: evolution, diffusion, sectors of activity

Article 3 of the Italian Constitution (1948), at paragraph 2, affirms that it is the task of the Republic to remove the obstacles limiting the freedom and equality of citizens. Yet when the State fails to bridge the inequalities and social imbalances afflicting territories, it is frequently and spontaneously communities that respond.

Communities increasingly organise themselves in enterprise form in order to counter the economic and social transformations that negatively affect the development of territories, above all marginal ones. Precisely for this reason, community enterprises of cooperative type have always been regarded as a spontaneous reaction to the shortcomings of the State (Borzaga et al., 2016).

Community enterprises represent productive entities offering goods and/or services on a continuous and stable basis. As early as 1995, the International Cooperative Alliance underlined how cooperatives contribute to the sustainable development of their communities through policies agreed upon by their members.

The concept of care for the community thus becomes a priority task of cooperation, realised through actions of shared and participatory management. These enterprises are distinguished by their participatory nature, being managed by their members according to inclusive and democratic principles. A distinctive trait is their strong rootedness in the territory in which they operate, with the objective of improving the community's living conditions, responding to its needs, countering depopulation, creating new employment opportunities and guaranteeing essential services (Euricse, 2016).

From the Feasibility Study for the development of community cooperatives carried out in September 2016 by the Ministry for Economic Development (MISE, 2016), certain recurrent aspects emerge which favour, or in some cases stimulate, the emergence of these entities. Among these, particular significance attaches to the territorial context: inner areas, peripheral areas and those marked by conditions of vulnerability constitute ideal settings for the emergence and development of cooperatives. The principal objective is to counter social and economic impoverishment, contributing to the survival and enhancement of the territories themselves, custodians of an important environmental and landscape heritage and of an intangible wealth constituted by ancient knowledge, traditions and experience.

The driving force of this way of doing business resides, without a shadow of doubt, in the community itself. A question therefore arises spontaneously: what, in reality, is a community?

According to the Treccani dictionary, it is defined as a set of persons sharing a common social life and holding the same behaviours and interests, but also as the totality of the inhabitants of a municipality (Treccani, 2003). A community may therefore be understood as a group of people sharing social bonds, common interests and a territorial identity rooted in the same local context.

To underline the context within which it acts is at the same time to highlight its limits and its strengths, since the community operates upon a specific territory and can never be conceived as severed from it, de-territorialised. This territorial attachment, if on the one hand it may appear as a limit, in that it circumscribes

the community's action to a well-defined portion of space, at the same time represents its principal strength: proximity and direct knowledge of the local context allow the community to understand the specificities of the territory, activating targeted responses to community needs and promoting economic activities oriented towards the social development of individuals and of the communities to which they belong. In recent years a strong growth in community cooperatives has been recorded (32 were founded in the course of 2023 alone), a growth that appears still more significant when pre- and post-COVID-19 pandemic data are analysed: between 2019 and 2023, the increase in community enterprises amounted to approximately 82%.

In 2019 Euricse recorded 109 community cooperatives, distributed relatively evenly across the national territory (Euricse, 2020). By January 2022, the mapping carried out by AICCON registered an increase, bringing the number of cooperatives to 188 (data as at 30/06/2021). The most recent data, updated to 2024, show that the community cooperatives recorded as active in Italy number 243 (Euricse, 2024). An aspect that appears particularly interesting is the connection between inner areas and community cooperatives. As has emerged from the literature which for over a decade has addressed the question of marginal territories, inner areas represent territories geographically distant from the centres providing essential public services relating to health, education and mobility (Barca et al., 2014). Over 65% of these cooperatives arises and is located in municipalities classified as inner areas: according to recent data, geographical location increases by 18.5% the probability of initiating a process of establishing an enterprise of this type (Euricse, 2024). Such organisations arise, indeed, in order to respond to specific needs of territories and local populations, in sectors that ought to be the province and responsibility of a civil State, understood as guarantor of the equity and rights of citizens. When this role is not fully discharged, it is citizens themselves who self-organise in collective forms of enterprise. The principal motivations prompting the establishment of community cooperatives may be reduced to four categories: the need to reconstruct and/or strengthen the social fabric of the territory (86.4%), to counter depopulation (81%), to respond to specific needs of the population (77.3%) and to provide missing services (77%) (Euricse, 2020). The sectors in which community cooperatives ground their activity encompass tourist accommodation, agriculture, personal services, cultural activities, recreational services, energy production and the maintenance of public green space. In the initial phase, such enterprises tend to launch an activity capable of serving as financial leverage for the organisation's development. Other activities are subsequently added to this. According to Aida data, the principal activities launched at the moment of establishment relate principally to personal services and welfare (31%), followed by tourism (20%), commerce (12%) and, finally, agriculture, environment and landscape (11%).

In this emerging model, within which community cooperatives may be situated, there lies an attempt to regenerate new forms of sociality, moving from a state of waiting to a proactive condition (Euricse, 2016), in which communities become decisive in the process of reactivating society from below (a bottom-up rather than a top-down approach) with a common objective: to improve their own environment through shared commitment. The third sector operating in inner areas can certainly play its role better by drawing upon its capacity for inclusion, its networks and its bonds of trust, rendering them ever more qualifying and conscious elements of its own operation and presence (Bassan and Pedercini, 2020). Community cooperatives represent a major laboratory of research and experimentation, from which forms and instruments suited to revitalising territories and communities may be learned, and they propose themselves as a model of economic and social development in which the participatory approach performs a driving function.

It is important, however, also to underline their limits. First among these is the participatory aspect: indeed, in order to function, the participatory approach requires the existence of contextual conditions which are not always present and which cannot always be created (Giusti, 2001). The critical issues frequently concern the lack of competent direction in the management of the processes in question, the scarcity of financial resources continuous over time, the difficulty of directly involving the parties concerned, and disengagement on the part of the community (Maino and Cau, 2023). It therefore appears significant to underline the need

to establish whether the surrounding conditions present in each context are effectively adequate and represent the best choice for the application of participatory models of cooperative type.
A further limit is represented by regulatory provision. Even today (May 2025), no specific national regulatory framework exists in Italy for this particular form of enterprise, but rather a constellation of regional laws attempting to regulate a void that the central legislator has not yet succeeded in filling. Bill no. 59 concerning the "Regulation of community cooperatives" (DDL n. 59, 2022)[13] is merely the latest attempt intended to furnish a legislative frame of reference for all those cooperatives which in fact already exist and operate on and within territories, in order to meet the needs of their communities, and at the same time to establish itself as a model for regional initiatives and to constitute a frame for measures of economic support for such entities (DDL n. 59, 2022). Notwithstanding that judgment no. 131 of 2020 of the Constitutional Court reaffirmed the exclusive competence of the State in matters of legislation (see also Art. 117 of the Constitution, paragraph 1), the legislator, instead of setting out first a strategic line and a long-term vision, is slow in arriving and is thus compelled to "limit the damage" thereafter. It is therefore to be hoped that the legislator will shortly succeed in untangling this long-standing question and in regulating community enterprises once and for all, if only in recognition of the role they perform pro altero within territories.

The case of Abruzzo: a laboratory of community enterprises

Abruzzo is one of the regions to have approved specific legislation on the regulation of community cooperatives. With the introduction of Regional Law no. 25 of 2015, the criteria and requirements for the recognition of the role and function of Community Cooperatives were defined for the first time (Art. 1), recognised as enterprises capable of enhancing local specificities and knowledge, territorial resources and cultural traditions, in

13 DDL S. 59 of the 19th legislature, tabled on 13 October 2022, forms part of an effort to establish a national framework for community cooperatives; however, in the absence of a comprehensive national law that has been definitively approved, the matter remains subject to fragmented regulation, left to the regions, which have adopted their own regulations with definitions, requirements and scopes of application that do not fully align.

order to improve the social and economic quality and the quality of life of the places in which they are established.
Ten years on, the Region has further consolidated this framework with Regional Law no. 29 of 13 November 2025, Disciplina delle Cooperative di Comunità per il Lavoro e la Produzione ed ulteriori disposizioni (Regulation of Community Cooperatives for Work and Production and further provisions), approved by the Regional Council on 29 October 2025 and entering into force on 4 December 2025, which updates and broadens the previous regulation by introducing more articulated provisions on mutualist exchange, categories of members and instruments of liaison with public administrations. The legislative update ten years on from the first regional law in the field constitutes a significant indicator of the maturity attained by the community cooperative phenomenon in Abruzzo and of its progressive institutionalisation within regional policies of territorial development. Within the cooperative system, Abruzzo represents a case peculiar within the national panorama as regards percentage incidence. Twenty-nine (as at June 2025) community enterprises are recorded as active within the regional territory, almost ten per cent of the total of Abruzzo's 305 municipalities.

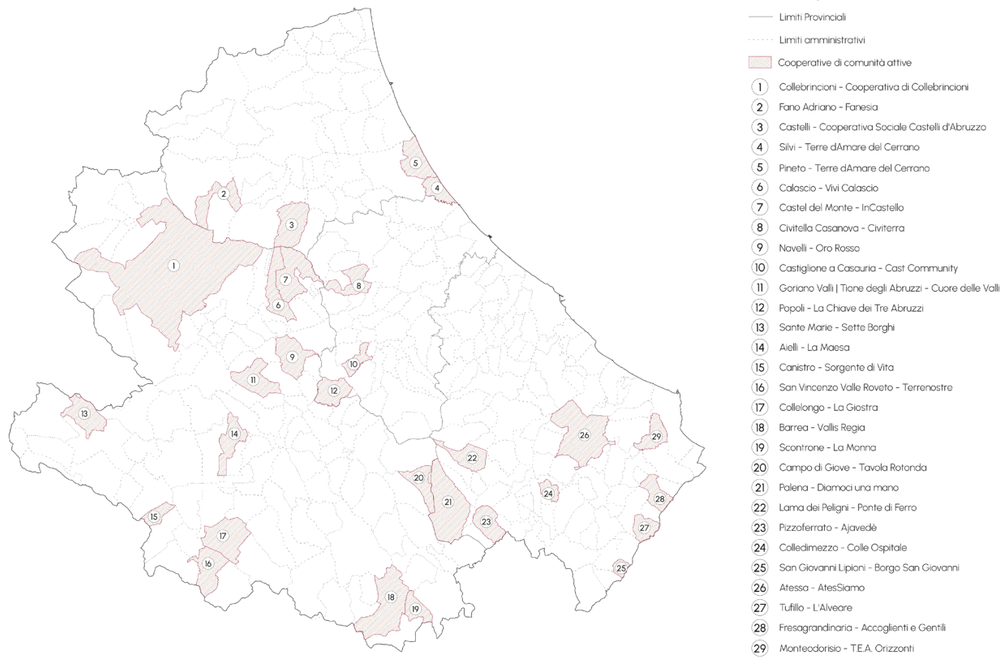


Figure 28.
Community cooperatives in the Abruzzo Region. Data updated to June 2025.
Source: elaboration by the author on data from Confcooperative Abruzzo.

Of the twenty-nine community cooperatives currently active in Abruzzo, twenty-three (equivalent to over eighty per cent) are located in areas classified as inner areas according to the National Strategy for Inner Areas. Of these, eighteen operate within the pilot areas identified in the 2014–2020 and 2021–2027 programming cycles.

Table 13. Community cooperatives active in Abruzzo. Data updated to June 2025. Source: elaboration by the author on data from OpenCoesione.

Community cooperatives active in Abruzzo	**29**		**9,51%**
in municipalities classified as hub	1	Collebrincioni (Frazione dell'Aquila)	0,33%
in municipalities classified as inter-municipal hub	-	-	-
in municipalities classified as belt	5	Aielli - La Maesa Canistro - Sorgente di Vita Collelongo - La Giostra San Vincenzo Valle Roveto - Terrenostre Silvi - Terre dAmare del Cerrano	1,64%
in municipalities classified as in-termediate	9	Calascio - Vivi Calascio Navelli - Oro Rosso Sante Marie - Sette Borghi Tione degli Abruzzi - Cuore delle Valli Castelli - Cooperativa Sociale Castelli d'Abruzzo - Arte e Turismo Fano Adriano - Fanesia Castiglione a Casauria - Cast Community Popoli - La Chiave dei Tre Abruzzi Pineto - Terre dAmare del Cerrano	2,95%
in municipalities classified as pe-ripheral	10	Atessa - AtesSiamo Campo di Giove - Tavola Rotonda Castel del Monte - InCastello Civitella Casanova - Civiterra Colledimezzo - Colle Ospitale Fresagrandinaria - Accoglienti e Gentili Lama dei Peligni - Ponte di Ferro Monteodorisio - T.E.A. Orizzonti San Giovanni Lipioni - Borgo San Giovanni Tufillo - L'Alveare	3,28%
in municipalities classified as ultra-peripheral	4	Barrea - Vallis Regia Scontrone - La Monna Palena - Diamoci una mano Pizzoferrato - Ajavedè	1,31%

From the data gathered and reported in Table 13 it emerges that only one community cooperative is located in a municipality classified as a hub: this is the community cooperative of Collebrincioni, active in a hamlet of the regional capital, L'Aquila, with an incidence on the regional total equal to 0.33 per cent.

No cooperative is established in municipalities classified as inter-municipal hubs. Five cooperatives, by contrast, are active in municipalities classified as belt (Aielli, Canistro, Collelongo, San Vincenzo Valle Roveto, Silvi), equal to 1.64 per cent of the total; nine in municipalities classified as intermediate (Calascio, Navelli, Sante Marie, Tione degli Abruzzi, Castelli, Fano Adriano, Castiglione a Casauria, Popoli, Pineto), with an incidence equal to 2.95 per cent; ten in municipalities classified as peripheral (Atessa, Campo di Giove, Castel del Monte, Civitella Casanova, Colledimezzo, Fresagrandinaria, Lama dei Peligni, Monteodorisio, San Giovanni Lipioni, Tufillo), with an incidence equal to 3.28 per cent; and finally four in ultra-peripheral municipalities (Barrea, Scontrone, Palena and Pizzoferrato), with an incidence of 1.31 per cent. The territorial distribution confirms the concentration of the cooperative model in the municipalities of inner areas, that is, in those contexts most exposed to phenomena of depopulation, deficient provision of public services and impoverishment of local socio-economic networks. In these contexts, as discussed previously, the adoption of bottom-up models is configured as a concrete and in some cases more effective alternative to traditional approaches to territorial intervention, contributing to generating new forms of cohesion and resilience within local communities. The diffusion of community cooperatives in Abruzzo, and in particular in inner areas, suggests that this model may represent an effective instrument for the management and reactivation of abandoned assets, on condition that the regulatory, financial and participatory limits highlighted are overcome.

In order to assess its concrete applicability, it is necessary to engage with experiences matured in other Italian territorial contexts, from which potentially transferable methodological indications may be drawn. The Comunità Cooperativa di Melpignano, a Salentine municipality of approximately 2,200 inhabitants, offers in this respect a particularly significant case for analysis: founded in 2011, the first community cooperative in Apulia and among the first in Italy, it has developed over the course of fourteen years a solid entrepreneurial model, with 320 members, an average annual turnover of 500,000 euros and total investments in the territory of 1.5 million euros. The model is founded upon four strategic domains — environment and territory, economy and

work, democracy and participation, openness and innovation — drawing explicitly upon the principles of civil economy and circular economy, with the choice of reinvesting profits in their entirety for the benefit of the community rather than distributing them to members. The cooperative operates by promoting a model of local development based upon the direct participation of citizens, drawing upon local skills and collaborating with regional and Community institutions through inclusive partnerships, and is configured today as a recognised point of reference for Apulian local communities and for Italian inner areas.

The case of Melpignano evidences with particular clarity how the long-term sustainability of a community cooperative depends upon the capacity to evolve from an initial experiment into a structured entrepreneurial entity. The Melpignano trajectory demonstrates that the grey zone between enterprise and volunteering identified as a recurrent critical issue of the model may be progressively overcome, but that this requires long timescales, constant investment in the training of members and the capacity to construct a distributed leadership that does not weigh disproportionately upon a narrow nucleus of promoters. In demographic terms, Melpignano continues to record a negative migration balance, confirming that isolated interventions, however virtuous, are insufficient in the absence of structured territorial strategies.

A significant point of comparison is offered by the Cooperativa di Comunità Valle dei Cavalieri, founded in 1991 in the municipality of Succiso in the Tuscan-Emilian Apennines, at approximately 1,000 metres of altitude, in a context of marked geographical and demographic marginality. Over more than thirty years of activity the cooperative has developed a multifunctional model integrating agritourism accommodation, PDO-branded cheese production, management of the Visitor Centre of the Tuscan-Emilian Apennine National Park, school transport services and assistance for the elderly, educational activities and sustainable tourism, reaching 63 members and 7 permanent employees. The case is distinguished by its capacity to construct over time a relatively autonomous economic base through the diversification of activities, to the extent of being recognised in 2018 with the second prize at the UNWTO Awards for Excellence and Innovation in Tourism and of being studied as a replicable model by delegations from the United States, Canada, Japan and Korea.

A case of different configuration, but equally significant for its capacity to integrate cultural, tourist and social dimensions within an articulated cooperative model, is offered by the Cooperativa di Comunità Identità e Bellezza, the first community cooperative formally recognised in Sicily, constituted in Sciacca in April 2020 with the aim of transforming the territory's resources into social, cultural, environmental and economic value through a community pact oriented towards equitable and sustainable development. Founded in the midst of the pandemic, the cooperative obtained in the same year accreditation from the Regione Sicilia as the Ecomuseo dei 5 Sensi di Sciacca, becoming its managing body and developing with extraordinary rapidity an integrated system for the enhancement of local tangible and intangible heritage[14] through an articulated offer of experiential activities, a network of information points distributed across the urban territory, and a participatory governance directly involving the 48 local cultural associations in the management and oversight of activities.

The model, founded upon the concept of an economy of beauty (in which ethical and economic objectives contribute to collective well-being rather than standing in opposition), has produced measurable results within a relatively short time span: an increase in the turnover of traders in the regenerated quarter, a rise in and progressive deseasonalisation of tourist overnight stays, the development of new professional skills internally, and the attainment of national awards, among them first prize in the Bravo Innovation Hub call dedicated to the most innovative enterprises in the tourism and culture sector. As regards transferability, the Sciacca case introduces a particularly significant variable by initiating structured pathways of support towards other communities, articulated along three operational dimensions: the generation of awareness of heritage that is available but not yet valorised; the development of skills to transform it into

14 The scheme covers a wide range of areas: from ceramic crafts to food and wine traditions; from the reopening to the public of cultural heritage sites that had long been inaccessible — such as the Vaporose Caves on Mount Kronio and the church of Badia Grande — to the development of local supply chains linking local producers and accommodation providers, thereby restoring economic and symbolic value to resources that had previously been underutilised.

social and economic value; and the activation of community connections capable of guaranteeing continuity over time. This explicit orientation towards replicability suggests a scalability potentially superior to that of experiences more dependent upon local conditions difficult to reproduce elsewhere, configuring the model not as an isolated case but as a methodological reference transferable to contexts of analogous marginality. The comparative analysis of the cases examined makes it possible to identify certain recurrent structural conditions in the more successful experiences: the presence of a project-oriented social capital, understood as a combination of technical skills, strategic vision and determination to operate in contexts of marginality, appears a necessary condition, although one not uniformly distributed across territories and difficult to construct artificially through public intervention.

Alongside this stands the multifunctionality of provision, which increases resilience relative to monofunctional initiatives by diversifying income sources and broadening the capacity to respond to the articulated needs of local communities, while embeddedness in supra-local networks compensates for the constraints deriving from peripheral location, guaranteeing access to skills, resources and markets otherwise unreachable. Finally, initial public support structured as an enabling investment, rather than as a permanent subsidy, favours trajectories of greater autonomy over the long term.

If the cooperative model is effectively to contribute to the revitalisation of inner areas, public policies ought to invest in preventive capacity building, guarantee continuous technical support in the initial phases of enterprise development, remove the bureaucratic obstacles that limit access to disused public built heritage, and integrate cooperatives more coherently into area strategies, in the awareness that isolated interventions, however virtuous, do not produce structural transformations in the absence of a broader territorial vision. The geographical diffusion of the model — documented by analogous experiences in differing territorial contexts, from the Cooperativa I Briganti di Cerreto, active in the Reggio Apennines in the recovery of historic buildings and the promotion of tourism, to the Cooperativa Viso a Viso of Ostana, a village of 88 inhabitants in the upper Po Valley, which is experimenting with a model of culturally based regeneration integrating community welfare, sustainable tourism and the enhancement of local heritage, through to the Cooperativa Linfa in the Brescian valleys, engaged in the integration of neighbourhood services and the refurbishment of disused spaces — confirms that the conditions of success identified are not tied to irreproducible local specificities but constitute a methodological reference transferable to contexts of analogous marginality, provided that the necessary design capacities and support networks are present.

5.2 TOURISM-BASED REUSE: TEMPORARY DWELLING AND THE *ALBERGO DIFFUSO*

The reuse of abandoned built heritage through forms of tourist hospitality represents one of the most widespread and most debated strategies in Italian inner areas. Among the various models elaborated, the albergo diffuso constitutes the most consolidated and most regulated case: it consists in the recovery of disused historic buildings in order to designate them as a unitary accommodation facility which, although distributed across several non-contiguous properties, offers centralised hotel services. As defined by the Friulian legislation that formalised the concept (Regional Law 2/2002), the model is characterised by the horizontal distribution of rooms, unitary management, the maintenance of the typological characteristics of the historic buildings and integration with local production and traditions, configuring an accommodation offer structurally distinct both from the traditional hotel and from the ordinary holiday home. The Associazione Nazionale Alberghi Diffusi records (2023) approximately 150 operational facilities in 18 regions, concentrated predominantly in Alpine, Apennine and historic contexts of the centre and south, testifying to a significant and geographically uneven diffusion. The model responds to a growing tourist demand oriented towards authentic and immersive experiences, remote from mass tourism. From this perspective, value derives not solely from the overnight stay as a service in itself, but from the capacity to engage the visitor in a personal and memorable manner (Pine and Gilmore, 1998), generating a sense of temporary belonging to a community and to a place that mass tourism is

unable to offer.

There exist, however, profound differences between alberghi diffusi that effectively contribute to the vitality of local communities and those which, although recovering buildings, generate forms of extractive touristification that exclude residents and transform places into scenographic landscapes devoid of stable community life, replicating on a smaller scale the critical dynamics already discussed in Chapter 4.

The case of Castel del Giudice, a small municipality of Alto Molise classified by the SNAI as ultra-peripheral and reduced from 1,200 to approximately 300 inhabitants over seventy years, represents one of the most fully documented examples of territorial revitalisation through tourism in Italian inner areas.

The project, promoted from the early 2000s by the municipal administration under the leadership of mayor Lino Gentile — a figure who has been able to construct and maintain a long-term strategic vision — has been articulated in three successive phases: the construction of territorial attractiveness through the recovery of the footpath network and the creation of an organic mountain apple orchard with a territorial brand (Melise); the realisation of the Albergo Diffuso Borgotufi, inaugurated in 2016 with 30 rooms distributed across restored historic buildings and entrusted under a thirty-year concession to a private operator, with the Municipality retaining ownership of the properties according to a public–private model that transfers operational risk to the private party while preserving public control over the heritage; and the development of complementary activities, among them a craft brewery (Malto Lento) and a restaurant listed in the Michelin Guide, which has contributed to broadening and diversifying the territorial offer. The total investment, estimated at approximately 8 million euros with a prevalence of public funds, has generated overall employment of approximately 40 people (a significant figure for a municipality of that size), contributing to making Castel del Giudice one of the very few Italian ultra-peripheral municipalities to have recorded demographic growth over the past decade: from 320 inhabitants in 2011 to approximately 370 in 2023, through the combined effect of the return of emigrants, the arrival of new residents attracted by quality of life, and the progressive stabilisation of seasonal workers.

Figure 29.
Castel del Giudice; Borgotufi (top right and bottom left); **Melise** (bottom right).
Source: Latitudeslife.

Even this case of relative success, however, evidences structural risks that merit critical attention. Seasonal tourist pressure generates dynamics whereby commercial activities are oriented towards external users rather than towards residential needs, reproducing in attenuated form the processes of touristification described in Chapter 4 and raising questions as to the model's capacity to maintain a sustainable balance between tourist function and stable residency. The tourist designation of a share of the recovered buildings simultaneously reduces the housing supply available to potential new residents, risking a contraction of the very demographic base that the project has contributed to building over time. As regards governance, the model presents, finally, a structural fragility linked to the concentration of strategic vision in a narrow number of promoting parties — a fragility which may nonetheless be progressively overcome through the construction of a distributed leadership and the consolidation of participatory decision-making practices, transforming an initially centralised leadership into a collective resource rooted in the local community.

The case of Sextantio at Santo Stefano di Sessanio, introduced previously (see Geographies of touristification: empirical evidence in Italian contexts), offers an illuminating point of comparison regarding the structural contradictions of the model. From the standpoint of the conservation of architectural heritage the operation is indisputably well executed and has generated international renown for an otherwise unknown

place; the building recovery, however, has not translated into a corresponding demographic and social revitalisation: Santo Stefano continues to lose population, falling from 130 inhabitants in 2004 to the present 115, while the progressive acquisition of buildings has drastically reduced the housing supply for residents and potential new inhabitants, fuelling a widespread perception of symbolic expropriation of the village by an external private party.

Figure 30.
Santo Stefano di Sessanio (left)
Source: Parco Nazionale Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga;
Santo Stefano di Sessanio, Sextantio (right)
Source: Sextantio.

The Sextantio case exemplifies with particular clarity what is termed a cathedral in the desert: an operation of the highest quality but substantially disconnected from the surrounding territory, incapable of generating broader processes of endogenous development, whose structural fragility was rendered evident both by the 2009 earthquake and by the COVID-19 pandemic, which demonstrated how dependence upon a single private party — however visionary — may translate into a concrete vulnerability difficult for public policy to govern.

The comparative analysis of the examples reported, read in the light of the literature on processes of touristification in inner areas, makes it possible to identify certain recurrent conditions in those alberghi diffusi that effectively contribute to territorial revitalisation. In the first place, local ownership or governance of the recovered properties increases the probability of territorial integration relative to wholly private and external models. Alongside this stands the need for gradual growth, which allows for progressive community assimilation while avoiding traumatic ruptures in existing social fabrics, while the presence of spaces and services accessible to residents as well reduces the separation between tourist space and community space, preserving that ordinary vitality without which the village risks being transformed into a stage set. Contributing decisively, finally, are active municipal policies for the protection of residency (through constraints on the ratio between tourist and residential units and the regulation of short-term lets) which mitigate the risks of excluding local populations. It should be underlined that alongside the albergo diffuso model, alternative forms of tourist reuse are emerging (residences for remote workers, community hospitality managed directly by residents, dispersed agritourism) which might represent approaches less exposed to the risks of exclusionary touristification, generating longer stays and a greater integration with the ordinary life of places.

Figure 31.
Geographical distribution of alberghi diffusi in Italy by region.
Source: elaboration by the author on data from the Associazione Nazionale Alberghi Diffusi, 2014.

5.3 CULTURALLY AND CREATIVELY BASED REUSE

The reuse of abandoned heritage through cultural and creative projects represents a growing strategy in Italian and European inner areas, one situated within a broader debate on creative cities and the economy of culture (Landry, 2000; Florida,

2002), originally elaborated with reference to urban contexts and progressively extended to marginal territories as well. The underlying rationale is that culture, understood broadly as a set of artistic, creative, heritage and performative activities, may act as a catalyst of territorial regeneration through multiple mechanisms, among them the attraction of visitors, artists and cultural operators, the symbolic reactivation that transforms the perception of places from spaces of abandonment into laboratories of experimentation, community mobilisation through participatory processes, and the generation of direct and induced employment.

Nevertheless, as the analysis of the cases will show, cultural projects present significant structural risks: they may generate forms of cultural gentrification that progressively exclude the original populations; they may be configured as ephemeral interventions devoid of lasting legacies; and they may fuel rhetorics of regeneration without addressing the structural causes of marginalisation.

Farm Cultural Park, established at Favara in the province of Agrigento in Sicily in 2010 on the initiative of Andrea Bartoli and Florinda Saieva (both natives of the Agrigentine municipality who had returned with the explicit intention of contributing to the regeneration of their place of origin), represents one of the most fully documented cases of cultural regeneration in a context of decline.

Figure 32.
Farm Cultural Park, Favara.
Source: farmculturalpark

The project originates in the recovery of seven abandoned historic buildings in the Cortile Bentivegna, progressively transformed into a contemporary art exhibition space, artists' residencies, a school of architecture for children, a boutique hotel and design-oriented commercial spaces, configuring a multifunctional cultural ecosystem distinguished by the hybrid economic model adopted: with commercial revenue at 60%, private sponsorship at 25% and occasional public contributions at 15%, Farm has attained a substantial financial autonomy that differentiates it structurally from many cultural projects in marginal areas dependent upon recurrent funding (Bartoli and Saieva, 2015).

The impacts generated have been significant across several dimensions. In urban terms, regeneration by contagion has produced, in the thirteen years following its opening, the recovery of over 50 abandoned buildings in the historic centre by private parties, the opening of approximately 15 new commercial activities and an estimated increase in property values of between 200 and 300%. International visibility has brought approximately 25,000 visitors annually to Favara, and it is estimated that some 30 to 40 people under 40 have relocated or returned, attracted by the cultural ecosystem generated.

The most significant impact, though perhaps the least quantifiable, concerns the transformation of the local collective imagination: the project has demonstrated that it was possible to produce ambitious, high-quality initiatives even in a context perceived as peripheral and marginal, generating an effect of collective empowerment that has reduced fatalism and opened up spaces for shared design endeavour.

The critical issues nonetheless remain profound and merit analytical attention. The increase in property values has rendered the historic centre progressively inaccessible for low-income segments of the population, configuring processes of cultural gentrification in which aesthetic improvement translates into socio-economic exclusion, while regeneration has remained territorially concentrated within the perimeter of the historic centre, leaving the more peripheral areas, in which the majority of the population resides, in conditions of substantially unaltered blight. In employment terms, the figures remain marginal relative to the overall scale of local unemployment, and the project

displays that structural fragility deriving from dependence upon its founders already highlighted in the analysis of community cooperatives, with analogous risks for long-term continuity.

The case of Matera 2019, European Capital of Culture, permits reflection on a radically different scale, that of major cultural events as engines of territorial development. The Lucanian city has recorded an extraordinary tourist transformation, rising from 153,000 visitors annually in 2014 to approximately 900,000 in 2023, with a peak of 1.67 million in the Capital year alone, thanks to infrastructural investment exceeding 100 million euros and to an international visibility that has repositioned Matera as one of the most visited destinations in the Mezzogiorno (Fondazione Matera Basilicata 2019, 2021).

The medium-term balance sheet, however, reveals profound contradictions: the Sassi are today almost completely touristified, with less than 5% of buildings inhabited by permanent residents, while residents have been progressively displaced by exponential increases in property values (estimated at between 300 and 500% between 2010 and 2020) and by the transformation of dwellings into short-term tourist lets. The employment generated is predominantly seasonal and precarious, the positive spillovers have been concentrated almost exclusively upon the city without radiating out to the surrounding regional territory, and the long-term financial sustainability of the cultural facilities created remains uncertain, confirming the frequent distance between the legacy promised by major cultural events and that actually realised (Ponzini and Nastasi, 2011; Richards and Palmer, 2010).[15]

The cases examined, notwithstanding their diversity of scale, context and management model, share certain recurrent structural conditions in the more successful experiences. Genuine community integration, in which the community assumes the role of co-producer rather than of mere recipient, reduces the risk of gentrification and increases sustainability over time, while the combination of culture, local productive economy and welfare services produces more structural impacts than purely cultural projects, confirming that the cultural dimension alone is not sufficient to trigger processes of lasting revitalisation. Appropriate scale and long timescales (incremental projects with decade-long horizons rather than major events concentrated within single seasons) moreover demonstrate a greater capacity to generate concrete territorial legacies, just as hybrid public–private–community governance, which combines design capacity, public resources and social rootedness, appears the most effective model for avoiding both dependence upon public funding and the extractive drift of wholly private projects.

5.4 PRODUCTIVELY AND INDUSTRIALLY BASED REUSE

The reuse of disused productive buildings and complexes represents a specific challenge and opportunity for inner areas that have experienced processes of deindustrialisation. As already noted, many Alpine and Apennine areas developed between the 1950s and the 1990s forms of dispersed industrialisation based upon local resources or upon specialised manufacturing districts, whose progressive crisis — through global competition, technological obsolescence and relocation — has left a significant stock of disused sheds, workshops, warehouses and hydroelectric plants. Unlike residential or ecclesiastical heritage, these buildings present specific typological characteristics (large undivided volumes, robust load-bearing structures, strategic locations, functional flexibility) which have favoured, in urban contexts, processes of reuse for creative and innovative productive functions, raising the question of whether such models may be transferred to marginal contexts, generating employment opportunities and attractiveness for new populations.

The Progetto Manifattura in Rovereto, the conversion of a former tobacco factory of approximately 25,000 m² into a hub for sustainable innovation, represents one of the most fully documented and articulated cases of industrial productive reuse in Italian mountain areas. Managed by Trentino Sviluppo, an agency of the Autonomous Province of Trento, the project accommodates enterprises, start-ups and research bodies operating in the sectors of circular economy, intelligent building, sustainable mobility, clean energy and quality of life.

15 With regard to the legacy of major cultural events, the literature has highlighted the frequent gap between stated objectives and lasting structural effects. In the case of Matera, the assessments carried out by the Matera Basilicata 2019 Foundation note positive impacts on tourism and visibility, but also point to limitations in the geographical distribution of the benefits and in the sustainability of the cultural legacy.

Figure 33.
Progetto Manifattura, Rovereto.
Source: progettomanifattura

Promoted from 2009 with a total investment of approximately 60 million euros, the project has transformed the industrial building into a Green Innovation Factory integrating coworking spaces, laboratories and offices designated for start-ups and innovative enterprises in green sectors, a certified incubator, a research centre in partnership with the University of Trento and the Fondazione Bruno Kessler, as well as services open to the city as a whole. In terms of environmental sustainability, the building was designed to reduce significantly (by approximately 85%) its CO□ impact and primary energy consumption, with integrated photovoltaic systems, a green roof and local materials, configuring itself as a demonstrator of the very green technologies that the enterprises it houses develop. As at 2023 the Manifattura accommodated approximately 80 organisations employing in total approximately 600 people, a figure that appears significant relative to the 200 posts lost with the closure of the original factory, with the added value of more highly qualified employment and of an innovative ecosystem that has generated positive agglomeration effects, favouring the emergence of partnerships between resident enterprises, universities and research centres.

The Rovereto case nonetheless evidences the structural limits of the model when projected onto contexts of greater marginality: the initial investment, made possible by the exceptional financial capacity of the Autonomous Province of Trento, raises serious questions as to replicability in regions with fewer resources.[16] As regards territorial integration, many of the resident enterprises maintain markets and networks predominantly external to Trentino, with limited integration into traditional local productive chains. Moreover, as highlighted by local trade union organisations, an unresolved tension persists between the innovative ecosystem of the Manifattura and the traditional industrial fabric of the Vallagarina, which continues to face processes of deindustrialisation not compensated by the growth of the technology hub. Its success has finally contributed to processes of gentrification in the surrounding quarter, with an increase in property values and the partial exclusion of the original populations, replicating dynamics already observed in the cases of cultural reuse analysed in the preceding section.

On a radically different scale from Rovereto, the literature on processes of innovation in inner areas documents experiences of the recovery of disused productive buildings such as former sawmills, artisanal workshops and small manufacturing plants, transformed into spaces of digital fabrication and coworking by groups of young professionals, frequently natives of the territory or attracted by the quality of Alpine and Apennine life. These cases, notwithstanding their heterogeneity, share certain recurrent characteristics: contained investments frequently realised through self-build, annual budgets in the order of tens of thousands of euros, a narrow nucleus of promoters combining skills in design, digital craft and entrepreneurial management, and an offer combining digital fabrication with traditional local artisanal knowledge. The most significant results concern the stabilisation of small groups of qualified professionals who would otherwise have had to emigrate, and the generation of

16 Thanks to the extensive financial autonomy guaranteed by its Special Statute, the Autonomous Province of Trento operates within a more favourable context in terms of public resources than ordinary regions; this raises questions regarding the transferability of territorially costly innovation models, such as Manifattura, particularly in the inland areas of Southern Italy. For further information on these territorial asymmetries, see Viesti (2021).

innovation within certain local supply chains — from the digital design of products in local materials to experimentation with components for the maintenance of historic built heritage. The structural fragility of these experiences nonetheless remains marked: narrow economic margins, dependence upon a restricted nucleus of promoters assuming multiple roles, and significant vulnerability to external shocks limit their long-term sustainability, configuring a model that is of interest but still far from full operational maturity.

Looking across the cases analysed, in the light of the experiences of productive reuse documented in the literature on inner areas, it is possible to outline a critical assessment of the model as a strategy of territorial revitalisation. The potential is real and is structurally distinct from that of tourist reuse: innovative productive reuse generates more highly qualified and stable employment, with less seasonality, and is capable of triggering processes of innovation within traditional local supply chains where it connects organically with artisanal knowledge and specific territorial resources, generating that cross-fertilisation between tradition and innovation which represents one of the most promising development trajectories for inner areas. The structural limits nonetheless remain significant: it emerges from the cases analysed that all depend upon the presence of advanced technical skills combined with a motivation to operate in contexts of marginality, a combination that is rare and difficult to construct artificially through public policy; the risk of operating as innovative enclaves disconnected from the local economy is concrete in the absence of explicit mechanisms of intermediation with traditional supply chains; and geographical transferability is conditioned by prerequisites — proximity to universities, infrastructural accessibility, digital connectivity — which not all peripheral contexts can guarantee. If productive reuse is effectively to take root in inner areas, what is required is initial public investment configured as enabling rather than as permanent subsidy, connection with supra-local networks of fab labs and innovative clusters, specialisation in niches coherent with specific territorial characteristics, and coherent embedding within broader territorial strategies combining productive innovation with housing policies, services and mobility.

5.5 TOWARDS AN INTERPRETIVE FRAMEWORK FOR INNER AREAS: REFLECTIONS ON THE TRANSFERABILITY OF MODELS

The comparative analysis of the four typologies of reuse of abandoned heritage conducted in this chapter does not intend to propose itself as an exhaustive survey of experiences, but rather to construct an interpretive framework enabling assessment of the conditions of transferability of these models to specific contexts of marginality, with particular reference to the inner areas of Abruzzo and to the Basso Sangro-Trigno.

Through systematic comparison of the cases examined, certain cross-cutting convergences emerge that transcend the specificities of the individual models. The presence of a project-oriented social capital, understood as a combination of technical skills, strategic vision and determination to operate in contexts of marginality, appears a necessary condition in all the typologies analysed, configuring itself as a discriminating variable not uniformly distributed across territories and difficult to construct artificially through public intervention. The multifunctionality of provision increases resilience relative to monofunctional initiatives, while territorial rootedness combined with strong connections to extra-local networks, skills and markets characterises the most sustainable projects, configuring an open localism that avoids autarkic drift. Enabling public support in the start-up phase, oriented towards creating the conditions for progressive autonomy rather than towards guaranteeing permanent subsidies, finally favours trajectories of greater long-term sustainability.

Alongside these convergences, the models analysed evidence significant divergences that configure structural dilemmas not easily resolved and which public policies ought to address explicitly rather than ignore. The economically most sustainable models tend to exclude low-income local populations, whereas the most inclusive models struggle to attain economic autonomy; analogously, tourist reuse generates visibility and resources but risks producing forms of exclusionary touristification, whereas prioritising stable residency limits tourist economic potential; and innovative productive reuse attracts qualified skills but risks disconnection from traditional local economies.

Figure 34. The cross-cutting convergences between the reuse models. Source: elaboration by the author

These tensions admit of no universal solutions but require contextualised choices dependent upon the specific characteristics of each territory, and which public policies ought to address explicitly rather than ignore.

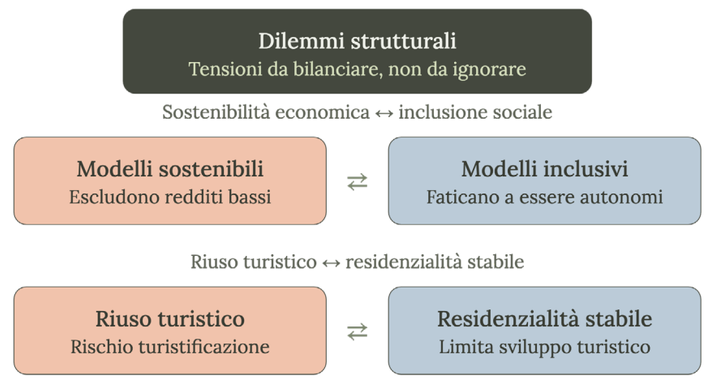
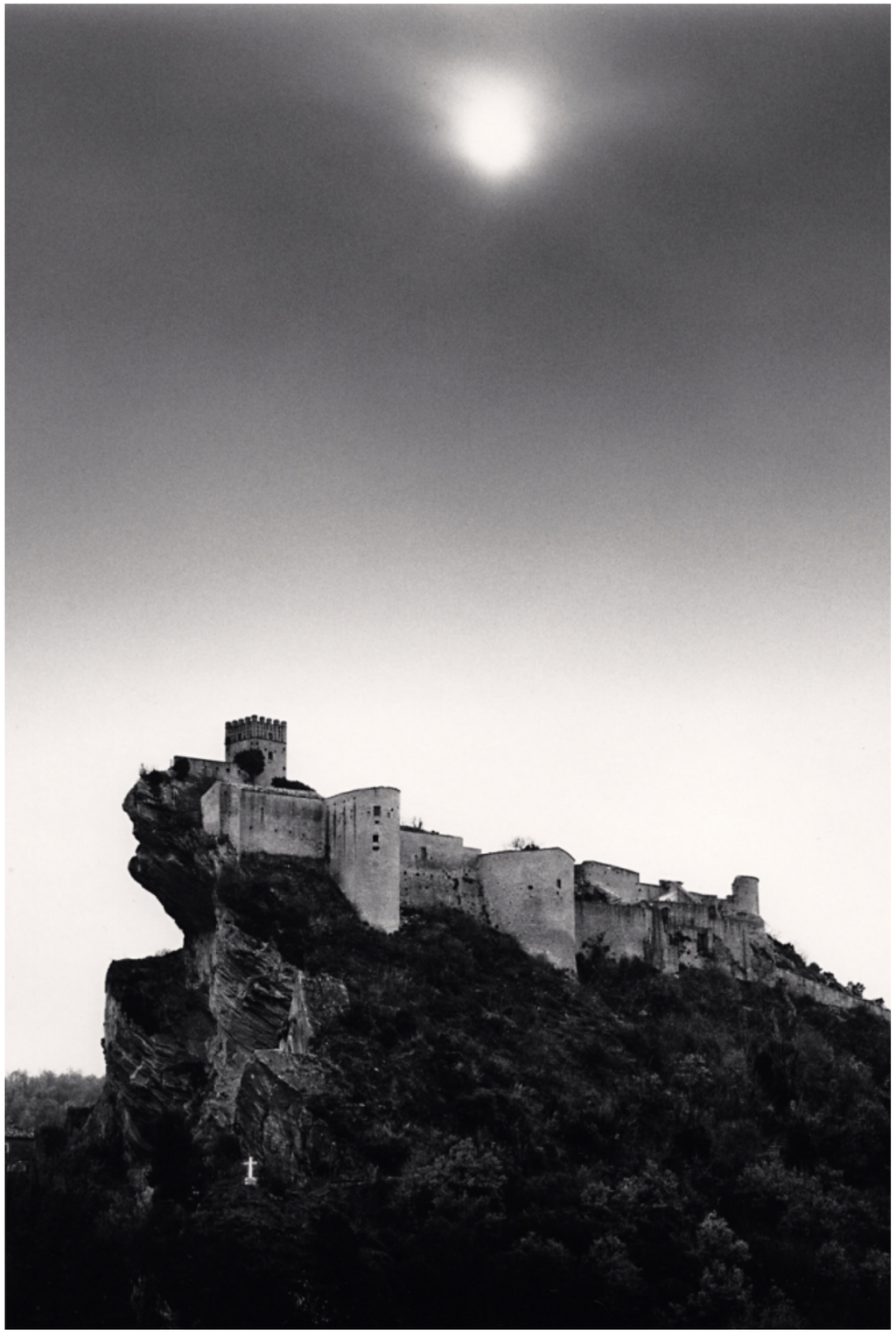


Figure 35. The structural dilemmas between the reuse models. Source: elaboration by the author.

As regards methodological transferability, the analysis suggests that none of the models examined is applicable in a direct and uncritical form to contexts of marginality other than those in which it originated, but that each offers analytically significant elements for the construction of reuse strategies adapted to local specificities. In particular, the central question that the research will have to address concerns not which model to replicate in the Basso Sangro-Trigno, but rather which elements of each model are significant for the specificities of the territory. It is in this direction that the interpretive framework elaborated in this chapter will find its operational application.



PART THREE

THE INNER AREAS OF ABRUZZO AND THE BASSO SANGRO - TRIGNO

On the preceding page *Midday Sun*, Roccascalegna Castle, Abruzzo, Italy.
Photograph by M. Kenna, 2016

The passage from the theoretical-comparative dimension to the applied one requires, however, a change of scale and of perspective: the enabling conditions identified cannot be assessed in the abstract, but exist only within concrete territories, with their physical geographies, their historical stratifications, their institutional capacities and their communities, where variables that the literature treats separately (morphologies of abandonment, ownership regimes, housing demand, administrative capacities) present themselves interwoven and indivisible.

For this reason the research now shifts its attention to the context within which it has chosen to test itself: the inner areas of Abruzzo and, within them, the area of the Basso Sangro-Trigno. The choice is not incidental. The area, composed of thirty-eight municipalities of the province of Chieti according to the most recent delimitation[1], is the first prototype area of the National Strategy for Inner Areas in Abruzzo and condenses in emblematic form the dynamics reconstructed in the preceding chapters: a long-term depopulation that has eroded the demographic base to critical thresholds; the progressive thinning-out of services; a widespread stock of disused built heritage largely devoid of formal protection; and, at the same time, an environmental and landscape capital of exceptional value, situated between the eastern Maiella and the valleys of the Sangro and the Trigno. This is, in other words, a territory in which the paradox described in Chapter 4 — empty houses and unmet housing demand — and the dilemmas of transferability of the reuse models discussed in the preceding chapter assume their maximum empirical evidence.

The two chapters composing Part III progressively prepare the ground for the experimentation. Chapter 6 reconstructs the physical, social and economic geography of the Basso Sangro-Trigno, setting out the territorial coordinates within which the research's operational question is to be situated; Chapter 7 analyses the typologies and morphologies of abandonment in inner Abruzzo and in the study area, verifying in the field the systematisation proposed in Chapter 3. It is within this

1 The 2021–2027 SNAI programme identified thirty-seven municipalities in the Basso Sangro-Trigno area; the Area Strategy (PSNAI, July 2025) updated the boundaries to include thirty-eight municipalities.

trajectory of progressive approach - from the national and European framework, to the region, to the inner area, and finally to the municipality of Colledimacine, where the methodology will be applied and validated in Part IV - that the questions matured in the analysis of reuse practices will find an operational formulation: which enabling conditions are already present or may be constructed within the territory, which disused heritage lends itself to which forms of reactivation, and which local actors possess or may develop the necessary project-oriented social capital.

6. THE BASSO SANGRO-TRIGNO: A GEOGRAPHY OF THE MARGIN

In the Abruzzo region, within the framework of the National Strategy for Inner Areas, four project areas were identified from 2015 onwards: Val Fino-Vestina, Valle Subequana-Gran Sasso, Valle Giovenco-Roveto, and Basso Sangro-Trigno. To these was added in 2016 the Alto Aterno-Gran Sasso Laga area and, subsequently, in 2022, the inner areas of Piana del Cavaliere Alto Liri and Valle del Sagittario e dell'Alto Sangro. Of a total of 305 municipalities, as many as 230 are classified as inner areas, of which 115 fall within the categories of peripheral and ultra-peripheral area (Fig. 18). Such municipalities are concentrated predominantly in the mountain zones of the Apennine ridge (Dipartimento per le Politiche di Coesione e per il Sud – Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri). Moreover, in 253 of them the resident population is below 5,000 (ISTAT, Censimento permanente della popolazione – Abruzzo, May 2024). In the 2021–2027 programming cycle, the seven inner areas of Abruzzo accommodate within their territory a resident population totalling 464,843 inhabitants, equivalent to 37% of the entire regional population. In line with the evolution of the National Strategy for Inner Areas and with the objective of updating the delimitation of the municipalities involved, the regional government took note of the approval of the National Strategic Plan for Inner Areas (PSNAI), which occurred during the session of 9 April 2025 of the Cabina di Regia per lo Sviluppo delle Aree Interne (Steering Committee for the Development of Inner Areas), at which the new re-delimitation of the two inner areas "Gran Sasso - Valle Subequana" and "Basso Sangro - Trigno" was adopted, as ordered by the Dipartimento per le Politiche di Coesione e per il Mezzogiorno, providing for the inclusion, respectively, of the municipalities of Barisciano and Bomba.

It is within this context that the Basso Sangro-Trigno Area is situated, a significant expression of a geography of the margin, in which the demographic dynamics, infrastructural deficiencies and socio-economic fragilities proper to Italian inner areas intersect, configuring it as an emblematic territorial context for the analysis of the critical issues and opportunities bound up with processes of territorial rebalancing.

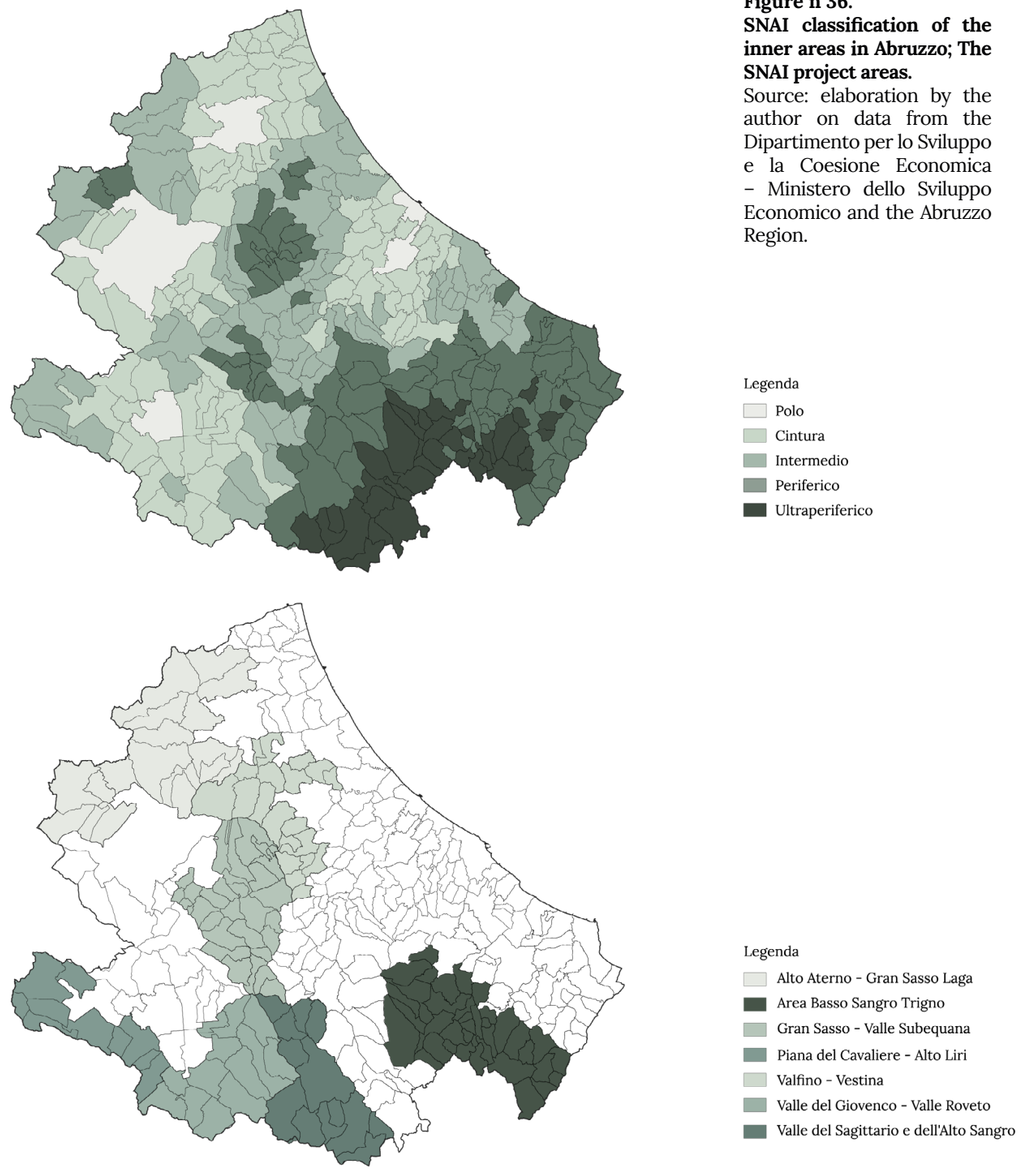


Figure n 36.
SNAI classification of the inner areas in Abruzzo; The SNAI project areas.
Source: elaboration by the author on data from the Dipartimento per lo Sviluppo e la Coesione Economica – Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico and the Abruzzo Region.

6.1 PHYSICAL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS

Composition and morphological characteristics

The Basso Sangro-Trigno area is one of the seventy-two pilot areas identified by the National Strategy for Inner Areas and the first prototype area of the Abruzzo Region, identified by the Regional Executive in 2015 for the 2014–2020 programming cycle.

The area is composed of 38 municipalities[2] belonging to the province of Chieti, located between the eastern Maiella, the river Sangro and the territory of the Alto Vastese between the rivers Trigno and Treste. In settlement terms, 21,430 inhabitants live in this area (ISTAT, 2025), 5.7 per cent of the population of the province of Chieti and 1.7 per cent of that of the region.

The area extends over a surface of 859 km² and presents a geographical and morphological configuration articulated into three sub-areas:

1. the Aventino (1 in Fig. 37), set between the eastern slope of the Maiella National Park and the river Aventino itself, comprising the municipalities of Civitella Messer Raimondo, Colledimacine, Fara San Martino, Gessopalena, Lama dei Peligni, Lettopalena, Palena, Palombaro, Roccascalegna, Taranta Peligna, Torricella Peligna;
2. the Sangro (2 in Fig. 37), along the valley of the river of the same name, with the municipalities of Borrello, Civitaluparella, Colledimezzo, Fallo, Gamberale, Montebello sul Sangro, Monteferrante, Montelapiano, Montenerodomo, Pennadomo, Pietraferrazzana, Pizzoferrato, Quadri, Roio del Sangro, Rosello, Villa Santa Maria;
3. the Alto Vastese (3 in Fig. 37), situated between the rivers Trigno and Treste, which includes the municipalities of Carunchio, Castelguidone, Castiglione Messer Marino, Celenza sul Trigno, Fraine, Montazzoli, Roccaspinalveti, San Giovanni Lipioni, Schiavi d'Abruzzo, Torrebruna.

2 Bomba, Borrello, Carunchio, Castelguidone, Castiglione Messer Marino, Celenza sul Trigno, Civitaluparella, Civitella Messer Raimondo, Colledimacine, Colledimezzo, Fallo, Fara San Martino, Fraine, Gamberale, Gessopalena, Lama dei Peligni, Lettopalena, Montazzoli, Montebello sul Sangro, Monteferrante, Montelapiano, Montenerodomo, Palena, Palombaro, Pennadomo, Pietraferrazzana, Pizzoferrato, Quadri, Roccascalegna, Roccaspinalveti, Roio del Sangro, Rosello, San Giovanni Lipioni, Schiavi di Abruzzo, Taranta Peligna, Torrebruna, Torricella Peligna e Villa Santa Maria.

Figure n 37.
Contextual framing of the Basso Sangro-Trigno Area. Framing map of the three sub-areas.
Source: elaboration by the author on GIS data.

The territory presents a predominantly hilly and mountainous conformation, with significant variations in altitude. Elevations range from the 336 metres above sea level of the municipality of Villa Santa Maria, situated in the Sangro sub-area, to the 1,343 metres of the municipality of Gamberale, located in the mountainous hinterland of the same sub-area, at the western margins of the area.

From an environmental standpoint, the area is distinguished by its high naturalistic value, with over 32 per cent of the territory subject to a protection regime.

Specifically, the territory comprises portions of the Maiella National Park, recognised as a UNESCO Geopark since 2021; twelve Sites of Community Importance (SCIs) included in the Natura 2000 Network; and two regional nature reserves, those of Borrello and Rosello.

To these are added landscape elements of particular value, such as the natural waterfalls of Borrello, the highest in the Apennines, and the Grotta del Cavallone, a cave of karstic origin characterised by alabastrine concretions that enrich its interior walls.

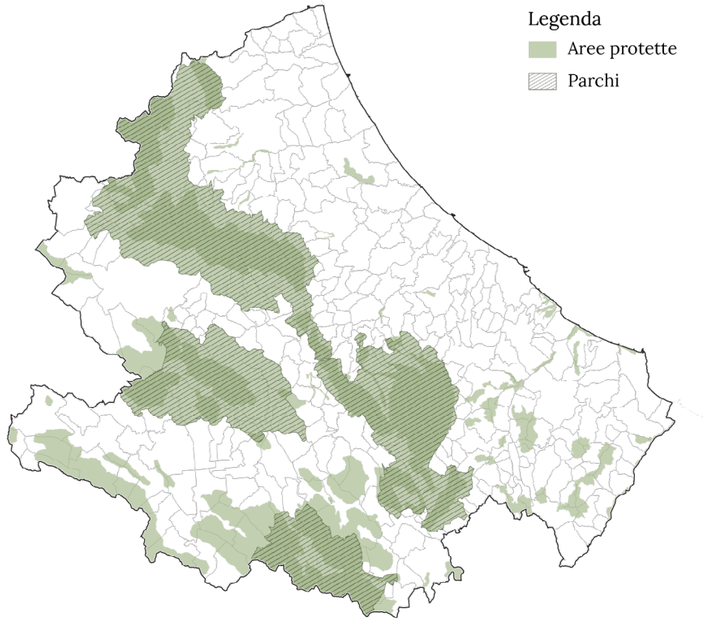


Figure n 38.
Protected areas, nature reserves and Sites of Community Importance in Abruzzo. Thematic map of protected areas and regional parks.
Source: elaboration by the author on GIS data.

The rivers Sangro, Aventino and Trigno, among the principal watercourses of the Abruzzo Region, represent the territory's principal ecological corridors, performing a fundamental role in the connection of ecosystems and in the conservation of biodiversity.

The vegetational context is likewise of great significance, with the presence of species such as the silver fir, extremely rare in the central Apennines.

The forest heritage includes species typical of mixed woodland, among them beech, yew, hornbeam, lime and other native species.

Taken as a whole, the landscape is configured as a widespread environmental resource of great value, accessible through an articulated network of naturalistic and hiking routes.

From the standpoint of settlement patterns, the Basso Sangro-Trigno is configured as a complex territorial system, an expression of historical stratification, of the morphology of the territory and of social and economic dynamics.

It is a context composed of natural landscapes and rural settlements, which testify to an articulated evolution strongly bound up with the environmental and cultural characteristics of the area.

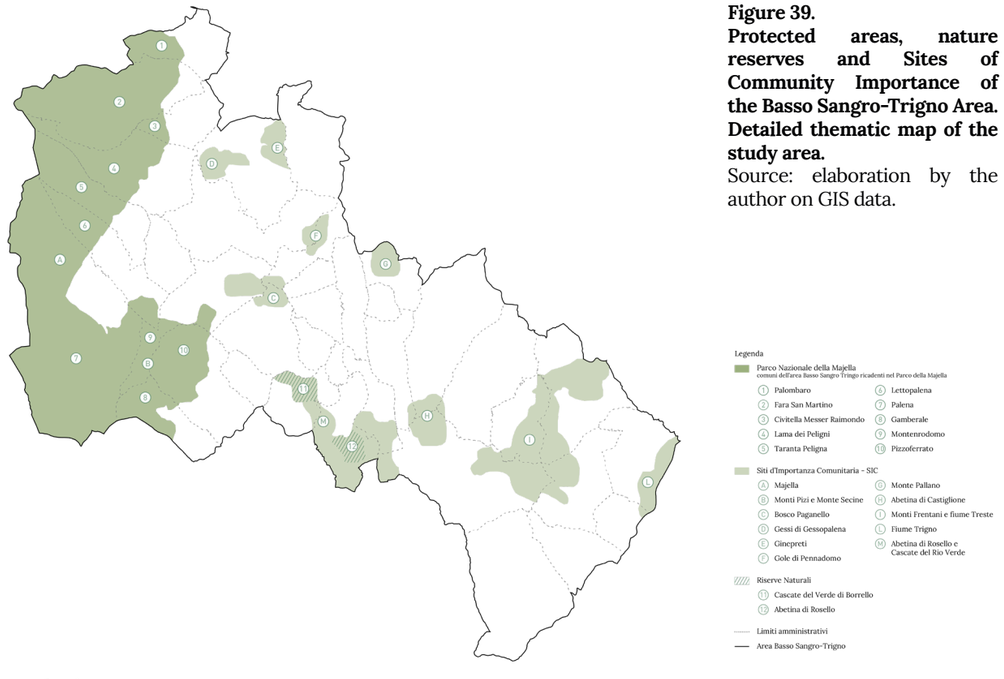


Figure 39.
Protected areas, nature reserves and Sites of Community Importance of the Basso Sangro-Trigno Area. Detailed thematic map of the study area.
Source: elaboration by the author on GIS data.

Population

The Basso Sangro-Trigno area has a total population of 21,430 inhabitants (ISTAT, 2025), equivalent to 5.7 per cent of the population resident in the province of Chieti.

In nine municipalities the population exceeds 1,000 inhabitants, with a maximum of 1,447 inhabitants recorded in the municipality of Castiglione Messer Marino; in ten municipalities the population lies between 501 and 999 inhabitants, while in eighteen municipalities it stands below 500. The minimum value is recorded in the municipality of Montelapiano, with barely 67 residents (ISTAT, 2025).

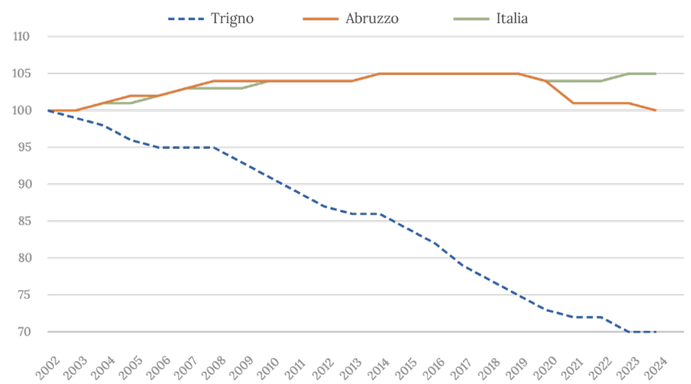


Figure n 40.
Trend of the resident population (2002–2024) in Italy, in Abruzzo and in the Basso Sangro-Trigno Inner Area. Graph of comparative demographic trends.
Source: elaboration by the author on ISTAT data.

Over the past twenty years, the area has recorded a significant demographic contraction, equal to 30.2 per cent, corresponding to an overall loss of 9,411 inhabitants.
This situation has affected all the municipalities of the area in a widespread manner, with rates of decline ranging between -54 and -15 per cent. This demographic trend is situated within a broader and by now consolidated process of depopulation that characterises the Basso Sangro-Trigno area, strongly influenced by migratory phenomena towards the valley-floor urban centres and the coastal areas.

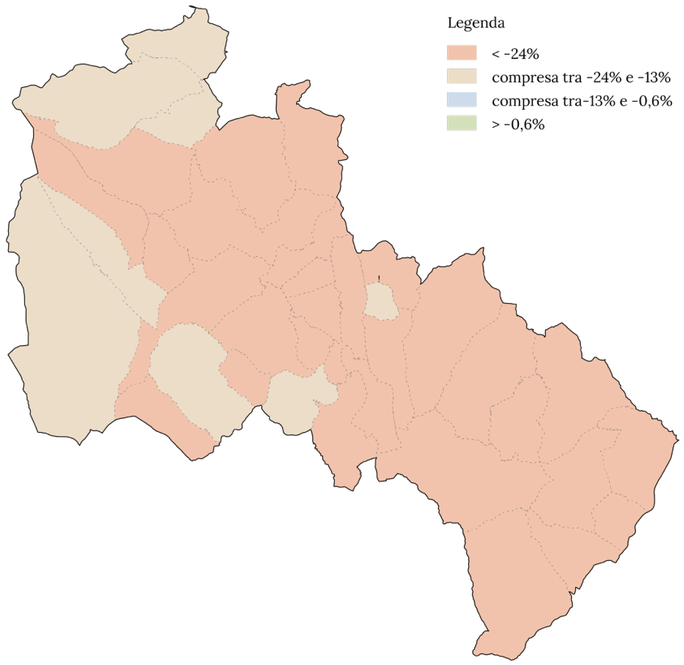


Figure n 41. Percentage variation of the population (2002–2024). Thematic map of demographic variation by municipality. Source: elaboration by the author on ISTAT data.

The combination of a scarcity of essential services and limited employment opportunities, together with the selective migration of young people (who rarely return to their places of origin after obtaining their qualifications), has determined a severe impoverishment of local human capital. This process determines, among other effects, a significant ageing of the resident population, with a proportion of elderly people equal to 32%, appreciably higher than both the regional average (23.4%) and the national average for inner areas (21.2%). This imbalance impacts negatively upon the social and economic resilience of the territory, contributing to a further reduction in the capacity of local communities for oversight and reproduction. The intensification of outward migratory flows, directed predominantly towards the large urban centres and abroad, is set against inward settlement dynamics that are scarcely significant and wholly insufficient to compensate for the negative migration balance. This demographic imbalance accentuates the process of settlement thinning-out and further weakens the capacities for territorial resilience.
The population density of the area proves significantly lower than the regional average, standing at 24.95 inhabitants per km² against Abruzzo's 117.1 inhabitants per km² (ISTAT, 2024).

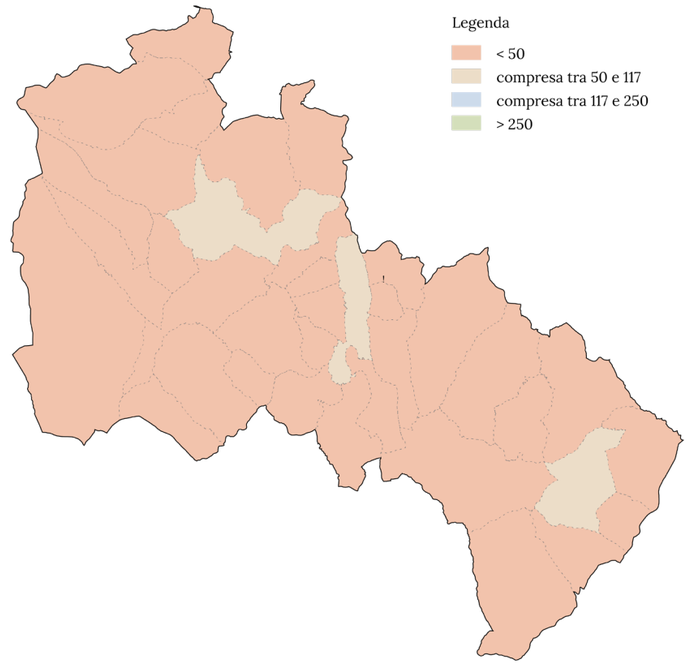
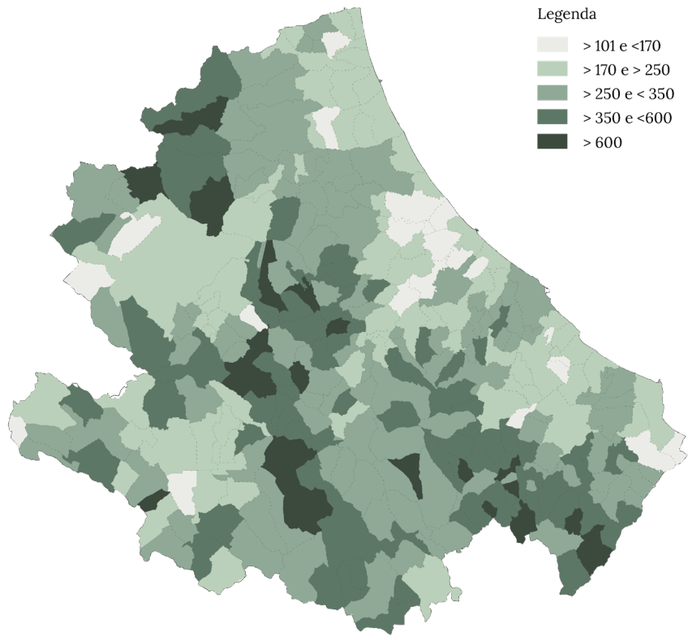


Figure n 42. Population density 2024 (inhabitants per km²). Thematic map of population density by municipality. Source: elaboration by the author on ISTAT data.

The old-age index[3] has grown over the past five years and stands at 422.8 in 2024, in fact far above the regional (220) and national (200) averages. The municipalities where the phenomenon assumes dramatic proportions are Colledimacine, Fraine, Rosello and San Giovanni Lipioni. This figure reflects both the ageing of the population and the progressive reduction in the birth rate, a phenomenon common to many Italian contexts (ISTAT, 2024).

3 The old-age index is the ratio of the population aged 65 and over to the population aged 0–14, multiplied by 100 (ISTAT).

Figure n 43.
Old-age index in Abruzzo (data as at 2024). Thematic map of the old-age index at regional scale.
Source: elaboration by the author on GIS data.



As at 2024, the presence of foreign nationals in the area stands at 993 residents, equal to 4.6 per cent of the total population, a figure lower than both the regional average, 6.9 per cent, and the national one, 9 per cent (ISTAT, 2024).

The municipalities in which the incidence of the foreign population exceeds the regional average are Schiavi di Abruzzo (8.3%), Torricella Peligna (8.8%), Roio del Sangro (11.1%), Carunchio (11.6%) and Palombaro (13.8%). By contrast, in the municipalities of Lettopalena, Pietraferrazzana, Castiglione Messer Marino and Pennadomo the foreign presence is almost nil (Table 14).

Education

The educational levels of the population evidence certain critical issues. The percentage of residents aged between 25 and 64 in possession of an upper secondary qualification stands at 17.4 per cent, a value significantly below the regional and national averages, respectively 24.6 per cent and 22.5 per cent.

Table 14.
Population density 2024 (inhabitants per km²).
Source: personal elaboration on ISTAT data

Municipalities in the inner area	Class.	Municipal fragility index		Population 2024		Area and population density		Demographic trends (Changes) %				Ageing index	% foreign popol.
	IA map	2019	2021	Absolute values	% of IA	Area (kmq)	Den. (ab/ kmq)	2002 - 2014	2014 - 2024	2002 - 2024	2002 - 2024		
Borrello	F	7	6	355	1,6	14,5	24,5	-73	-12	-85	-19,3	270,3	2,3
Carunchio	E	6	7	551	2,5	32,6	16,9	-157	-73	-230	-29,4	412,2	11,6
Castelguidone	E	10	9	286	1,3	15,1	19,0	-86	-107	-193	-40,3	854,5	2,4
Castiglione Messer Marino	F	7	7	1.476	6,8	48,0	30,8	-386	-365	-751	-33,7	355,0	0,9
Celenza sul Trigno	E	8	7	782	3,6	22,7	34,5	-148	-166	-314	-28,6	393,8	2,2
Civitaluparella	F	10	10	283	1,3	22,5	12,6	-64	-73	-137	-32,6	383,3	1,8
Civitella Messer Raimondo	E	7	8	769	3,5	12,7	60,4	-100	-88	-188	-19,6	376,3	6,9
Colledimacine	F	10	10	153	0,7	11,3	13,5	-75	-54	-129	-45,7	2500,0	2,0
Colledimezzo	E	5	8	437	2,0	11,0	39,6	-59	-91	-150	-25,6	511,4	6,2
Fallo	E	7	9	116	0,5	6,1	19,0	-24	-20	-44	-27,5	440,0	4,3
Fara San Martino	E	1	1	1.268	5,8	44,7	28,4	-138	-218	-356	-21,9	309,4	3,7
Fraine	F	10	9	255	1,2	16,1	15,8	-83	-116	-199	-43,8	1010,0	1,6
Gamberale	F	6	3	273	1,3	15,6	17,5	-63	-54	-117	-30	435,0	1,1
Gessopalena	E	9	9	1.173	5,4	31,5	37,3	-179	-342	-521	-30,8	455,1	6,1
Lama dei Peligni	E	7	7	1.043	4,8	31,4	33,2	-153	-290	-443	-29,8	485,3	5,8
Lettopalena	F	8	8	315	1,4	21,1	14,9	-25	-64	-89	-22	400,0	0,3
Montazzoli	F	10	10	810	3,7	39,5	20,5	-118	-185	-303	-27,2	365,3	2,8
Montebello sul Sangro	E	10	10	86	0,4	5,4	16,0	-32	-7	-39	-31,2	300,0	1,2
Monteferrante	F	10	10	108	0,5	15,3	7,1	-52	-27	-79	-42,2	409,1	3,7
Montelapiano	F	8	9	68	0,3	8,3	8,2	-16	-22	-38	-35,8	560,0	2,9
Montenerodomo	F	8	9	596	2,7	30,0	19,9	-209	-123	-332	-35,8	280,3	4,4
Palena	F	5	6	1.216	5,6	93,6	13,0	-85	-179	-264	-17,8	258,9	2,6
Palombaro	E	6	6	946	4,3	17,2	55,0	-128	-97	-225	-19,2	317,2	13,8
Pennadomo	E	9	8	207	1,0	11,0	18,8	-66	-87	-153	-42,5	657,1	1,0
Pietraferrazzana	E	9	8	130	0,6	4,4	29,8	-20	-2	-22	-14,5	258,8	0,8
Pizzoferrato	F	7	6	970	4,5	30,9	31,4	23	-236	-213	-18	450,8	3,4
Quadri	E	8	10	691	3,2	7,4	92,8	-96	-147	-243	-26	602,4	2,6
Roccascalegna	E	7	7	1.022	4,7	23,0	44,4	-122	-265	-387	-27,5	544,8	4,2
Roccaspinalveti	F	10	9	1.163	5,3	33,0	35,2	-272	-223	-495	-29,9	455,7	3,8
Roio del Sangro	F	9	7	99	0,5	11,8	8,4	-58	4	-54	-35,3	700,0	11,1
Rosello	F	6	6	167	0,8	19,2	8,7	-78	-89	-167	-50	1037,5	4,8
San Giovanni Lipioni	E	10	6	138	0,6	8,7	15,9	-84	-66	-150	-52,1	1014,3	3,6
Schiavi di Abruzzo	E	10	9	641	2,9	45,6	14,1	-482	-269	-751	-54	603,9	8,3
Taranta Peligna	F	8	6	291	1,3	21,9	13,3	-123	-93	-216	-42,6	454,2	3,8
Torrebruna	E	10	9	668	3,1	23,3	28,7	-293	-208	-501	-42,9	890,3	2,5
Torricella Peligna	F	9	9	1.116	5,1	36,1	30,9	-202	-263	-465	-29,4	518,3	8,8
Villa Santa Maria	E	8	7	1.110	5,1	16,2	68,4	-85	-283	-368	-24,9	338,0	3,5
IA total		**8,0**	**7,7**	**21.778**	**100**	**858,5**	**25,4**	**-4.411**	**-5.000**	**-9.411**	**-30,2**	**422,8**	**4,6**
Abruzzo				**1.269.963**		**10.831,7**					**0,6**	**219,7**	**6,9**
Italia				**58.989.749**		**302.109,5**					**3,5**	**199,8**	**9,0**

Analysis of the data at municipal level, as emerges from the table (Table 15), evidences a significant heterogeneity. In particular, five municipalities — Quadri, Civitella Messer Raimondo, Rosello, San Giovanni Lipioni, Fara San Martino — present values above the regional average (ranging between 24.8 and 26.3 per cent), whereas in two municipalities, Montebello sul Sangro and Monteferrante, the percentage is nil. This last figure is attributable principally to the strongly aged demographic composition of these villages rather than to a deficiency in educational levels.

This gap nonetheless represents a limiting factor for the socio-economic and cultural development of the territory, impacting negatively upon its capacity for urban attraction as well.

In terms of employment, the Basso Sangro-Trigno inner area evidences certain critical issues. The employment rate, defined as the ratio between the number of employed persons and the corresponding reference population, stands at 38.7 per cent, proving in fact lower than both the regional average (45.1 per cent) and the national one (46.4 per cent). As regards the unemployment rate, that is, the percentage of residents seeking employment relative to the active population, this stands at 9.2 per cent, a value slightly above the national average (8.6 per cent) but marginally below the regional one (9.4 per cent) (ISTAT, 2022).

Given the heterogeneous composition of the area, constituted by numerous municipalities with differing socio-economic characteristics, a more detailed territorial analysis is required.

Analysis at municipal level indeed evidences an articulated situation: some municipalities, such as Carunchio, Montelapiano and Schiavi d'Abruzzo, record particularly high unemployment rates, ranging between 15.1 per cent and 17.7 per cent. By contrast, other municipalities present values significantly below the regional average, such as Celenza sul Trigno (5.9 per cent) and Fara San Martino (6.8 per cent).

At provincial level, ISTAT data for the year 2024 indicate, for the province of Chieti, an employment rate for the population aged between 15 and 64 equal to 61.4 per cent, a value slightly below both the regional average (62.1 per cent) and the national average (62.2 per cent). Particularly significant is the gender divide: the male employment rate stands at 73.4 per cent, whereas the female rate stops at 49.5, evidencing a significant gender gap.

Table 15. Educational attainment (data as at 2024).
Source: personal elaboration on ISTAT data

Municipalities in the inner area	Population with a high level of education %	Indices (Abruzzo=100)	Population with a low level of education %	Indices (Abruzzo=100)
Borrello	10,9	60,6	28,6	103,5
Carunchio	12,6	70,3	40,5	146,6
Castelguidone	17,8	99,6	44,6	161,5
Castiglione Messer Marino	15,9	88,6	38,7	140
Celenza sul Trigno	17,9	100,1	36,4	131,7
Civitaluparella	4,1	22,6	37,2	134,6
Civitella Messer Raimondo	26,2	146,1	20,4	73,8
Colledimacine	12,9	71,8	21,4	77,6
Colledimezzo	13,9	77,8	27,4	99,2
Fallo	15,3	85,2	39	141,2
Fara San Martino	24,8	138,5	22,5	81,4
Fraine	9,8	54,5	45,5	164,9
Gamberale	17,5	97,6	30,8	111,4
Gessopalena	23	128,3	21,8	79,1
Lama dei Peligni	23	128,2	14,6	52,8
Lettopalena	10,5	58,8	27	97,7
Montazzoli	14,6	81,3	43,7	158,3
Montebello sul Sangro	0	0	42,9	155,2
Monteferrante	0	0	35,4	128,3
Montelapiano	5,6	31	25	90,5
Montenerodomo	12,2	68	35,6	128,8
Palena	15,7	87,6	26,6	96,4
Palombaro	19,8	110,3	26,3	95,4
Pennadomo	18,4	102,7	24,1	87,4
Pietraferrazzana	17,5	97,5	19	69
Pizzoferrato	16,3	91,1	28,7	104
Quadri	26,3	146,8	20,2	73,3
Roccascalegna	17,2	95,8	26,6	96,4
Roccaspinalveti	11	61,3	46,3	167,8
Roio del Sangro	21,7	121,4	34,8	126
Rosello	26,2	146	26,2	94,7
San Giovanni Lipioni	25,9	144,8	18,5	67,1
Schiavi di Abruzzo	13,5	75,3	42,3	153,3
Taranta Peligna	20,1	112,4	27,5	99,7
Torrebruna	18,2	101,5	35,1	127,2
Torricella Peligna	17,3	96,8	28,4	102,9
Villa Santa Maria	15,4	86	30	108,5
IA total	**17,4**	**97**	**30,3**	**109,7**
Abruzzo	**24,6**		**28,3**	
Italia	**22,5**		**32,9**	

As regards labour market participation, the Basso Sangro-Trigno area presents a value equal to 42.6 per cent, appreciably lower than both the regional figure (49.8%) and the national one (50.7%). Under this profile too, the differences between individual municipalities are confirmed as marked, evidencing the internal complexity characterising the territory.

Productive system

From the standpoint of the productive system, the territory of the Basso Sangro-Trigno represents a unique case within the Abruzzo panorama. Although founded upon a local economic fabric characterised by small entrepreneurial entities, the territory benefits from proximity to highly specialised productive districts of international standing.

The productive system and the employment structure of the area prove strongly influenced by, and largely dependent upon, the valley-floor productive basins, in particular those of the Val di Sangro and Vasto-San Salvo, located outside the perimeter of the inner area.

In these hubs the automotive and mechanical industrial sector is concentrated, with the presence of internationally significant companies such as Stellantis Europe Spa (formerly Sevel), Honda Italia Industriale Spa, Pilkington, Hydro alluminio and Isringhausen. This sector represents a strategic axis for the local economy and for the region as a whole, contributing 13% of regional industrial GDP and 48% of regional exports (Polo Innovazione Automotive, 2025).

The sector accounts overall for approximately 22,000 employees in Abruzzo, of whom 20,000 are concentrated in the province of Chieti alone.

The presence of large multinational enterprises in the valley-floor areas reinforces the economic dependence of the area. Indeed, according to a survey conducted during the drafting of the Preliminary Strategy (2017), approximately 900 workers from the prototype area are employed in companies of the Val di Sangro industrial area, while approximately 150 work in the enterprises of the San Salvo industrial area; it is estimated that overall approximately one household in four in the area is directly involved in the valley-floor productive hubs.

Municipalities in the inner area	Employment rate %	Indices (Abruzzo=100)	Unemployment rate %	Activity rate
Borrello	38,3	85	12,1	43,6
Carunchio	40,2	89,1	11,8	45,6
Castelguidone	40,5	89,8	8,3	44,2
Castiglione Messer Marino	37,5	83,1	9,2	41,3
Celenza sul Trigno	39,8	88,3	8,5	43,5
Civitaluparella	38,4	85,1	7,5	41,5
Civitella Messer Raimondo	37,6	83,5	9,7	41,7
Colledimacine	32,5	72	7,8	35,2
Colledimezzo	30	66,6	14,5	35,2
Fallo	39,1	86,7	8,1	42,5
Fara San Martino	44,3	98,2	5,8	47
Fraine	36,9	81,9	7,9	40,1
Gamberale	41,9	92,8	8,1	45,5
Gessopalena	38,7	85,8	10	43
Lama dei Peligni	40,9	90,6	8,8	44,8
Lettopalena	38,8	85,9	9,4	42,8
Montazzoli	36,4	80,6	9,9	40,3
Montebello sul Sangro	30,1	66,8	10,4	33,6
Monteferrante	28,1	62,4	12,8	32,3
Montelapiano	28,6	63,4	22,2	36,7
Montenerodomo	42,9	95	9,1	47,1
Palena	41,7	92,6	10,1	46,4
Palombaro	40,1	88,9	8,4	43,8
Pennadomo	31,2	69,1	9,3	34,4
Pietraferrazzana	40,5	89,9	8,7	44,4
Pizzoferrato	45,3	100,5	8,9	49,7
Quadri	36,5	80,9	9,6	40,3
Roccascalegna	39,9	88,5	8,1	43,4
Roccaspinalveti	39,2	87	7,6	42,5
Roio del Sangro	31,6	70	11,1	35,5
Rosello	29,6	65,6	8,4	32,3
San Giovanni Lipioni	28,5	63,1	11,5	32,1
Schiavi di Abruzzo	28	62,2	10,7	31,4
Taranta Peligna	38,8	86,1	8,6	42,4
Torrebruna	32,6	72,3	9,6	36
Torricella Peligna	38,1	84,5	9,1	41,9
Villa Santa Maria	41,4	91,9	10,4	46,2
IA total	**38,7**	**85,8**	**9,2**	**42,6**
Abruzzo	**45,1**		**9,4**	**49,8**
Italia	**46,4**		**8,6**	**50,7**

Table 16.
Employment (data as at 2022).
Source: personal elaboration on ISTAT data.

Alongside these stands the contribution of the pasta industrial district of Fara San Martino and, to a lesser extent, of a capillary network of agricultural, artisanal and tourist micro- and small enterprises.

ISTAT data for 2021 (Table 17) evidence that 3,870 employees work in the area, distributed across 1,448 local units, considering only the private, non-agricultural sectors. Relative to 2012, a reduction equal to 286 employees is recorded, corresponding to a decline of 6.9%.

At municipal level, heterogeneous employment dynamics emerge: the most significant increases are found in the municipalities of Gamberale (+75) and Palena (+40), whereas the greatest contractions affect Fara San Martino (-131), Celenza sul Trigno (-59) and Montazzoli (-43).

Analysis of the distribution of employees across the various municipalities of the area underlines a marked disparity between resident population and employed workforce, showing how, in many cases, the percentage of employees proves significantly lower than the share of population, indicating a limited capacity of these territories to generate employment and, more generally, to retain or attract human resources. This imbalance reflects a structural weakness of the local economic and productive fabric, frequently linked to a scarcity of enterprises or to poor diversification of the economic activities present.

Running counter to this scenario is the municipality of Fara San Martino, which, although representing only 5.8% of the total population of the inner area, concentrates approximately 23% of total employees, evidencing the municipality's strategic role as a supra-local productive hub, strongly specialised in the agri-food sector and in particular in the pasta segment, thanks to the presence of a consolidated industrial district and of important entrepreneurial entities of national and international standing such as De Cecco, Delverde and the Pastificio Artigiano Cav. Giuseppe Cocco.

Encouraging values as regards employees are also recorded by the municipalities of Castiglione Messer Marino (7.7%), Villa Santa Maria (6.2%), Palombaro (5.8%) and Roccascalegna (5.2%), which present a positive employment balance. By contrast, the municipalities of Quadri, Pizzoferrato, Civitella Messer Raimondo,

Table 17.
Employees per local unit in the private non-agricultural sectors (data as at 2021)
Source: personal elaboration on ISTAT data

	Local units		Staff	
Municipalities in the inner area	**Absolute values**	**Composition %**	**Absolute values**	**Composition %**
Borrello	23	1,6	59	1,5
Carunchio	44	3,0	107	2,8
Castelguidone	18	1,2	37	1,0
Castiglione Messer Marino	137	9,5	296	7,7
Celenza sul Trigno	56	3,9	105	2,7
Civitaluparella	15	1,0	21	0,6
Civitella Messer Raimondo	41	2,8	69	1,8
Colledimacine	4	0,3	4	0,1
Colledimezzo	21	1,5	35	0,9
Fallo	15	1,0	42	1,1
Fara San Martino	101	7,0	889	23,0
Fraine	14	1,0	25	0,6
Gamberale	20	1,4	104	2,7
Gessopalena	59	4,1	105	2,7
Lama dei Peligni	66	4,6	134	3,5
Lettopalena	14	1,0	24	0,6
Montazzoli	51	3,5	91	2,3
Montebello sul Sangro	1	0,1	1	0,0
Monteferrante	5	0,3	11	0,3
Montelapiano	4	0,3	4	0,1
Montenerodomo	33	2,3	62	1,6
Palena	89	6,1	189	4,9
Palombaro	65	4,5	223	5,8
Pennadomo	10	0,7	16	0,4
Pietraferrazzana	7	0,5	10	0,3
Pizzoferrato	63	4,4	110	2,8
Quadri	36	2,5	64	1,6
Roccascalegna	51	3,5	200	5,2
Roccaspinalveti	76	5,2	179	4,6
Roio del Sangro	11	0,8	17	0,4
Rosello	14	1,0	46	1,2
San Giovanni Lipioni	10	0,7	20	0,5
Schiavi di Abruzzo	49	3,4	114	3,0
Taranta Peligna	22	1,5	30	0,8
Torrebruna	35	2,4	42	1,1
Torricella Peligna	77	5,3	145	3,7
Villa Santa Maria	91	6,3	241	6,2
AI total	**1448**	**100**	**3870**	**100**

Torrebruna and Gessopalena reveal a negative picture when population and number of employees are analysed.
The productive density of the area, equal to 17.7 employees per 100 inhabitants, proves lower than both the regional average (28.1%) and the national one (29.7%), confirming weak local employment, with the exception of a few municipalities such as Fara San Martino (67.8 employees per 100 inhabitants), Gamberale (35.9%) and Fallo (34.8%), which present levels of productive intensity above the regional average, within an area which, taken as a whole, manifests a poor capacity to generate employment.
The productive system of the area presents itself as relatively diversified, while nonetheless evidencing a marked concentration in the manufacturing sector, which absorbs 25.3% of employees, a value significantly higher than both the regional average (22.7%) and the national one (21.2%), thanks above all to the presence of the pasta industries, as analysed previously.
Following, in terms of employment incidence, are the construction sector (17.4%) and the health and social care sector (9.8%), the latter with a value almost double the regional and national ones (both equal to 5.6%). The remaining productive segments prove, by contrast, strongly under-represented, and the area fails to draw effectively even upon the potential bound up with tourist activities.
At territorial level, manufacturing activities are concentrated predominantly in the municipality of Fara San Martino, which alone accounts for 597 employees, equal to 61% of the sector total. There follow the municipalities of: Palombaro, specialised in the production of leather articles (37 employees); Fallo, where a supply chain linked to the production of wood and products in wood and cork is present (14 employees); and Castiglione Messer Marino, with activities linked to the repair, maintenance and installation of machinery (16 employees), as well as to the production of metal artefacts (13 employees).
The construction sector presents a fairly homogeneous distribution across the territory, while nonetheless evidencing a significant concentration in Castiglione Messer Marino, with 85 employees engaged predominantly in specialised construction works. The energy segment proves located almost exclusively in Villa Santa Maria, where the presence of the Enel Green Power plant employs 68 people. Financial activities are distributed, by contrast, between Fara San Martino, Roccaspinalveti and Villa Santa Maria, while the health and social care sector, although less polarised, records the highest employment incidences in the municipalities of Castiglione Messer Marino (57 employees), Schiavi di Abruzzo (38) and Villa Santa Maria (48).
According to the Municipal Fragility Index (Indice di Fragilità Comunale, IFC) elaborated by ISTAT, the majority of the municipalities of the area (20 out of 24) falls within the most critical levels of socio-economic fragility, confirming the widespread presence of productive activities characterised by low sectoral productivity. Running counter to this, the municipalities of Castelguidone, Fara San Martino, Gamberale and Montebello sul Sangro are distinguished, being situated at more contained levels of fragility.
Finally, according to data from the Agenzia delle Entrate (Revenue Agency), in 2022 the average taxable income per taxpayer in the area was 14,985 euros, a value markedly lower than both the regional average (17,928 euros) and the national one (20,745 euros).

Agriculture

Agriculture has always occupied a fundamental role in the governance of the territory, as a source of food production and as an essential component of the landscape, of local identities, of biodiversity and of environmental well-being.
As recorded by the last General Census of Agriculture (2020), the Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) for the Basso Sangro-Trigno area amounted to 32%, that is, 27,516 hectares of the total surface, evidencing values lower than both the national average (41.2%) and the regional one (39.2%). The articulation at municipal level is visible in the figure (42).
Notwithstanding a slight increase recorded between 2010 and 2020, attributable principally to the rise registered in the Sangro area (+4.5%), the agricultural sector has undergone a significant decline in terms of the number of holdings, which has more than halved over the last decade, falling from 3,814 to 1,675 units.
In general, a picture of the local agricultural system may be discerned which appears in line with the dynamics recorded at regional level.

Figure n 44.
Regione Abruzzo (2020). UAA as a share of total territorial surface by municipality. Year 2020 (percentage incidence)
Source: Regione Abruzzo on ISTAT data.

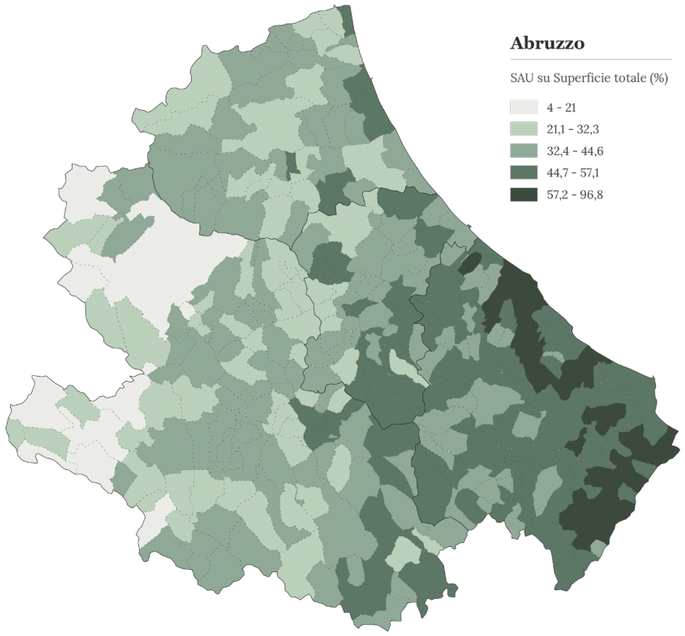
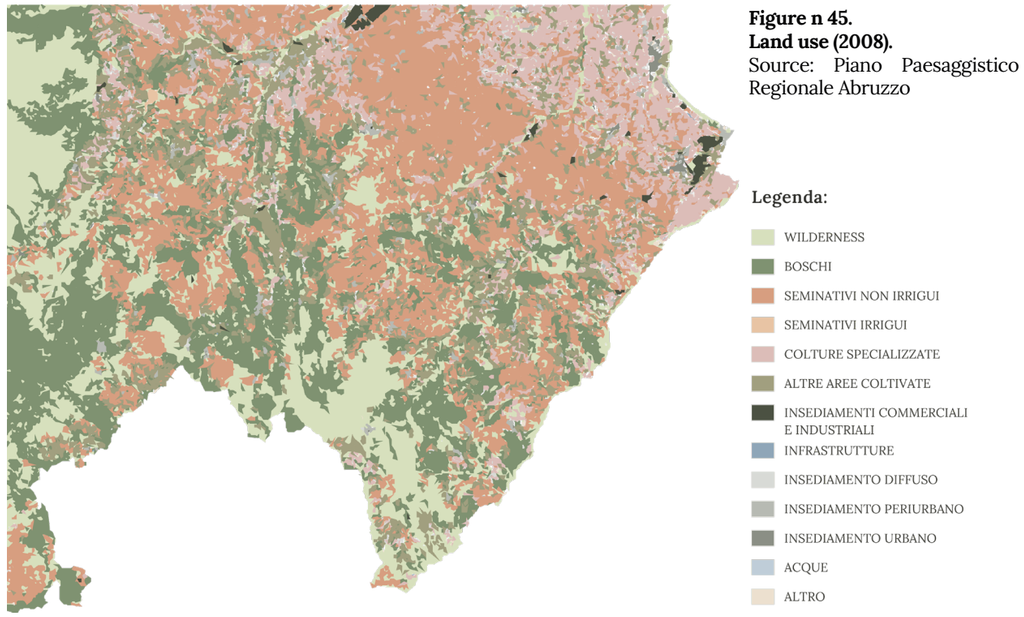


Figure n 45.
Land use (2008).
Source: Piano Paesaggistico Regionale Abruzzo



The composition of the Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA), as evidenced by the Regional Landscape Plan, shows a prevalence of permanent meadows and pastures, which cover 44.9% of the UAA, a percentage slightly higher than the regional average (42.3%). There follow arable crops, with a share equal to 39%, likewise comparable with the regional figure (40.9%). More contained, by contrast, is the presence of woody agricultural crops, which stand at 4.9%, against a significantly higher regional value (16.5%). From the standpoint of typical products, the territory is characterised by the presence of local varieties and quality crops, an expression of agri-food traditions and of agricultural biodiversity.

Among these may be noted native single-variety olive groves (such as that of Roccascalegna), horticultural and fruit products (Oliva Intosso, Patata di montagna), traditional cereals (durum wheat Cappelli and Marzuolo, common wheat Solina and Casorella, barley, oats, spelt, rye), local pulses (the “socere e nore”, tondino, a pane and a caffè beans), as well as the presence of truffle in the area of Quadri and of the Medio Sangro.

All the municipalities included in the study area fall within the territorial zoning provided for by the Rural Development Plan 2023–2027 of the Abruzzo Region, which classifies areas according to their degree of marginality and their development potential.

The majority of the municipalities of the area — among them Borrello, Carunchio, Castelguidone, Castiglione Messer Marino, Civitaluparella, Colledimacine, Fallo, Fara San Martino, Fraine, Gamberale, Lama dei Peligni, Lettopalena, Montazzoli, Montebello sul Sangro, Monteferrante, Montelapiano, Montenerodomo, Palena, Pennadomo, Pizzoferrato, Quadri, Roccaspinalveti, Roio del Sangro, Rosello, Schiavi di Abruzzo, Taranta Peligna, Torrebruna, Torricella Peligna and Villa Santa Maria — has been identified as a “Rural area with development problems”, indicating contexts characterised by socio-economic critical issues, reduced accessibility and infrastructural fragilities. Other municipalities, such as Celenza sul Trigno, Civitella Messer Raimondo, Colledimezzo, Gessopalena, Palombaro, Pietraferrazzana, Roccascalegna and San Giovanni Lipioni, have by contrast been classified as “Intermediate rural areas”, in which elements of vulnerability persist but also potentials for growth.

Accessibility of services

The accessibility of services in the territory under examination proves strongly conditioned by the weakness of the infrastructural system, characterised by a secondary road network constituted principally by municipal and provincial roads, frequently subject to deficient maintenance and not always adequate in terms of capacity and safety. Among the principal local arteries may be noted the S.P. 86 dir, S.P. 198, S.P. 212, S.P. 132, S.P. Sangritana, S.S. 652 and S.S. 62, which perform a function of internal connection, intersecting the two principal north–south axes represented by the A14 motorway and the S.S. 16, while in the east–west direction connection is guaranteed principally by the Fondovalle Trigno and the Fondovalle Sangro.

Access to the motorway network is guaranteed principally by the junctions of Val di Sangro, Casalbordino-Vasto Nord and Vasto Sud-Montenero di Bisaccia-San Salvo, located along the route of the A14, which may be reached with journey times varying appreciably within the area: from approximately 20 minutes for the closest municipalities, such as Roccascalegna and Colledimezzo, to over 60 minutes for the most peripheral municipalities such as Lettopalena, Castiglione Messer Marino, Palena, Gamberale, Colledimacine and Taranta Peligna.

In general, the average time of access to the motorway network for the area stands at around 30 minutes.

As regards rail connections, the area is currently devoid of them, following the closure of the Marina di San Vito – Lanciano – Castel di Sangro line of the Ferrovia Sangritana, which took place in December 2006. The nearest railway stations are located along the coast and prove reachable with journey times ranging between 30 minutes for municipalities such as Celenza sul Trigno and approximately 80 minutes for municipalities such as Palena and Lettopalena.

The Abruzzo International Airport, situated in the municipality of Pescara, represents the principal regional air terminal and constitutes a strategic node for extra-regional connectivity and tourist attractiveness. To date, the journey times required to reach it from the municipalities of the inner area vary appreciably: from approximately 54 minutes for Roccascalegna to over 95 minutes for the most distant municipalities, such as Schiavi d'Abruzzo.

Extra-urban road transport guarantees connections towards the hubs of Chieti and Pescara, ensuring an acceptable service for students, less so for other categories of user.

Local public transport (LPT) is severely deficient, above all in the mountain areas, owing both to low demand, composed predominantly of an elderly population that tends not to use it, and to the growing preference for the use of private vehicles, above all on the part of workers, with a considerable impact upon costs and safety.

For access to higher-order essential services, such as education, healthcare and public rail transport, the municipalities of the area look to three principal hubs: Pescara, Chieti and Campobasso, the last of these situated outside the regional boundaries. In particular, the municipalities of the Sangro turn towards Pescara, those of the Alto Vastese towards Campobasso, with the exception of Montazzoli and Roccaspinalveti, which likewise gravitate towards Pescara. The municipalities of the Aventino, by contrast, look predominantly to Chieti, with the sole exception of Roccascalegna, which is functionally connected to Pescara.

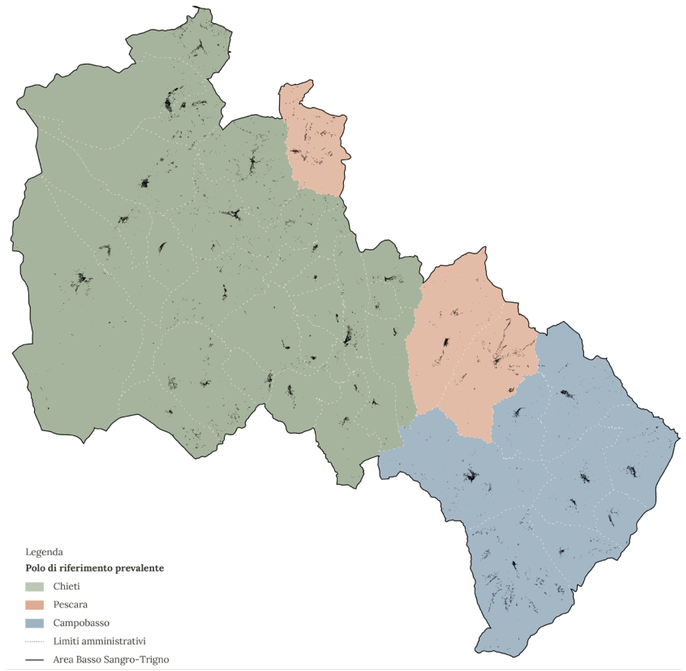


Figure n 46.
Hubs of territorial gravitation.
Source: elaboration by the author on data from Regione Abruzzo Sanità (health district areas).

A further critical issue is represented by the weakness of the slow mobility system, which proves poorly infrastructured and inconsistent. The absence of a structured and integrated network of cycle-pedestrian routes and footpaths has thus far limited the possibility of drawing fully upon the territory in relation to an emerging tourist demand oriented towards naturalistic experiences and active holidays, fields for which the area presents a natural vocation given the environmental and landscape context within which it falls.

Quality of life: health and school services

The quality of life in the territory of the Basso Sangro-Trigno is closely bound up with the presence and accessibility of essential services, in particular health and school services, which represent fundamental indicators of social cohesion, attractiveness and balanced territorial development.

In this context, the organisation of the health system reveals significant critical issues, which impact profoundly upon the living conditions of the resident population and upon the area's potential for territorial rebalancing.

Territorial analysis has made it possible to identify two principal health district areas which constitute the operational points of reference for the delivery of healthcare services in the territory of the Basso Sangro-Trigno: the "Sangro-Aventino" district area and the "Alto-Vastese" district area (Fig. 44). The first district area comprises a vast portion of municipalities located in the area adjoining the middle course of the river Sangro and the valley of the Aventino, with the municipalities of Altino, Archi, Atessa, Bomba, Borrello, Casoli, Civitaluparella, Civitella Messer Raimondo, Colledimacine, Colledimezzo, Fallo, Fara San Martino, Gamberale, Gessopalena, Lama dei Peligni, Lettopalena, Montazzoli, Montebello sul Sangro, Monteferrante, Montelapiano, Montenerodomo, Paglieta, Palena, Palombaro, Pennadomo, Perano, Pietraferrazzana, Pizzoferrato, Quadri, Roccascalegna, Roio del Sangro, Rosello, Sant'Eusanio del Sangro, Taranta Peligna, Tornareccio, Torricella Peligna and Villa S. Maria, whereas the "Alto-Vastese" district area concerns predominantly the municipalities of the mountain and hill belt of the Vasto hinterland and comprises the municipalities of Carpineto, Carunchio, Casalanguida, Castelguidone, Castiglione Messer Marino, Celenza sul Trigno, Dogliola, Fraine, Furci, Gissi, Guilmi, Liscia, Palmoli, Roccaspinalveti, San Buono, San Giovanni Lipioni, Schiavi d'Abruzzo, Torrebruna and Tufillo.

Although located outside the administrative boundaries of the Basso Sangro-Trigno, the health district of Castel di Sangro, situated in the province of L'Aquila, performs a strategic role for some municipalities of the area thanks to its geographical proximity and its greater accessibility relative to other health districts, thereby configuring itself as a complementary node within the network of territorial health services.

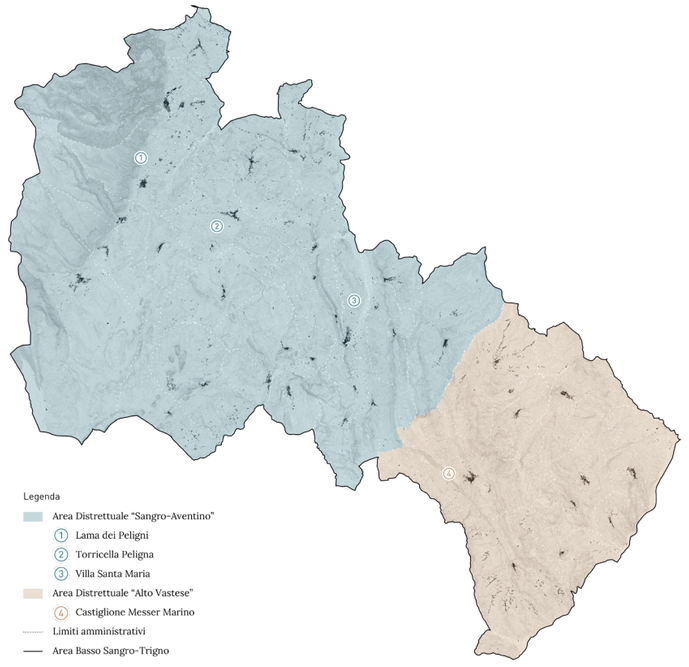


Figure n 47.
Health district areas. Thematic map of the "Sangro-Aventino" and "Alto-Vastese" district areas.
Source: personal elaboration on data from the Abruzzo Region.

Within the territory of the Basso Sangro-Trigno there are four operational district offices for the delivery of health services, located in the municipalities of Lama dei Peligni, Torricella Peligna, Villa Santa Maria and Castiglione Messer Marino (Fig. 45). Each of these offices represents the reference micro-hub for other municipalities:

- Lama dei Peligni: comprises the municipalities of Fara San Martino, Civitella Messer Raimondo, Taranta Peligna, Palena and Lettopalena;

• Torricella Peligna: whose territorial ambit is composed of the municipalities of Colledimacine, Gessopalena, Montenerodomo and Roccascalegna;
• Villa Santa Maria: gathers the municipalities of Bomba, Borrello, Civitaluparella, Colledimezzo, Fallo, Gamberale, Montazzoli, Montebello sul Sangro, Monteferrante, Montelapiano, Pennadomo, Pietraferrazzana, Pizzoferrato, Quadri, Roio del Sangro and Rosello;
• Castiglione Messer Marino: with the municipalities of Carunchio, Castelguidone, Celenza sul Trigno, Fraine, Roccaspinalveti, San Giovanni Lipioni, Schiavi d'Abruzzo and Torrebruna.

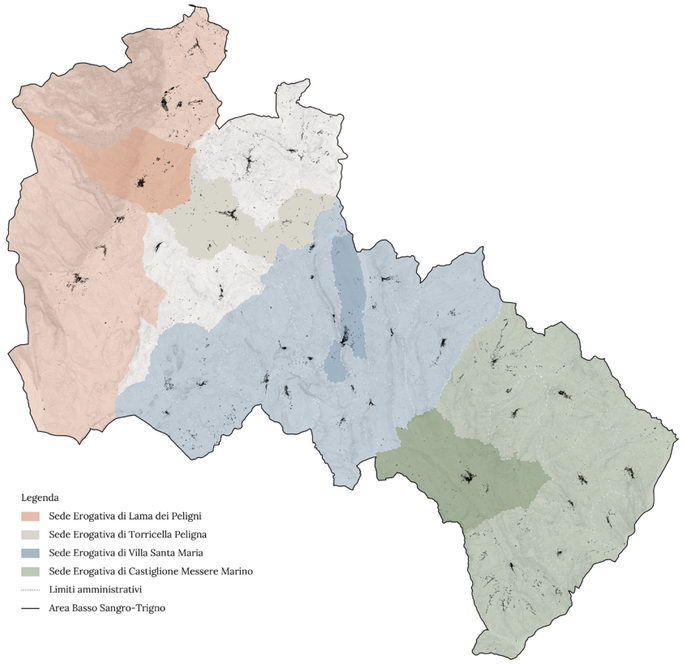


Figure n 48. Health service delivery offices (former health districts). Thematic map of the four operational district offices.
Source: personal elaboration on data from Regione Abruzzo Sanità.

There is, however, no hospital facility within the area; the nearest are located at Atessa, Vasto, Lanciano, Ortona and Chieti, at an average distance of approximately 50 km. Some examples: Castiglione Messer Marino–Atessa (33 km), Palena–Atessa (47 km), Palena–Chieti (95 km). These distances evidence a substantial inequality in terms of accessibility to hospital services, which translates into a significant disadvantage for local communities, above all in relation to the elderly population or those with reduced mobility.

One of the most significant critical issues concerns the high rate of inappropriate hospitalisation: over 40% of admissions is attributable to chronic conditions which, in the absence of an effective local facility, are not adequately identified at an early stage, causing frequent — and frequently avoidable — recourse to hospital care, with repercussions upon the efficiency of the health system and the quality of care, evidencing the structural fragilities of proximity medicine and the need for it to be strengthened, in line with the principles of equity, continuity of care and territorial resilience.

Analogously to the health system, the school system of the territory of the Basso Sangro-Trigno likewise evidences signs of growing fragility, attributable to demographic decline and to the progressive reduction in the number of school premises, with direct consequences for accessibility to education, for the quality of educational provision and for the daily organisation of families, contributing to the erosion of the local social fabric and of the attractiveness of small centres for the younger generations.
In the course of the 2025/2026 school year, the Istituto Comprensivo of Quadri was merged with the Istituto Omnicomprensivo "G. Marchitelli" of Villa Santa Maria, reducing to four the overall number of istituti comprensivi (comprehensive school clusters) present in the area: IC Torricella-Palena, IC Castiglione Messer Marino-Carunchio, IC Casoli–Palombaro and IC Tornareccio. Alongside these stands the I.O. "G. Marchitelli", with premises at Villa Santa Maria and Quadri. These institutions, distributed unevenly across the territory, manage in total 20 nursery schools, 17 primary schools, 10 lower secondary schools and a single upper secondary school: the I.P.S.S.A.R. "G. Marchitelli" of Villa Santa Maria, specialising in hospitality and catering.
The presence of a single form of upper secondary provision represents a strongly critical element for the territory, since it significantly limits educational opportunities for students and contributes to the migratory impetus towards the larger urban centres, where educational provision proves more diversified and accessible, further consolidating the dynamics of depopulation and marginalisation already under way.
Notwithstanding the existence of these school entities, coverage

remains discontinuous and insufficient to guarantee equitable access to education at territorial scale, in particular in the mountain municipalities and those of low population density, once again accentuating territorial inequalities.

Tourism and culture

The Basso Sangro-Trigno inner area, characterised by a fragmented settlement distribution devoid of urban poles consolidated at regional scale — a configuration typical of the mountain and sub-mountain areas of the central Apennines — presents an equally uneven tourist offer.

Notwithstanding this, some municipalities — among them Colledimezzo, Gamberale, Fara San Martino, Lama dei Peligni, Palena, Pizzoferrato, Torricella Peligna and Villa Santa Maria — evidence a greater tourist attractiveness, a phenomenon closely correlated with the presence of significant natural, cultural and landscape resources, which constitute important driving factors of local hospitality.

According to regional data on the "Consistency of accommodation facilities" of the Abruzzo Region (2023), the overall accommodation provision of the area amounts to approximately 2,550 bed places, distributed between hotel facilities (39%) and non-hotel facilities (61%), such as agritourism establishments, bed and breakfasts, rooms to let and holiday homes, evidencing the prevalence of a dispersed and family-run tourism model, more coherent with the settlement morphology of the territory.

From the standpoint of territorial distribution, a strong divide between municipalities is observed: from analysis of the data it emerges that some centres such as Pizzoferrato (539 bed places), Fara San Martino (293), Lama dei Peligni (172), Palena (168) and Villa Santa Maria (151) possess a significant accommodation capacity, closely bound up with the presence of significant natural, cultural and landscape resources, which constitute the principal drivers of local hospitality. By contrast, numerous small municipalities — among them Castelguidone, Civitaluparella, Colledimacine, Fraine, Montebello sul Sangro, Montelapiano, Quadri and San Giovanni Lipioni — prove devoid of accommodation facilities, evidencing the absence of any capacity for tourist reception and the need for targeted strategies of enhancement.

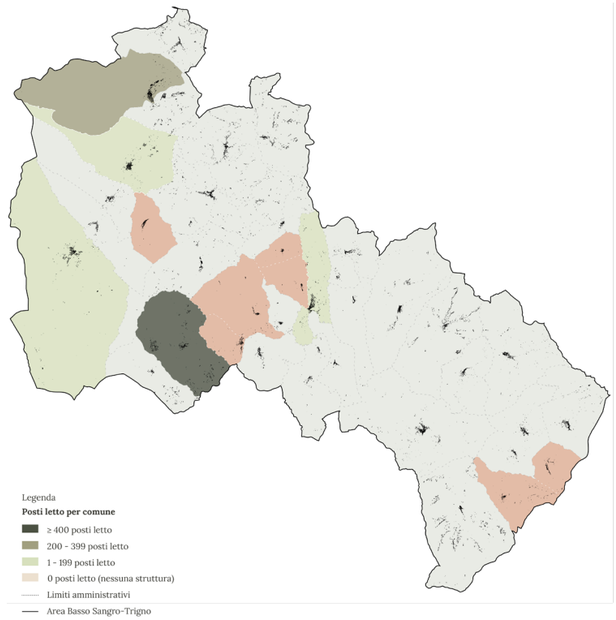


Figure n 49.
Tourist accommodation capacity by municipality (bed places).
Source: elaboration by the author on data from the Abruzzo Region, 2023.

Between 2014 and 2020, the Basso Sangro-Trigno evidenced a marked growth in tourist activity, accompanied by a significant strengthening of accommodation provision. According to Open-kit data of the Abruzzo Region (source: ISTAT), the accommodation rate of the area, expressed in bed places per 1,000 inhabitants, rose from 70.19 in 2014 to 104.80 in 2020, an increase of over 49%. This development reflects the expansion of accommodation capacity through the increase of hotel and non-hotel facilities and through works of reuse of existing built heritage, contributing to a redefinition of land uses and of urban morphology, especially in historic centres and in areas with a tourist vocation.

In parallel, the data relating to tourist demand likewise show a significant evolution: arrivals rose from 1,523 in 2014 to 4,067 in 2020, a percentage variation of 167.04%, while overnight stays grew from 4,568 to 11,142, recording an increase of 143.91%. The increase in arrivals proves proportionally greater than that in overnight stays, suggesting a possible reduction in the average duration of stay, coherent with a more dynamic and fragmented tourism model, frequently oriented towards short periods or proximity tourism.

The tourism rate, calculated as the number of overnight stays per

1,000 inhabitants, stands in 2020 at a value of 591.84, evidencing a particularly intense ratio between resident population and tourist flow. This figure underlines the significant impact of tourism upon the urban and social dimension of the territory, in terms of pressure upon services, temporary housing demand and transformation of local identity.

From the standpoint of accommodation typology, 2020 shows a prevalence of the hotel segment (72.46% of overnight stays) relative to the non-hotel sector (27.54%), a sign of a system still anchored to traditional models of hospitality, but with signs of openness towards alternative formulas, frequently more integrated within the local fabric.

According to the report "Analisi territoriale: Area Interna Basso Sangro-Trigno", between 2018 and 2022 a moderate increase in overall tourist provision was recorded: the number of accommodation facilities rose from 114 to 120 units (+6), but this increase concerned exclusively the non-hotel segment, while hotel facilities declined by one unit over the same period. The municipalities recording the greatest increases are Fara San Martino (+3 facilities) and Lama dei Peligni (+2 facilities), signalling a local dynamism probably linked to small-scale entrepreneurial initiatives and to the enhancement of forms of slow and sustainable tourism, coherent with the characteristics of the territory.

In recent years, the Basso Sangro-Trigno area has confirmed its capacity for attraction, recording a generally positive trend in the post-pandemic context as well, marked by a renewed interest in inner areas and by a progressive reappraisal of rural and mountain contexts as places of life and of tourism. The data relating to 2025, available at regional scale, indicate an increase in tourist overnight stays of 20.44% in the first five months of the year relative to the same period in 2024, with a total of over one million six hundred thousand overnight stays.

A survey conducted by CNA Turismo Abruzzo during the summer of 2025, however, on a heterogeneous sample of tourist enterprises located in differing territorial contexts (coastal belt, mountain, inner areas), yields a more articulated picture. Tourist flows show a clear prevalence of short stays, with 47% of visitors opting for the weekend, followed by weekly stays (21.2%) and other flexible arrangements (31.8%).

In particular, facilities situated on the Costa dei Trabocchi have encountered an increase in demand for single overnight stays, confirming the diffusion of a so-called hit-and-run tourism, frequently merely passing through. By contrast, inner areas such as the Basso Sangro-Trigno have recorded a decline in overnight stays, raising questions as to the strategies of promotion and accessibility of these territories. This dynamic evidences the need for integrated territorial policies that sustain inner areas as autonomous destinations, endowed with a vocation to attract forms of cultural, naturalistic and regenerative tourism, with a view to sustainable development. As Boeri (2020) observes, what is needed is not new nativity scenes but small active centralities, safeguarding a territory that remains extraordinary: an invitation to move beyond the passive and picturesque narrative of villages in order to promote development models founded upon innovation and authenticity. From this perspective, as Barca (2016) underlines, tourism in inner areas may draw upon the richness of natural and cultural resources, as well as upon the capacity of local communities to represent themselves.

As regards the theme of culture, the spatial unit of reference for which significant data prove available is the regional one. Official statistics, indeed, furnish neither structured information nor quantitative data sufficiently detailed at municipal level, thereby limiting the possibility of conducting in-depth analyses at local scale.

According to the ISTAT BES 2022 survey, the province of Chieti presents an index of density and significance of museum heritage equal to 0.23, a value above the Abruzzo regional average, which stands at 0.17.

This indicator measures the number of permanent exhibition facilities (museums, archaeological areas, monuments open to the public) per 100 km², weighted according to the number of visitors, and makes it possible to assess the territorial distribution and the degree of attractiveness of cultural heritage.

As regards employment in the cultural sector, in 2021 those working (employed and self-employed) in the local units of active enterprises in Abruzzo represent 1.1% of total employees, a value lower than the national average (1.6%) but in line with that recorded in the other regions of the Mezzogiorno. At provincial

level, Pescara evidences the highest share (1.5%), while Chieti is situated below the regional average with a percentage of 0.8%.

Forms of civic participation and inter-institutional cooperation

Civic participation and associational activity represent fundamental instruments for strengthening social cohesion and promoting processes of sustainable and inclusive territorial development. In the Basso Sangro-Trigno area a significant presence of active organisations is recorded, among them associations, social cooperatives and forms of institutional cooperation between local authorities, such as unions and territorial pacts. Alongside these stand public–private partnerships, such as the Local Action Groups (LAGs), which testify to the dynamism of the socio-territorial fabric and contribute to the participatory governance of the territory.

Within the territory of the Basso Sangro-Trigno several Unions of Municipalities operate, arising from agreements between local administrations with the objective of promoting forms of institutional collaboration, shared management of services and integrated development of the area. Among these may be noted:

- the Unione dei Comuni del Sinello, formed by nine municipalities of the Vasto area between the valley of the river Sinello and that of the Trigno, among them Carunchio, Montazzoli, San Giovanni Lipioni and Torrebruna;
- the Unione dei Comuni montani Maiella Orientale-Verde Aventino, composed of Colledimacine, Lettopalena, Palena and Taranta Peligna, territories characterised by a high environmental and landscape value;
- the Unione dei Comuni montani del Sangro, which involves eight municipalities situated entirely within the Basso Sangro-Trigno area: Colledimezzo, Montebello sul Sangro, Monteferrante, Montelapiano, Montenerodomo, Pietraferrazzana, Roio del Sangro and Rosello.

Alongside the unions of municipalities, two Patti Territoriali (Territorial Pacts) operate — instruments of concertation between public bodies, enterprises and local actors, directed towards promoting the socio-economic development of the area: the Patto Territoriale Sangro-Aventino and the Patto Territoriale Trigno-Sinello.

The Patto Territoriale Sangro-Aventino, which involves numerous municipalities of the Basso Sangro-Trigno, promotes the enhancement of local resources, the increase of employment and the strengthening of social capital. Among the member municipalities of the Basso Sangro-Trigno area may be counted: Lama dei Peligni, Roccascalegna, Roio del Sangro, Lettopalena, Rosello, Montebello sul Sangro, Borrello, Monteferrante, Montelapiano, Montenerodomo, Taranta Peligna, Civitaluparella, Civitella Messer Raimondo, Colledimacine, Palena, Torricella Peligna, Colledimezzo, Palombaro, Fallo, Pennadomo, Villa Santa Maria, Fara San Martino, Pietraferrazzana, Pizzoferrato, Quadri and Gessopalena.

The launch of the Pact, dating back to 1996, is situated within a political-institutional context favourable to experimentation with new forms of negotiated programming, in line with the processes of decentralisation and reform of territorial governance that characterised Italy in the 1990s. The Pact represents a concrete response to the need to coordinate economic, social and environmental development in an integrated manner, drawing upon endogenous resources and promoting the agency of local actors. Its emergence was made possible by a strong synergy between various public and private parties: the Provincial Administration of Chieti, local parliamentarians, the municipalities of the Sangro-Aventino area, the mountain communities, trade union organisations, trade associations, and the banking and school systems, with the support of the Regional Executive. This articulated system of relations has permitted the emergence of a multi-level governance that orients strategic choices in accordance with territorial vocations.

In 1998 the limited-liability consortium company “Patto Territoriale Sangro-Aventino” was established, which operates in the capacity of Local Intermediary Body, with the task of implementing the interventions envisaged by the Pact. It takes the form of a mixed company with a public majority, a configuration that makes it possible to integrate public interest and private initiative, favouring dynamics of co-planning and co-design oriented towards sustainable local development.

The Patto Territoriale Trigno-Sinello concerns 52 municipalities

distributed across the provinces of Chieti (30), Campobasso (10) and Isernia (12). The area extends from the Adriatic coast, along the valleys of the rivers Trigno and Sinello, to the border with southern Lazio. The municipalities of the Basso Sangro-Trigno involved are: Carunchio, Castelguidone, Castiglione Messer Marino, Celenza sul Trigno, Fraine, Montazzoli, Roccaspinalveti, San Giovanni Lipioni, Schiavi d'Abruzzo and Torrebruna.

The most significant entity, in terms of territorial governance, is represented by the GAL Maiella Verde, a public–private partnership activated within the framework of the LEADER Community initiative. The LAG covers the Basso Sangro-Trigno area in its entirety, involving 84 municipalities and 126 member parties, of whom 8 represent the public component and 118 the private one, performing a strategic role in local development, promoting the integration between urban and rural entities and activating numerous projects in the sectors of agriculture, sustainable tourism and the enhancement of territorial heritage.

The principal lines of intervention pursued by the LAG are articulated along three strategic directions:

- the integration of animal and plant biodiversity into processes of production and transformation, with the objective of promoting practices that are sustainable and coherent with the ecological characteristics of the territory;
- the identification and enhancement of local systems of identity, through the recognition of the cultural, historical and landscape specificities of each area, with the objective of strengthening the sense of belonging and territorial distinctiveness;
- the strengthening of services for the enjoyment of the territory, directed towards improving its accessibility and attractiveness, for the resident population and for visitors alike, with a view to integrated and sustainable development.

Within the socio-economic context of the area, several not-for-profit entrepreneurial entities also operate, among which 16 social and community cooperatives with a significant rootedness in the territory stand out. These organisations perform a key role in improving quality of life, offering support to the most vulnerable segments of the population and promoting initiatives of social inclusion, neighbourhood services and cultural activities.

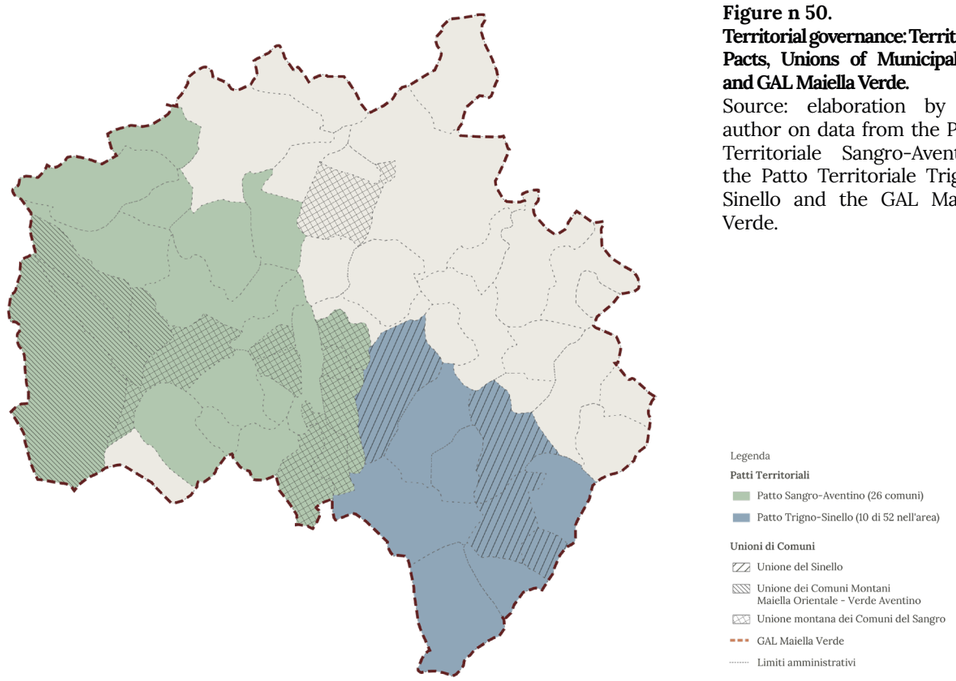


Figure n 50.
Territorial governance: Territorial Pacts, Unions of Municipalities and GAL Maiella Verde.
Source: elaboration by the author on data from the Patto Territoriale Sangro-Aventino, the Patto Territoriale Trigno-Sinello and the GAL Maiella Verde.

From the territorial mapping conducted, however, a picture emerges in which the presence of political-administrative bodies prevails over organisations arising from below or constituted directly by the citizenry. This scenario suggests a social fabric that still tends to rely principally upon public initiative, displaying a relative weakness in its capacity for civic self-organisation.

Spontaneous aggregations concerned with central themes such as education, health services or the right to housing prove poorly developed. Community enterprises too, although present, orient their activities predominantly towards tourism and commerce rather than towards the provision of essential services to the population.

This condition evidences the need to strengthen processes of bottom-up participation, drawing upon existing local networks and promoting a greater direct involvement of citizens in the definition of territorial policies, so that participation does not remain confined to an institutional dimension but becomes a widespread collective and cultural practice.

6.2 RECENT TERRITORIAL PROJECTS AND VISIONS

From 2014 onwards, in the municipalities belonging to the Basso Sangro-Trigno Inner Area a total of 929 projects have been funded, to the amount of approximately 50 million euros. Of these, 228 projects (totalling 8 million euros) were supported through European programming resources, in particular by means of the Regional and National ERDF and ESF Operational Programmes. The remaining portion of the funding derives predominantly from national interventions, with resources allocated through the Development and Cohesion Fund (FSC) and ordinary funds.

At the time of the last survey, 387 projects are recorded as concluded, for a total value of 7.3 million euros, while 80 projects, equal to 4.6 million euros, are not yet recorded as having been launched. The remainder are in the implementation or settlement phase.

Thematically, the majority of interventions has concerned the competitiveness of enterprises, although the associated investments have been, on average, of modest scale (approximately 2,248 euros per project). By contrast, the environmental sector has benefited from the most substantial amounts: with only 8 projects funded, it has absorbed 14.8 million euros. Among these, two important interventions — worth 1.5 million euros each — have concerned works of geotechnical consolidation and stabilisation in the municipalities of Rosello and Castiglione Messer Marino.

The second thematic axis by volume of resources is that of social inclusion and health, with interventions directed towards the realisation of multifunctional centres, the refurbishment of sports facilities, the development of a territorial network of social-care services, and the strengthening of the regional system through the Abruzzo Include project, funded with ESF ROP 2014–2020 resources.

As regards the territorial distribution of the projects:

- The municipalities of Gessopalena, Quadri and Roccaspinalveti prove the most active, with 50 projects each;
- The municipalities of Civitella Messer Raimondo, Fraine and San Giovanni Lipioni have submitted the smallest number of proposals (8 projects each);
- The municipality that has obtained the highest total funding is Villa Santa Maria;
- The municipalities with the highest per capita funding are Montelapiano and Montebello sul Sangro, with over 20,000 euros per inhabitant;
- By contrast, the municipalities of Gessopalena, Montazzoli and Pizzoferrato record per capita values below 500 euros.

It should further be noted that 21 projects (worth 2.6 million euros) refer to resources advanced from the Abruzzo Development and Cohesion Plan 2021–2027.

Interventions funded by the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR)

Completing the picture of public investment, data updated to November 2023 report 441 projects funded through the PNRR in the municipalities of the area. The most frequently activated axes are:

- Green revolution and ecological transition;
- Digitalisation and innovation.

In terms of overall resources, however, it is the Inclusion and cohesion axis that has attracted the greatest volume of funding. Within the Health axis, projects have been launched only in the municipalities of Castiglione Messer Marino and Villa Santa Maria.

At territorial level:

- The municipality of Fara San Martino — among the most significant of the area — is distinguished both by the number of projects submitted and by the total amount of funding received;
- The highest per capita funding is recorded in the municipalities of Montelapiano (52,870 euros per inhabitant) and Rosello (approximately 40,000 euros);
- The municipality with the lowest per capita amount is Gessopalena, with 1,074 euros per inhabitant.

Slow mobility and local public transport

Among the most significant results generated by public funding, the development of an integrated system of slow mobility, structured according to a network logic, stands out. This system represents a strategic infrastructure supporting naturalistic tourism and the experiential tourist offer bound up with the “active holiday”, for which the Basso Sangro-Trigno area displays

a natural vocation.

Particularly significant are the interventions on local public transport (LPT) as well, conceived for school users. Such actions have permitted the strengthening of connections between the municipalities and the principal school premises, with particular attention to those institutions involved in processes of merger. The experimentation conducted in the 2014–2020 period was subsequently institutionalised by the Abruzzo Region, entering into the Regional Transport Plan and being included among the structural services of the Abruzzo LPT service.

7. TYPOLOGIES AND MORPHOLOGIES OF ABANDONMENT IN ABRUZZO AND IN THE BASSO SANGRO - TRIGNO

Inner Abruzzo and the Basso Sangro-Trigno area present themselves today as a territory steeped in time (Manganelli, 2005), characterised by an accumulation of stratified memories in which abandonment is not a terminal event but a complex morphological and social condition (Varagnoli, 2008). These areas, defined as places that do not matter (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018) within the hegemonic narratives of development, are in reality strategic territories for rethinking the care of built heritage and for countering civil inequalities.

Freed from the perception of blight and abandonment, they are beginning today to emerge as places of the possible, above all in ecological and cultural terms, favouring the overcoming of conventional hierarchies and directions and the definition of the complementarity of territorial systems within the mutual relationship between town and countryside. Abruzzo represents an emblematic case for central and southern Italy: a region strongly marked by depopulation, where 82% of municipalities consists of minor centres (250 out of 305), many of them situated in mountain or rural areas, and in which the phenomenon of abandonment is closely bound up with a territorial fragility that combines the physical deterioration of materials with seismic and hydrogeological vulnerability, aggravated by centuries of economic marginalisation (Oteri, 2019; Varagnoli et al., 2020). Within the region, of a total of 305 municipalities, as many as 230 are classified by the SNAI as inner areas, of which 115 fall within the categories of peripheral and ultra-peripheral area, concentrated predominantly in the mountain zones of the Apennine ridge; in 253 of them the resident population is below 5,000. This fragility manifests itself both on the physical plane and as an interpretive device that allows the territory to be read as a stratified fabric in which cycles of abandonment and reuse, destruction and reconstruction, memory and oblivion are superimposed.

As already observed in the introduction, the marginality of the Abruzzo Apennines has paradoxically preserved the authenticity of the built heritage and the quality of natural environments (Oteri, 2019), configuring a resource that mass tourist development has by contrast compromised in many Alpine contexts. This

authenticity, frequently allied to a landscape of great evocative power, constitutes today a heritage of inestimable value, the more precious for being the rarer in the context of the homogenising modernisation that has affected much of the Italian territory. In this sense, the regeneration and reuse of existing heritage, in environmental and landscape terms as much as in building terms, represent a strategic opportunity for initiating concrete processes of sustainable development, favouring demographic stability and promoting the development of new local economic activities. The temporal stratification of these processes has produced a complex geography, in which wholly deserted settlements, partially inhabited nuclei and failed attempts at refoundation coexist (Serafini, 2008; Bartolomucci, 2020). The notion of palimpsest[4] (Corboz, 1983) is particularly pertinent for describing a territory in which each layer of transformation does not entirely erase the preceding one but integrates it within a discontinuous spatial narrative.

The ruins emerging from the woods, the dilapidated houses that punctuate the mountain slopes, the abandoned infrastructures that traverse the landscape, constitute so many signs of a suspended time, crystallised in material forms that resist total disappearance (Varagnoli et al., 2020). The marginalisation of the inner areas of Abruzzo is thereby configured as the outcome of long-term historical processes, in which the abandonment of historic centres is profoundly interwoven with environmental, social and economic dynamics that have sedimented persistent forms of fragility within the territory.

The dynamics of depopulation that today mark much of the regional territory cannot be fully understood without considering the impact that, over the course of the twentieth century and beyond, traumatic events of various kinds have had. Seismic events have played a crucial role: the Marsica earthquake of 1915, which caused over 30,000 deaths, and that of the Maiella in 1933 determined extensive destruction and the forced relocation of entire settlements, redefining in many cases the local settlement geography.

Figure n 51.
The Migration Series. Panel no. 1, Panel no. 23 and Panel no. 40.
Source: The Phillips Collection (Washington D.C.).

The 1915 earthquake, in particular, led to numerous relocations of centres such as Aielli, Frattura, Lecce dei Marsi and Pescina. To these historic events have been added over time further earthquakes that struck Molise in 2002, L'Aquila in 2009 and the central Apennines between 2015 and 2016, accentuating the physical and social instability of these territories and reinforcing the perception of insecurity bound up with remaining in small mountain centres. In parallel, hydrogeological instability too has had a significant role in the transformation of the settlement landscape. The law of 1908, promulgated in the aftermath of the Messina earthquake and directed towards securing settlements

4 The concept of territory as a palimpsest was developed by André Corboz in his essay *Le territoire comme palimpseste* (1983), published in *Diogène*. Corboz invites us to view territory as a surface that is continually rewritten, in which the traces of previous passages do not disappear entirely but remain legible beneath the new layers of transformation. This interpretative framework, originally devised to understand the historical construction of the European landscape, proves particularly useful for analysing the layered complexity of the Apennine territories and Italy's inland areas; De Rossi (2018) also adopts this approach, interpreting inland Italy as a space of abandonment, reuse and reconquest.

threatened by landslides, incentivised the relocation of numerous urban nuclei, favouring the construction of new centres further down the valley and effectively abandoning the original historic villages. In Abruzzo and in neighbouring Molise, this dynamic led to the creation of centres such as Pescolittorio (today Pescosansonesco), leaving in a state of blight villages such as Buonanotte, Salle, Corvara, Castellino del Biferno and Rocchetta al Volturno, transformed into landscapes of ruins that testify still today to the fracture between past and present.

The natural component was thus interwoven with the socio-economic one, contributing to the progressive weakening of the settlement resilience of inner areas. In these territories, indeed, until the mid-twentieth century, the agro-pastoral economy guaranteed a fragile but persistent equilibrium between territory and population; with the agrarian reform of the 1950s, however, industrial growth concentrated in the urban hubs and mass emigration towards northern Italy and abroad broke this equilibrium, triggering a gradual abandonment of the more isolated villages and of the hill and mountain hamlets. Moreover, the subordination of agriculture to industry ruptured settlement cohesion, condemning the old hilltop settlements to marginalisation and progressively emptying the inner areas.

To this scenario was added, finally, the impact of the Second World War: the presence of the Gustav Line — which, from the river Garigliano on the border between Lazio and Campania, ascended towards Cassino and the Mainarde in order to cross the major upland plains of Abruzzo and the Maiella, as far as the Adriatic coast at Ortona — caused extensive destruction in numerous urban and rural centres, among them Francavilla al Mare, Ortona, Lettomanoppello, Palena and Lettopalena, accelerating processes of hollowing-out already under way and further aggravating settlement precarity.

ISTAT data show how, between 1951 and 2021, approximately half of the municipalities of Abruzzo recorded a demographic decline of dramatic proportions, with peaks approaching 90% in cases such as Montebello sul Sangro, Montelapiano, Colledimacine, Villa Santa Lucia degli Abruzzi and San Giovanni Lipioni. In the Basso Sangro-Trigno area, which comprises 37 municipalities of the province of Chieti located between the eastern Maiella and the borders with Molise, 21,778 inhabitants live today (ISTAT, 2024), equal to 5.7% of the provincial population and 1.7% of the regional one, with a proportion of elderly people equal to 32%, appreciably higher than both the regional average (23.4%) and the national average for inner areas (21.2%). Varagnoli et al. (2020) indicate that 11 of the 14 centres examined in the province of Chieti could become entirely uninhabited by 2100, with Colledimacine at risk of reaching this condition as early as 2027. These projections, although based on current trends susceptible of reversal, evidence the urgency of structured interventions of territorial regeneration.

The combination of these factors, distributed over time yet profoundly interconnected, has contributed to shaping a stratified and discontinuous geography of abandonment, in which the memory of trauma is inscribed within the morphologies of the built environment and renders indispensable, for any project of regeneration, an attentive and integrated historical reading of territorial transformations. The analysis that follows is developed across four interconnected levels: historic settlements and villages (see Historic settlements and villages: geographies of permanence between adaptation and resistance), understood as urban systems traversed by processes of total or partial abandonment or of refoundation; open spaces and disused agricultural territories (see Open spaces and disused agricultural territories), which testify to the rupture of the productive relationship between community and rural landscape; disused buildings and artefacts (see Disused buildings and artefacts: geographies of the functional void), where the disuse of public, private, ecclesiastical, military and industrial functions produces a fragmented geography of functional voids; and finally, architectural heritage in fragile areas (see Architectural heritage in fragile areas: problems and prospects), which synthesises the conservation issues and the prospects for enhancement in contexts characterised by seismic, hydrogeological and socio-economic vulnerability. This articulation does not respond to a merely classificatory logic but seeks to convey the systemic nature of abandonment, in which the various scales — from the building to the territory — mutually influence one another, configuring landscapes of ruin that require integrated strategies of intervention.

7.1 HISTORIC SETTLEMENTS AND VILLAGES: GEOGRAPHIES OF PERMANENCE BETWEEN ADAPTATION AND RESISTANCE

Abruzzo is configured as a region characterised by what Serafini (2008) terms a coherence of heterogeneity: a territory in which the morphological variability of the landscape — from the Adriatic coastal belt to the Apennine heights — has generated a vast and differentiated casuistry of minor centres, which represent over 90% of regional settlements (Serafini, 2008; Varagnoli et al., 2020). This multiplicity of settlement forms is not the product of historical contingency but the outcome of long-term processes in which local communities elaborated sophisticated adaptive responses to the environmental, economic and social conditions specific to each context.

The historic villages of Abruzzo embody a centuries-old constructional wisdom stratified over time, founded upon the intelligent and sustainable use of local materials — limestone, fired brick, chestnut and oak timber — and upon building techniques handed down across generations through a collective artisanal knowledge (Varagnoli, 2008).

Their urban conformation responds not to merely aesthetic or formal logics but reflects a profound environmental rationality, based upon maximum efficiency in the use of land and upon protection from natural elements: settlements perch upon ridges, lean against slopes or arrange themselves in a crown around rocky spurs, minimising exposure to prevailing winds and optimising solar gain in the cold seasons.

This territorial intelligence, today recognised as a precursor of the principles of sustainability and climate resilience, represents a heritage of knowledge embedded within built matter that has progressively been lost with abandonment and with modern reconstructions, which have privileged standardised, decontextualised criteria frequently extraneous to historic settlement logics (Serafini, 2008; Bartolomucci, 2020).

The present condition of the historic villages of Abruzzo cannot, however, be understood without considering how this constructional legacy has confronted the processes of transformation and abandonment described above. Demographic crisis, post-seismic relocations and the progressive hollowing-out of agro-pastoral economies have transformed many of these settlements into partially deserted containers, in which the physical deterioration of materials is interwoven with the loss of the social and cultural practices that had determined their genesis and their persistence. The abandoned or semi-abandoned villages of the Abruzzo Apennines are thereby configured as material archives of a knowledge of dwelling that risks dissolving definitively, but which at the same time represents a strategic resource for imagining alternative forms of dwelling and of regenerating inner territories.

The typological analysis that follows identifies three principal configurations of the abandonment of historic settlements — total, partial and by refoundation — not as rigid categories but as processual modalities that frequently coexist within the same territory, generating complex geographies in which differing temporalities and settlement strategies are superimposed.

a. Wholly abandoned

Total abandonment involves simultaneously the urban nucleus and the rural territory that sustains it, configuring itself as a process of demographic and functional desertification affecting the entire settlement system (Varagnoli et al., 2020). In Abruzzo, villages that have become ghost towns are frequently the outcome of traumatic events — seismic, wartime, hydrogeological — that have triggered processes of definitive abandonment, transforming entire inhabited centres into monumental ruins.

Albe Vecchia, abandoned after the Marsica earthquake of 1915, represents an emblematic case: the ancient centre, situated in a dominant position over Lake Fucino, saw its population decimated by the earthquake and then progressively transferred to the new rationalist settlement of Albe, built down in the valley. Today it presents itself as an assemblage of perimeter walls, collapsed façades and street layouts overrun by vegetation, retaining nonetheless a strong evocative charge that renders it a site of collective memory (Varagnoli et al., 2020). Similar is the case of Ocre, reduced to an urban skeleton in which the original site becomes ruin while life shifts elsewhere.

In the Basso Sangro, the centre of Buonanotte (today Montebello

sul Sangro) was abandoned in the mid-1950s on account of severe risks of slope instability, remaining today as a silent ruin that dominates the valley (Varagnoli et al., 2020). The transfer of the population to the new centre of Montebello sul Sangro, planned according to criteria of seismic and hydrogeological safety in a flatter and more readily accessible zone, entailed the definitive loss of the organic relationship between settlement and natural morphology that had characterised the ancient centre. This represents one of the many cases of "doubling" that mark Abruzzo, where the transfer to a new, safer and more accessible settlement has not succeeded in countering the exodus of the population over the long term (Varagnoli et al., 2020).

Figure n 52. Buonanotte (Montebello sul Sangro)
Source: photographs by Wallace (left), E. Billai (right).

Another significant example is Gessopalena, the village of gypsum, where the built fabric, constituted by rupestrian cells excavated directly into the gypsum rock, was progressively abandoned following a series of catastrophic[5] events, determining the definitive relocation of the population towards new settlements situated further down the valley.
The ancient nucleus remains today as an open-air museum of rare authenticity, testimony to an extreme adaptation to environmental conditions and available resources, in which the dwellings represent a form of vernacular architecture unique within the regional panorama; the abandonment of these structures has crystallised a heritage of constructional knowledge and dwelling practices that would otherwise have been erased by modern transformations.
These wholly abandoned villages raise crucial questions in terms of conservation and enhancement: on the one hand, the absence of settlement pressures and of transformative interventions has preserved the material and spatial authenticity of these places, rendering them archaeological documents of inestimable value; on the other, prolonged exposure to atmospheric agents, the absence of maintenance and progressive structural deterioration threaten their very physical survival (Oteri, 2019; Bartolomucci, 2020).
A dilemma therefore arises between "museal" conservation — which risks freezing these settlements in a condition of picturesque ruin — and projects of integral recovery which might compromise the very values of authenticity that render them significant.

b. Partially abandoned

More frequent are forms of "selective" or partial abandonment, which configure a hybrid and unstable urban condition. Many centres of the Sangro Valley present today a situation in which one dwelling in three is empty, creating a fragmented urban landscape in which nuclei still inhabited coexist with wholly deserted sectors.
This phenomenon creates isolated pockets of abandonment that fragment the social and physical fabric, generating functional and perceptual discontinuities that profoundly alter the character of historic centres.
Cases of partial abandonment particularly affect small rural centres and hamlets, where abandonment may concern several contiguous buildings — the so-called abandonment by pockets that characterises centres such as Fallo, Rosello, Pietraferrazzana and Monteferrante — or else cases of isolated abandonment distributed capillarily across the entire built fabric.

5 In 1850, a landslide caused the collapse of the old town centre and the subsequent division of the settlement; the 1933 Maiella earthquake caused significant damage, prompting the population to move to a safer area; finally, the bombing raids of the Second World War contributed to the town centre's definitive decline.

Figure n 53.
Selective abandonment and settlement thinning-out in a historic centre of the Basso Sangro-Trigno.
Monteferrante,
(top left);
Pietraferrazzana,
(top right);
Rosello,
(below);
Source: Borghi Autentici d'Italia, Wallace, Abruzzocittà.

The case of Colledimacine is emblematic of the gravity of the situation: of a total of 443 residential buildings, as many as 106 are in a state of ruin, 150 are stably inhabited and 24 are used sporadically (Varagnoli et al., 2020), delineating a picture in which more than a quarter of the built heritage is by now lost and less than half of the buildings still standing retains a continuous residential function. An analogous condition is found at Lettopalena, Palena, San Giovanni Lipioni and other centres composing the Basso Sangro-Trigno area, underlining how demographic thinning-out — with a median age above 60 — is interwoven with the deterioration of the built environment, contributing to a process of progressive erosion of settlement resilience. In these contexts, the strongly unbalanced demographic structure compromises the social and economic sustainability of small centres, while the lack of essential services (schools, clinics, shops) fuels a vicious circle that further accelerates depopulation, rendering it ever more difficult to remain even for those who would be willing to do so.

Paradoxically, abandonment preserves traditional building techniques (rubble-filled masonry, reed-lath renderings, timber floors with terracotta tiles) which the transformations of the 1960s have by contrast erased in the more dynamic centres (Varagnoli, 2008).

Abandoned dwellings thus become involuntary archives of constructional knowledge, in which it is possible to study solutions that respected the principles of reversibility, material compatibility and functional adaptability. The absence of maintenance, however, renders these structures extremely vulnerable: the deterioration of timber roofs rapidly leads to the collapse of floors, transforming interiors into deposits of rubble overrun by vegetation and triggering processes of accelerated deterioration that render ever more urgent a distinction between recoverable heritage and ruins that are by now irrecoverable, for which consolidation represents the only realistically pursuable intervention.

Partial abandonment moreover generates specific critical issues in urban management: the fragmentation of ownership, the difficulty of tracing owners — frequently emigrated or deceased — and the scarcity of economic resources available for recovery constitute almost insurmountable obstacles to any systematic refurbishment intervention (Bartolomucci, 2020). The voids created by collapses are not simple physical lacunae but fractures that interrupt historic routes, isolate inhabited buildings and alter the spatial relations that defined the character of the historic centre (Serafini, 2008).

These voids, frequently perceived as residual spaces devoid of value, require innovative design strategies that address the overall reconfiguration of urban space. Participatory instruments such as collaboration pacts between citizens and institutions, co-design workshops and community cooperatives may in this sense contribute actively to regeneration, favouring the creation of services and promoting the management of shared spaces that respond to the real requirements of the territory.

c. Refoundation of new centres

The history of Abruzzo is, in many cases, a history of the "nomadism of cities" (Musset, 2002), a long-term process that has seen settlements abandoned and refounded on different sites, frequently at a short distance from the original nucleus. Refoundation was conceived as a veritable correction of the errors of the first foundation, seeking terrain more stable in geomorphological terms, better exposed climatically and more accessible infrastructurally, according to a profoundly pragmatic settlement logic in which safety and functionality prevailed over the symbolic and commemorative bonds with the ancestral site.

Such is the case of Lettopalena: entirely destroyed during the Second World War by bombardment and Nazi reprisals, and already gravely afflicted by the 1933 earthquake, it was rebuilt anew on the far side of the river Aventino, in a flat and readily accessible position (Serafini, 2008).

This refoundation determined a total fracture, physical and identitary, with the old site, today almost forgotten by the local population and visited only occasionally by history enthusiasts or researchers. The new Lettopalena presents a regular urban layout, based upon an orthogonal grid of streets and upon standardised building typologies that have nothing in common with the organic morphology of the ancient centre.

Other examples of this "hourglass game" (Aristone, 2020) — in which the emptying of the ancient centre corresponds symmetrically to the filling of a nucleus down in the valley — are found at Salle, Pescosansonesco and Corvara, the last of these officially relocated by presidential decree in 1956 following repeated landslide events that had rendered the original site uninhabitable (Serafini, 2008; Aristone, 2020).

Figura n 54.
Lettopalena destroyed by the bombardments of 19433.
(left)
The new Lettopalena.
(right)
Source: photographs by L. Ponticelli

The refoundation of Corvara represents one of the most emblematic cases of this dynamic: the new centre, built according to the criteria of modern town planning, developed along the principal road with isolated buildings and centralised services, while the ancient nucleus remained clinging to the slope as a spectral presence dominating the landscape.

Figure n 55.
Corvara, old historic centre.
Source: photographic archive of the Ente Parco Nazionale Gran Sasso e Monti della Laga; E. Barbini.

Particularly significant is the phenomenon of the duplication of urban centres on the valley floor, typical of Atessa but common also to other neighbouring centres such as Altino, Casoli and Perano. The progressive transfer of inhabitants has generated new settlements which end by assuming a demographic and territorial weight superior to that of the original historic nuclei, creating a settlement duality that poses complex questions of territorial governance. The administrative fragmentation and the need to manage two polarities — the historic centre in abandonment and the new expansion down in the valley — require a perspective extending beyond municipal administrative boundaries. The refoundation of centres raises profound questions concerning the relationship between continuity and innovation in the construction of the territory. If on the one hand the transfer towards safer and more functional sites has guaranteed the survival of communities and improved living conditions, on the other it has entailed the loss of an intangible heritage made up of social practices, collective rituals and spatial relations inseparably bound to the configuration of the original nucleus (Aristone, 2020). The new centres, although guaranteeing higher housing standards, have frequently encountered difficulties in reconstructing the forms of cohesion and communal organisation proper to the historic nuclei, with effects that are reflected in social resilience and in the stability of local relations.

The three configurations analysed — total abandonment, partial abandonment and refoundation (Table X) — do not constitute discrete categories but moments of a processual continuum traversing the territories of inner Abruzzo. Their co-presence within the same context generates complex geographies in which differing temporalities are superimposed: the crystallised time of ghost villages, the suspended time of partially inhabited centres, the accelerated time of new foundations. This temporal and morphological stratification imposes an interpretive approach extending beyond typological cataloguing, requiring the capacity to read the systemic relations between abandoned settlements, disused rural spaces (see Open spaces and disused agricultural territories) and abandoned built heritage (see Disused buildings and artefacts: geographies of the functional void). The abandoned or semi-abandoned villages of Abruzzo thus represent a paradox: they are simultaneously testimonies of a settlement failure and archives of a precious constructional knowledge; sites of collective memory and spaces of experimentation for new forms of dwelling; landscapes of the end and laboratories of possible regeneration. Their liminal condition — between permanence and disappearance, between memory and oblivion — renders them strategic terrains for constructing that "geography of possibilities" which, transcending the dominant narrative founded upon marginality and decline, recognises in the inner areas of Abruzzo an active heritage of environmental, cultural and settlement resources.

Table n 18. Configurations of settlement abandonment in the inner territories of Abruzzo. Source: elaboration by the author on the basis of Serafini (2008), Aristone (2020), Varagnoli et al. (2020).

Configuration	Principal characteristics	Prevailing dynamics	Critical issues	Potential
Total abandonment	Wholly uninhabited settlements	Irreversible depopulation, complete disuse of functions	Collapses, loss of accessibility, advanced blight	Cultural enhancement, heritage tourism, conservation of ruins
Partial abandonment	Co-presence of inhabited buildings, voids and ruins	Demographic thinning-out, discontinuous use of heritage	Ownership fragmentation, loss of services, widespread blight	Selective regeneration, residential and community reuse
Refoundation of new centres	Transfer of the settlement to safer and more accessible sites	Settlement relocation, growth of valley-floor nuclei	Loss of territorial memory, dualism between old and new centre	New centralities, better settlement conditions, territorial integration

7.2 OPEN SPACES AND DISUSED AGRICULTURAL TERRITORIES

Abandonment concerns not only the built environment but affects the entire territorial system that for centuries had guaranteed the subsistence of local communities, radically transforming the physiognomy of the rural landscape of Abruzzo. If abandoned villages represent the settlement dimension of this process, open spaces and disused agricultural territories constitute its landscape and productive dimension: two faces of a single systemic phenomenon that has progressively eroded the coherence of the relationship between community, territory and resources (Oteri, 2019; Aristone, 2020). Adopting the reading proposed by Angrilli et al. (2025) on the basis of Banham's (1971) reflection on urban ecologies, it is possible to recognise how built heritage, the agro-forestry landscape, productive practices and networks of relation constitute in the Apennine context interdependent local ecologies: the reading of these spaces must move beyond a mere diagnosis of decline and recognise them as environmental and cultural infrastructures, providers of fundamental ecosystem services (water regulation, air quality, biodiversity, agricultural soil, landscape) and sources of strategic resources for imagining alternative forms of territorial development.

The end of the pastoral economy and of transhumance entailed the disuse of the tratturi (drove roads), once the backbone of interregional trade and the load-bearing structure of an economy integrated at Apennine scale. These millennia-old routes — termed the "green motorways of antiquity" for their capacity to connect ecosystems, economies and cultures at interregional scale — which linked the mountain pastures of Abruzzo with the plains of Apulia, generating flows of people, goods and knowledge, have lost their original function together with the entire system of minor infrastructures that punctuated them: taverns, stazzi[6] (pastoral folds), rural churches, drinking troughs, bridges (Varagnoli et al., 2020).

The disuse of this network has entailed the loss of an

6 The term 'stazzo' (or 'statio', from the Latin *stare*, meaning 'to stay') refers to the open-air space used for livestock to spend the night during transhumance: an oval or rectangular enclosure bounded by dry stone walls for cattle, or an area fenced off with rope netting for sheep, sometimes divided into sections according to the type of animal. In a broader sense, the term referred to any place of rest or temporary shelter along the sheep tracks.

infrastructural system of great historical significance and the fragmentation of pastoral ecosystems shaped for millennia by human action. The high-altitude grasslands, once kept open by sheep grazing, are progressively colonised by woodland, altering pre-existing ecological equilibria and increasing the risks of fire and hydrogeological instability (Bartolomucci, 2020). The architectures of transhumance — from the stazzi to the small dry-stone huts — have fallen into ruin, depriving the territory of material testimonies of a pastoral culture that has profoundly marked the identity of Abruzzo and that today struggles to find adequate forms of recognition and protection.

Figure n 56. The Tratturo Magno as historic infrastructure of the Apennine pastoral landscape. Historic photographs of transhumance along the Tratturo Magno.
Source: Strada dei Parchi.

In parallel, the decline of subsistence agriculture has transformed terraced cultivations into uncultivated fields, where invasive vegetation progressively alters hydrogeological equilibria, favouring erosive and landslide phenomena (Bartolomucci, 2020). The system of terracing — which for centuries had permitted the cultivation of even very steep slopes, transforming the morphology of the territory into an anthropic landscape of extraordinary complexity — is abandoned together with the maintenance practices that guaranteed its stability.
The dry-stone walls, no longer tended, progressively collapse, determining the failure of agrarian arrangements and the triggering of mass movements. The loss of these artefacts has repercussions extending well beyond the aesthetic dimension of the landscape, affecting the territory's capacity to regulate water runoff, prevent flood phenomena and maintain soil fertility: a loss of ecosystem services that is scarcely reversible in the short term and all the graver in a context, such as that of Abruzzo, already marked by high hydrogeological vulnerability (Angrilli and Matta, 2025).

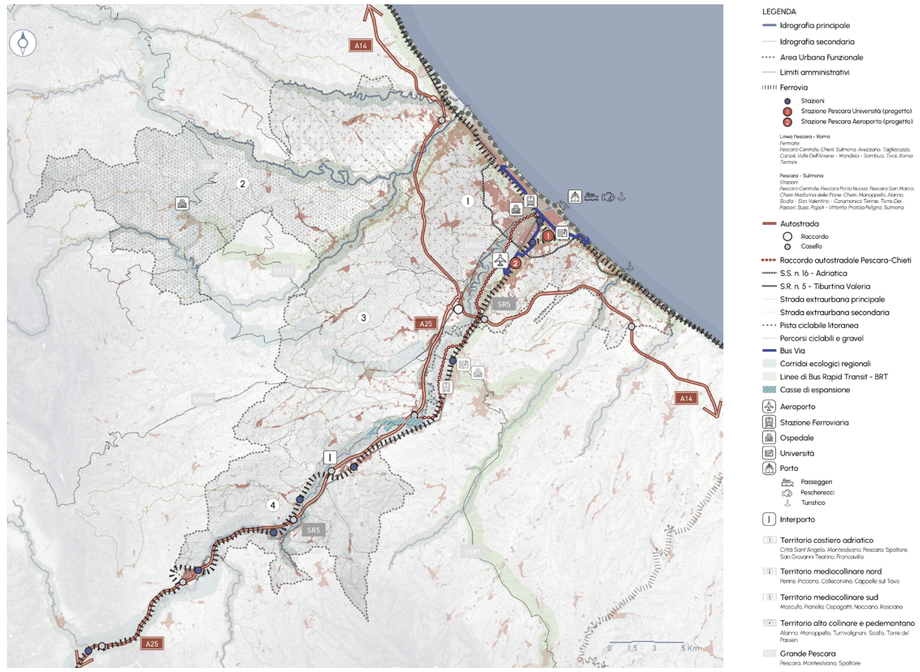
In the Basso Sangro, the post-war agrarian reform added a further level of complexity to this picture. Land redistribution, which ought to have created a class of small owner-cultivators, thereby stabilising the rural population, proved substantially ineffective: the reduced dimensions of the holdings, the poor quality of the soils and the absence of adequate infrastructure rendered the permanence of the assignee families economically unsustainable, and they abandoned the assigned lands within a few years in order to follow the migratory flows towards the industrial centres of northern Italy and of Europe (Varagnoli et al., 2020).
This squandering of territory manifests itself today in a vast network of marginal open spaces in which the traditional agrarian landscape has been replaced by a dispersed and fragmentary urbanisation, frequently fuelled by speculation in second homes, used only for brief periods of the year, which do not sustain local economies in a stable manner and contribute to the social desertification of villages, withdrawing resources that could instead be invested in the recovery of historic centres and in the enhancement of the rural cultural capital constituted by villages, rural architecture, historic agrarian landscapes and local traditions. This is, moreover, a form of uncritical enhancement which, oriented solely towards seasonal enjoyment rather than towards real territorial rootedness, risks falling within that category of ineffective approaches — founded upon touristification (see Contemporary territorial dynamics) and the episodic consumption of heritage — which have proved incapable of constructing sustainable processes of development over the medium term. The fracture between inner areas and coastal belts synthesises and amplifies all these dynamics, since while the coast has experienced a tumultuous and frequently disorderly urban growth, driven by seaside tourist development, the hinterland has undergone a progressive demographic and economic decline that has left deep scars upon the territory. The territory, understood as a common good (Oteri, 2019), has lost its unitary physiognomy, dissolving into a set of spatial relics oscillating between mountain and coast without any strategy of connection. This polarisation produces territorial imbalances that render it ever more difficult to imagine — and above all to practise — integrated and sustainable development strategies.

Yet it is precisely this context of fracture that has begun to generate significant institutional responses, as demonstrated by the Pescara context, in which the strategic vision of the Metro-Collina (Fig. XX) — elaborated within the framework of the definition of the Functional Urban Area (FUA) of Pescara — proposes a structural overcoming of the coast/hinterland dichotomy through the concept of the "allied territory".

In this territorial configuration, each portion of the FUA contributes to the sustainability of the entire system with a view to a co-development founded upon interdependence, co-responsibility and reciprocity, in which the hill system is no longer a mere hinterland of the coastal city but a co-protagonist of metropolitan development, an active territorial subject, bearer of environmental, cultural and productive resources that the coastal city cannot generate alone (Angrilli and Matta, 2025).

This vision, although elaborated in a context geographically proximate to but distinct from the Basso Sangro-Trigno, offers an interpretive and operational framework useful for rethinking the role of disused open spaces: not as relics of an economy that has passed, condemned to irrelevance, but as environmental and cultural infrastructures strategic for the resilience of inner territories. The inner areas of the Basso Sangro-Trigno are the historical result of a dynamic equilibrium between human settlement and productive use of the land, in which dwelling, cultivating, rearing livestock and managing woodland constituted interdependent activities, responsible for the generation of landscape and collective identity.

The disuse of open spaces is configured on the one hand as a loss of agrarian productivity, on the other as an erosion of that ecological and identitary coherence which holds settlement and landscape together: a regenerative approach that fails to take account of the fate of productive open space and of the ecosystem services it provides risks producing sterile interventions, incapable of activating local economic cycles or of restoring meaning to places. Understanding this integrated system is therefore a precondition of any regeneration strategy — a theme that will be examined in greater depth in section 7.4, after the specific typologies of disused buildings and artefacts composing the abandoned built heritage of the area have been examined in section 7.3.



7.3 DISUSED BUILDINGS AND ARTEFACTS: GEOGRAPHIES OF THE FUNCTIONAL VOID

The disuse of historic settlements and of productive open spaces analysed in the preceding sections finds in disused built heritage its most capillary and visible dimension. Every abandoned function — residential, ecclesiastical, public, military, industrial — leaves upon the territory a physical, symbolic and relational void, which interrupts networks of meaning sedimented over time and produces fractures in the identitary coherence of places (Varagnoli, 2008; Oteri, 2019).

The morphology of abandonment is therefore specified into differing functional typologies, each bearing its own cultural and architectural values, and specific critical issues that require diversified conservational and design approaches. The process of reuse of abandoned heritage ought to concern as a priority those buildings in conditions of safety and habitability, recognising in this distinction between recoverable heritage and ruins a precondition of any effective regeneration strategy.

Figure n 57.
The Metro-Collina strategic vision
Source: elaboration by I. Matta and M. Angrilli.

a. Buildings in public and private use

The seigneurial palaces and civil dwellings of minor historic centres frequently lie in a state of oblivion, silent testimonies of a stratified society that reserved differentiated spaces and decorations for different social classes. Examples such as Palazzo Ricci at Popoli or the villa Caffè at Pescara show how neglect or improper restoration may erase the distinctive characters of local architecture, replacing original elements with incompatible materials and techniques (Varagnoli, 2008). Many private buildings, once the fulcrum of urban density and of social life, are today lacunae within the built fabric, open wounds that expose chimneys, internal staircases and wall frescoes as a result of partial collapses (Serafini, 2008).

Figure n 58.
Palazzo Ricci at Popoli.
Source Palazzo Ricci

The noble palaces represented residences, but also centres of economic and political power: their internal courtyards accommodated markets and fairs, their monumental portals marked the entrance to spaces of representation in which public and private ceremonies took place. Their abandonment has entailed the loss of this functional complexity, reducing them to empty containers and accelerating the deterioration of the decorated interiors (stuccoes, frescoes and fine floors) once the heating and ventilation systems that guaranteed their conservation had ceased to function (Varagnoli, 2008).

The civil dwellings of minor centres, although devoid of the monumental value of the palaces, conserve equally precious testimonies of material culture and of dwelling practices: kitchens with their large hooded fireplaces, vaulted cellars excavated into the rock, attic granaries with ventilated floors, constitute a repertoire of functional solutions that responded with great efficacy to the requirements of rural life (Bartolomucci, 2020).

The abandonment of these structures entails the loss of a heritage of empirical knowledge that might still furnish precious indications for a sustainable and climatically adapted design.

b. Buildings in ecclesiastical use

Churches are frequently the last stronghold of memory in abandoned villages, symbols of a communal dimension that endures beyond the end of civil life. If the church of San Berardo at Pescina appears today mutilated by the post-1915 consolidations, which sacrificed architectural coherence to structural stability, other rural churches along the tratturi have been reduced to quarries of material, stripped of their squared stones for reuse elsewhere (Varagnoli, 2008). In many villages of the Sangro, such as Rosello, the parish church is the sole surviving building emerging amid the rubble, assuming a monumental value isolated from its original context (Serafini, 2008).

Rural churches constitute a widespread heritage of extraordinary significance, both for the artistic and architectural values that many of them conserve and for the role they performed as points of reference in the landscape and in the life of communities: they marked the rhythms of agricultural labour with their patronal feasts, offered refuge to travellers, and guarded genealogical memories through family burials (Varagnoli et al., 2020). Their abandonment determines the rupture of these intangible bonds, erasing rituals and practices that had shaped local identity for centuries.

Many abandoned churches still conserve decorative apparatus of great interest, such as votive frescoes, carved wooden altars, processional statues and liturgical furnishings in precious metal, which prove exposed to the gravest risks of theft and vandalism — risks that in recent decades have dramatically impoverished the ecclesiastical heritage of inner areas, in a context in which soprintendenze (heritage protection authorities) and dioceses, frequently devoid of adequate resources, struggle to guarantee even minimal surveillance (Oteri, 2019).

c. Buildings in military use

The disposal of military heritage represents an emerging theme in the debate on urban regeneration. In Italy, and in Abruzzo

too, vast restricted areas (barracks, depots, powder magazines, firing ranges) today constitute military voids awaiting processes of sustainable regeneration (Camerin and Gastaldi, 2021). These complexes, frequently situated in central positions within consolidated urban fabrics or in settings of great landscape value, offer the opportunity to trigger new urban centralities through temporary reuse or definitive conversion into public, university or cultural facilities (Camerin and Gastaldi, 2021; Balletto et al., 2021). Their specificity relative to other typologies of abandonment resides in their large dimensions, in the diversification of their buildings — quarters, warehouses, workshops, infirmaries — and in the circumstance that, having been withdrawn from public use for decades, they have frequently conserved environmental and landscape characters by now rare within urban fabrics, configuring themselves as veritable ecological islands (Balletto et al., 2021). Conversion nonetheless requires substantial investment and high design capacities: environmental remediation, frequently necessary at sites used for exercises or munitions storage, and the energy and structural upgrading of existing volumes significantly increase recovery costs, while the fragmentation of ownership among various State administrations further complicates decision-making processes (Camerin and Gastaldi, 2021).

d. Buildings in industrial use

The industrial archaeology of Abruzzo comprises mills, brick kilns (the so-called pinciare), fulling mills, wool mills, paper mills and hydroelectric plants, frequently situated along the watercourses that furnished the motive power necessary for the functioning of the plants (Varagnoli, 2008). These artefacts, born of a symbiosis with local resources and of a skilful management of water, are today fragile architectures at risk of disappearing definitively, depriving the territory of fundamental testimonies to the history of labour, technique and local entrepreneurship (Oteri, 2019; Varagnoli et al., 2020).

Mills constituted essential infrastructures for local economies: they were not simple productive plants but places of socialisation where news was exchanged, contracts concluded and feasts celebrated. Their architecture reflected a profound hydraulic knowledge: the systems of derivation, the mill races, the weirs

and the head-ponds constituted engineering artefacts of great technical refinement, and their abandonment has entailed the loss of the buildings and the deterioration of the hydraulic works, with negative consequences for the regulation of watercourses and for ecosystemic equilibrium (Varagnoli, 2008).

The pinciare, built in refractory brick and raw earth, were generally circular or elliptical in plan and permitted the firing of thousands of bricks and tiles; their location depended upon the presence of suitable clays and of timber to fuel the kilns. Today these structures have almost entirely disappeared: many have been demolished, others have collapsed through neglect, and only a few have been recovered or musealised (Varagnoli et al., 2020), with the consequent loss of the memory of a productive cycle that for centuries furnished the building materials of these villages.

Figure n 59.
Gualchiera Orsatti, Fara San Martino.
(above)
Source: Parco nazionale della Maiella
Pinciara, Sant'Omero.
(below)
Source: Web

The textile works, concentrated above all along the rivers Aterno-Pescara and Sangro, represented a form of gentle industrialisation, which integrated the use of hydraulic power without significantly altering the characters of the territory: wool mills, paper mills and fulling mills transformed wool, hemp and rags into quality finished products, but many of these establishments, unable to compete with mass industrial production, were abandoned in the second half of the twentieth century, while only a portion has been converted to other uses and numerous buildings today lie in a state of complete blight (Oteri, 2019). What these differing typologies of disused heritage have in common is their nature as material archives of technical knowledge, social practices and economic relations at risk of dissolution; as Angrilli et al. (2025) observe, uncritical reuses oriented solely towards musealisation or spectacularisation have proved ineffective in constructing durable regenerative processes, whereas approaches based upon participatory management, which reintegrate artefacts within vital economic and social cycles, constitute the necessary condition for transforming disused heritage from inert burden into an active resource for territorial regeneration. It is around this tension between conservation and reactivation, between the safeguarding of the past and the construction of the future, that the problems and prospects to be analysed in the concluding section are articulated (see Architectural heritage in fragile areas: problems and prospects).

7.4 ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE IN FRAGILE AREAS: PROBLEMS AND PROSPECTS

The context of abandonment in Abruzzo and in the Basso Sangro-Trigno poses complex problems and, paradoxically, offers innovative prospects bound up with architectural heritage understood as territorial capital. Understanding this dual nature — of crisis and of latent resource — requires an approach extending beyond a simple diagnosis of physical deterioration in order to interrogate the structural conditions that have produced the fragility and the concrete possibilities of reversing its direction. Physical deterioration — affecting materials, structures and installations — and seismic vulnerability represent the most evident manifestations of this fragility, but the more profound crisis is that of the system of relations between people and habitat, which has repercussions in the loss of memory and of meaning of the built heritage (Oteri, 2019). The omission of practices of care amplifies the fragility, which is to be understood not so much as a defect intrinsic to the architecture as a consequence of the indifference and the distance of the collectivity from its own places of origin. The architectural heritage of inner areas progressively loses its identitary function for communities, transforming itself into an assemblage of ruins devoid of recognised value; and it is precisely in this loss of recognition, rather than in physical deterioration, that the threat most difficult to counter resides.

The occasions of post-seismic reconstruction, although necessary, frequently represent a greater risk for historic built fabric than the earthquakes themselves. In Abruzzo, the reconstruction following the 2009 earthquake at L'Aquila and that following the 2016 earthquake in the central Apennines was frequently characterised by extensive demolitions and securing works that erased the physical substance and the identity of these places (Oteri, 2019). The emergency logic, which privileges rapidity of intervention over quality of outcome and considers the building as a mere property to be refurbished, disregarding entirely the historical-constructional knowledge and the values of the context, has produced in many cases the definitive erasure of urban fabrics that might have been recovered through more respectful and scientifically grounded approaches.

Post-seismic reconstruction moreover makes it possible to bring into focus a dimension frequently underestimated in the analysis of abandonment: the economic one, understood not only as the cost of interventions but as the relationship between public investment and effective territorial reactivation. The Abruzzo case is, from this standpoint, a laboratory of national scope. Following the 2009 earthquake, approximately 21 billion euros were invested in reconstruction — a figure for which, significantly, no definitive official quantification yet exists — which have yielded a stock of over 20,000 refurbished residential units, characterised today by high technological, energy and anti-seismic standards. Yet a significant share of this stock remains in a condition of underuse or of total non-use: the physical availability of recovered dwellings has not translated into repopulation, generating a systemic

territorial mismatch between refurbished housing supply and the absence of the conditions (employment opportunities, services, connections, demographic critical mass) that render dwelling sustainable (Carbonara et al., 2025). Analysis of the distribution of resources reveals the roots of this outcome. Approximately 78 per cent of investment was concentrated upon the refurbishment of private residential heritage, while in parallel the provision of essential services was contracting: over the period considered, 45 per cent of the municipalities of the cratere (earthquake crater zone) lost at least one school, 30 per cent lost basic health services and 60 per cent recorded reductions in public transport (Carbonara et al., 2025). To this is added a structural distortion bound up with the composition of the stock: in the municipalities of the cratere a very high share of the recovered buildings consists of second homes. The case of Bussi sul Tirino is emblematic: the data of the Reconstruction Plan recorded 463 second homes (67 per cent of the stock) against 230 principal dwellings, with an estimated recovery cost of 29 million euros for the former and 19 for the latter; the State, that is, invested more resources in the recovery of a stock which by definition does not respond to primary housing needs (Carbonara et al., 2025). The housing hardship of inner areas thus assumes sub-surface characteristics that escape traditional indicators constructed upon the urban and manifest forms of the phenomenon: not a physical shortage of dwellings, but an impossibility of inhabiting available dwellings (and ones even refurbished with public money) owing to the absence of the territorial conditions that render dwelling economically and socially practicable.

These findings have two direct implications for the present research. The first is of an interpretive order and confirms what has been argued in the preceding chapters: sectoral approaches centred upon building recovery alone are structurally inadequate, since the value of an intervention depends not upon the technical quality of the recovery but upon its integration with economic development, services and territorial connectivity. Investing in physical recovery without acting upon contextual conditions risks producing — as post-seismic reconstruction demonstrates at maximum scale — a stock that is technically excellent but territorially inconsequential. The second implication is of a methodological order and reinforces the epistemic hypothesis of the research: the proposal for a regional observatory of dwelling, founded upon integrated indicators that simultaneously read housing hardship, territorial vitality and the effectiveness of investment — among them the ratio between the cost of an intervention and the units effectively reactivated — converges with the thesis sustained here of the systematic production of knowledge as a precondition of any public policy on disused heritage, and suggests a natural extension of it: the municipal inventory tested in this research may constitute the elementary informational unit of such an observatory, welding the micro scale of the survey to the regional scale of monitoring and programming.

Analogous contradictions, on the plane of instruments of enhancement, emerge in the analysis of the National Strategy for Inner Areas as well: although the SNAI recognises cultural capital as a driver for the development of marginal areas, the outcomes thus far have not been encouraging (Oteri, 2019). Local administrations frequently confine themselves to proposals for restoration and reuse oriented exclusively towards external users — alberghi diffusi, museums, tourist attractors — without constructing an organic connection between economic revival programmes and the conservation of built heritage; in this way these projects risk transforming villages into stage sets devoid of authentic life, destined for a superficial and seasonal consumption. This is precisely that twentieth-century drift towards musealisation and spectacularisation which Angrilli et al. (2025) identify as one of the principal causes of the ineffectiveness of regeneration policies in inner areas: the tendency to replicate best practices on the assumption that these may prove effective everywhere, ignoring the specificity of territories and the response of communities. What is lacking is an integrated vision capable of recognising in built heritage not an object to be conserved or exhibited, but a living infrastructure to be reintegrated within economic and social cycles vital to the territory. Interpreted as a condition of preserved authenticity — the paradoxical outcome of decades of marginality and isolation — abandonment and depopulation are configured today as a rare resource within the Italian panorama, capable of attracting forms of sustainable tourism and models

of life alternative to the dominant urban one. Recognising it as such, however, does not mean replicating standardised models of enhancement uncritically: only rigorously place-based strategies, rooted in the specificities of each context, can transform authenticity from a passive condition into an active resource for territorial regeneration. Abandonment may be a reversible process: new forms of return to the mountains, favoured by the technological instruments that permit remote working and by growing environmental concerns bound up with urban life, prefigure development opportunities alternative to metropolitan models (Oteri, 2019; Bartolomucci, 2020). The case of San Giovanni Lipioni, in the Basso Sangro-Trigno, already discussed, is emblematic in this sense: from 2020 onwards, thanks to the commitment of the association "Riabitare San Giovanni" and to the support of the GAL Maiella Verde, interventions of urban regeneration have been launched founded upon the recovery of disused built heritage and upon the promotion of new forms of habitability, with a strongly participatory approach (Costantino et al., 2024). The inventory of disused properties identified fifteen uninhabited building aggregates, but only in one — nine dwellings with traceable and willing owners — did the conditions obtain for initiating recovery, evidencing how ownership fragmentation constitutes one of the structural obstacles most difficult to overcome.[7]

Figure n 60.
San Giovanni Lipioni
Source: APS Nessuno Escluso

7 The case of San Giovanni Lipioni confirms that simply carrying out a survey of derelict properties is not enough: their regeneration also depends on being able to trace the owners and on their willingness to take action.

Analogous experiences, such as those of Ostana in the Western Alps and of Grottole in Basilicata, demonstrate that the regeneration of villages requires a multidimensional approach integrating the physical recovery of heritage, the creation of sustainable economic conditions for permanent or temporary residency, the reconstitution of a welcoming social fabric and the enhancement of natural and cultural resources. Innovative instruments such as community cooperatives — which in small Italian centres have transformed disused buildings into multifunctional spaces, artists' residencies, cultural centres and facilities for experiential tourism — prove fundamental in actively involving the population in processes of regeneration, restoring a central role to the community in the management of its own territory.

Figure n 61.
Refurbished buildings at Ostana; Spaces managed by the Viso a viso community cooperative; Logo of the Viso a viso community cooperative. Ostana (CN), Italy.
Source: Viso a viso community cooperative.

The solution to the crisis of inner areas therefore resides in reconstructing social and cultural bonds, acting upon the relations that have transformed these places into reserves of meaning. The demographic projections — which indicate the possible disappearance of 11 centres out of 14 in the Basso Sangro by 2100, with Colledimacine at risk as early as 2027 — serve as a reminder that the time available is limited and that inertia has irreversible costs: this is not an ineluctable destiny but the consequence of political and economic choices that may still be modified.

This requires an approach placing communities and their knowledge at the centre, recognising in heritage a concrete resource, over and above a repository of ideal values, capable of generating economic development, social cohesion and environmental quality. The Faro Convention (2005) offers in this direction a fundamental normative and cultural reference, recognising in the active involvement of "heritage communities"[8] the precondition for effective protection: cultural heritage belongs first and foremost to those who inhabit and live it daily, not to external institutions or experts who dispose of it in the absence of territorial rootedness. This principle requires that attention be extended from individual monumental landmarks — frequently heritagised exclusively for tourist purposes — to the widespread heritage that defines the peculiar characteristics of the territory: churches and seigneurial palaces, together with rural dwellings, hydraulic artefacts, terracing, historic routes, traditional building techniques, natural landscape and ecosystems that constitute the ecological and identitary frame of the built environment (Oteri, 2019; Bartolomucci, 2020; Costantino et al., 2024). Only through this integrated vision, which allows the reuse of built heritage to proceed hand in hand with the reactivation of open spaces of agricultural, silvo-pastoral and forestry vocation, is it possible to construct rooted processes of regeneration that activate local economic cycles and restore meaning and direction to inner territories.

8 The Faro Convention, adopted in 2005 and which came into force in 2011, was ratified by Italy under Law No. 133 of 1 October 2020, following its signing in 2013. The recognition of the 'heritage community' – understood as the group of people who value specific aspects of cultural heritage and wish to pass them on to future generations – marks an important step towards more participatory forms of protection and promotion, which are particularly relevant in inland areas.

Box n.4 - The Faro Convention (2005)

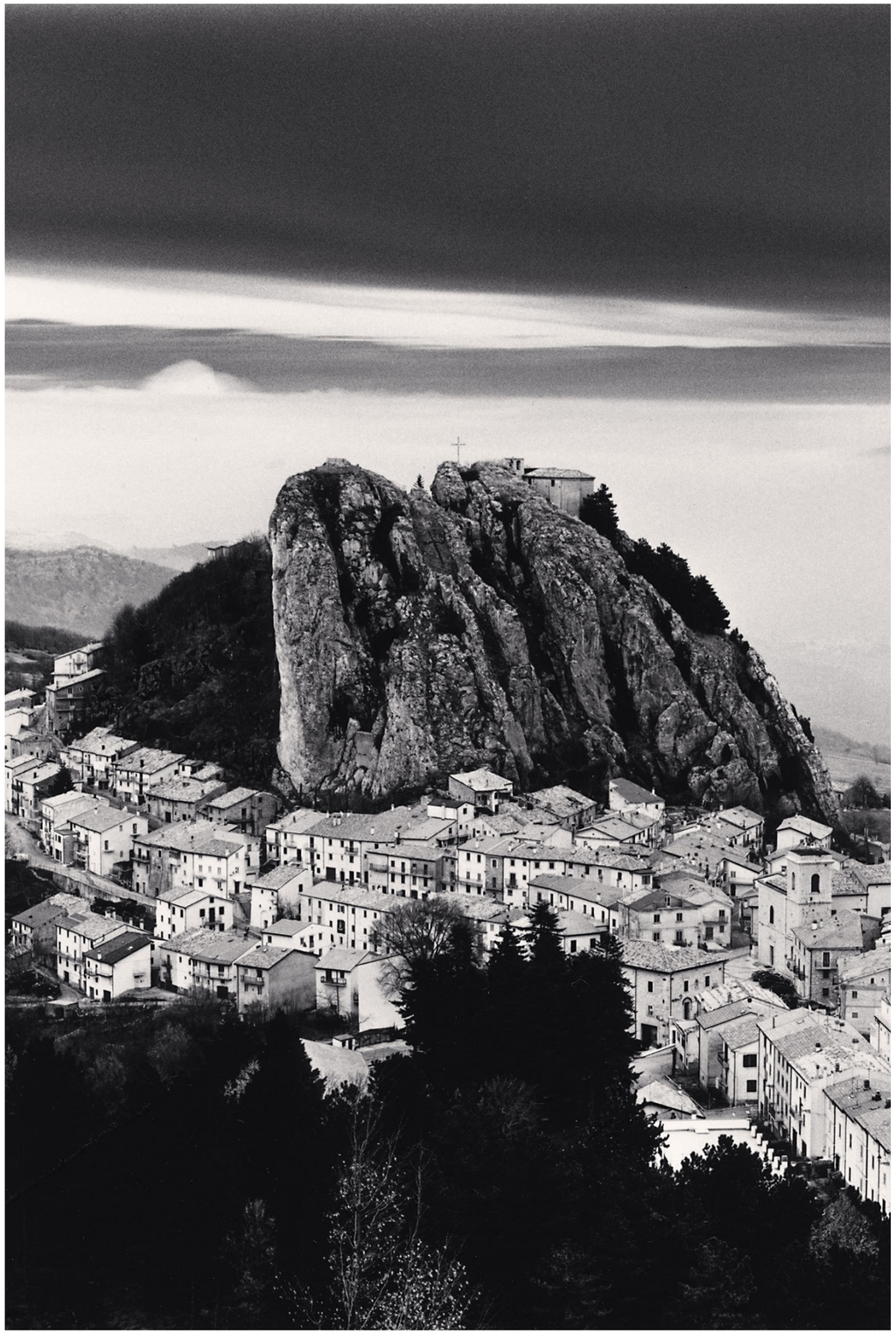
Adopted by the Council of Europe on 13 October 2005 in Faro, Portugal, and entering into force on 1 June 2011, the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society — also ratified by Italy — is understood to mark a significant departure from previous instruments of heritage protection. Its guiding principle is as simple as it is radical: cultural heritage is held to belong, first and foremost, to those who inhabit and experience it on a daily basis, rather than to institutions or external experts who might otherwise dispose of it in the absence of any grounding in the local territory. From this principle is derived the notion of heritage communities, understood as those groups who recognise in an asset a value to be preserved and transmitted, irrespective of its formal legal status of protection. Around this principle, four interdependent lines of action are articulated by the Convention: democratic participation and social responsibility in the management of heritage (Arts 11–13); the enhancement of quality of life through an integrated approach to cultural identity, landscape and ecosystems (Art. 8); the management of cultural diversity as a resource for coexistence between communities (Art. 7); and, finally, the strengthening of social and economic cohesion linked to the responsible use of heritage (Arts 8–10). The combined effect of these principles is held to require a shift in perspective: from isolated monumental emergencies — often heritagised primarily for touristic purposes — towards a diffuse heritage constituted by rural dwellings, hydraulic structures, terracing, historic routes, traditional building techniques, landscape and ecosystems.

A particularly instructive case is that of Fontecchio (AQ), where the Casa & Bottega project, recognised by the Faro network, was established in the immediate aftermath of the 2009 earthquake. Rather than being confined to the physical recovery of damaged buildings, the project was oriented towards their conversion into craft and agricultural workshops, with the conditions for lasting resettlement built around civic education and citizen participation.

CASA&BOTTEGA

This case constitutes a precedent offering a direct term of comparison with the critical reading of the post-seismic reconstruction in Abruzzo proposed in these pages, suggesting that the divergent outcome — heritage reactivated rather than merely restored — ultimately depends on who is placed in a position to decide over their own heritage. The Faro Convention thus constitutes an important normative and cultural point of reference, grounded in a place-based approach oriented towards the reuse of abandoned heritage, whereby local communities are recognised as playing an active role in the protection and reactivation of the built environment.

Source: Council of Europe, La Convenzione di Faro: la via da seguire per il patrimonio culturale, 2020



PART FOUR

DESIGNING WITH THE TERRITORY

On the preceding page *Approaching Clouds*, Pizzoferrato, Abruzzo, Italy.
Photograph by M. Kenna, 2016

The first three parts of the research have constructed, respectively, the theoretical framework of inner areas, the multidimensional interpretation of building abandonment and the characterisation of the Basso Sangro-Trigno as a case study. Part IV effects the passage from knowledge to action: it presents the field testing of the inventory methodology developed, its application in the municipality of Colledimacine and the implications deriving therefrom for the replicability of the instrument on a wider scale. Chapter 8 documents the action-research process conducted, from the analysis of existing instruments to the development of the guidelines and the operational kit, through to direct application and results. Chapter 9 critically discusses the limits of the experimentation, the necessity of the inter-municipal scale, and formulates operational recommendations for the various levels of policy making, proposing a replicable governance model for disused heritage in inner areas.

8. RESEARCH AND ACTION IN THE BASSO SANGRO-TRIGNO: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH OF THE EXPERIMENTATION

The experimentation conducted in the Basso Sangro-Trigno inner area constitutes the juncture at which the theoretical framework elaborated in the preceding chapters is translated into operational practice, making it possible to verify in the field the hypotheses formulated and the transferability of the instruments proposed. The chapter documents the action-research process through which a methodology for the inventory and enhancement of abandoned built heritage was developed, tested and validated, with the objective of constructing a replicable and sustainable approach for public administrations.

As emerged in Part I, inner areas present demographic, economic and social conditions that generate phenomena of disuse and underuse of built heritage; in Part II the multidimensional nature of abandonment was examined in greater depth, highlighting its morphologies, its structural causes and the contradictions that characterise the contemporary context; Part III reconstructed the territorial specificities of the Basso Sangro-Trigno, configuring it as an emblematic case study of the dynamics of the inner areas of Abruzzo — hill and Apennine alike — and furnishing the context within which the proposed methodology is to be tested.

Within this framework, the experimentation (developed and discussed in the present chapter) assumes a dual function: on the one hand it verifies the technical and organisational feasibility of the methodology; on the other it makes it possible to observe how the instruments elaborated may effectively be integrated into local administrative processes, contributing to the strengthening of institutional capacity and to the construction of systemic practices for the management of abandoned heritage.

The approach adopted is that of action research, understood as an iterative process in which theory and practice nourish one another, allowing instruments to be progressively refined through continuous engagement with operational reality.

The chapter is articulated into five principal sections: the first (see Objectives and research question of the experimentation) defines the objectives and research questions that have guided the experimentation; the second (see Analysis of existing instruments) analyses existing instruments and practices, identifying their limits and their potential; the third (see Development of the methodology and guidelines for public administrations) documents the development of the methodology, articulated into strategic guidelines and a kit of operational instruments; the fourth (see Methodological application) describes the application of the methodology in the case study of Colledimacine, highlighting the operational conditions, the methodological choices and the critical issues encountered; and finally the fifth (see Results: characterisation of the disused public heritage of Colledimacine) presents the results of the inventory conducted, furnishing a quantitative and qualitative characterisation of the abandoned public heritage surveyed and laying the foundations for the reflections developed in the following chapter.

8.1 OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTION OF THE EXPERIMENTATION

The experimentation conducted in the Basso Sangro-Trigno pursues a dual general objective: to develop an operational methodology for the inventory of abandoned built heritage in inner areas and to verify its application in a real context, assessing its functioning and its potential.

The specific objectives, in turn, are the following:

1. to assess the operational effectiveness of the instruments, verifying that the instrument (the survey form) is comprehensible, usable in the field and capable of gathering the information adequate to the characterisation of disused heritage with a view to the constitution of the registers provided for by national and regional legislation;
2. to analyse the sustainability of the inventory process, considering the time, competences and resources required, and verifying that it may be managed with the ordinary means of municipal administrations (the competences of municipal technical officers, access to data already held by the offices) and without the need for additional economic investment;
3. to examine the quality and completeness of the data gathered, assessing whether they prove sufficient to support public administrations in the construction of systematic registers of unused properties;
4. to identify operational critical issues and margins for improvement, detecting any technical or organisational obstacles emerging during the application of the methodology, so as to refine the instruments and render them more effective;
5. to gather evidence on the transferability of the method, verifying whether the process may be transferred and applied in other municipalities of the territory as well.

Unlike inventory experiences conducted with extraordinary resources or through external commissions, the methodology proposed was designed to be directly applicable by municipal technical officers within their ordinary competences and with the informational resources already available to the administrations.

As discussed in the regulatory analysis, the regional registers introduced in some Regions (Regional Law 24/2017, Emilia-Romagna; Regional Law 58/2023, Abruzzo) have evidenced limits bound up with the voluntary nature of registration, the lack of shared standards and the absence of operational guidelines; for this reason the experimentation is situated within this methodological void, proposing a structured model applicable in a uniform manner.

The research question orienting the work is the following: **how may a standardised and replicable methodology for the inventory and mapping of disused built heritage be defined, one capable of furnishing public administrations with the operational instruments for the constitution of systematic registers of unused properties?**

From it derive sub-questions relating to the sustainability of the process, in terms of the time and competences required; to the usability of the survey form in the field; to the informational completeness of the data gathered relative to the requirements of characterising disused properties; to the conformity of the results with regulatory requirements; and to the possibility of applying the methodology in other municipal contexts while guaranteeing adequate levels of standardisation.

8.2 ANALYSIS OF EXISTING INSTRUMENTS

Before a new methodology is developed, it is essential to understand what has already been tested in other contexts, which instruments exist, and what their strengths and their limits are. This section synthesises the analysis conducted on existing instruments for the inventory of abandoned heritage, integrating and examining in greater depth what has already been discussed (see Regional inventories: fragmentation and inconsistency) in relation to the regulatory framework.

The fragmented regulatory framework

The Italian panorama relating to the inventory of abandoned heritage is marked by a pronounced regulatory fragmentation and by the absence of a shared methodological standard (see Regional inventories: fragmentation and inconsistency). At national level no framework law exists that regulates in a coherent manner the survey and management of disused heritage: the Consolidated Building Act (Testo Unico dell'Edilizia, DPR 380/2001)[1] confines itself to general references to building recovery and to the containment of land take, without furnishing specific operational instruments, while Law 158/2017 on small municipalities, although acknowledging the significance of inner areas, introduces no uniform procedures for the mapping of unused properties.

At regional level, some administrations have established "Registers of properties made available". The Emilia-Romagna Region, with Regional Law 24/2017, for example, introduced a register of unused properties directed towards favouring reuse and limiting land take, providing for procedural simplifications and volumetric incentives; the Abruzzo Region adopted this model with Regional Law 58/2023[2]. Other regions — among them Lombardy, Tuscany and Apulia — have adopted regulatory instruments bound up with the recovery of historic centres and with urban regeneration which entail forms of inventory of disused heritage, albeit with heterogeneous and not always comparable approaches.

From this framework structural critical issues emerge which limit its overall effectiveness: the optional nature of participation produces incomplete registers which intercept only a marginal portion of the heritage effectively abandoned, since owners do not perceive benefits proportionate to the burdens required; the absence of standardised methodologies leaves administrations devoid of operational indications, generating significant territorial disparities; the poor integration of the registers with spatial planning and with local development strategies further reduces their strategic usefulness. To this is added a limited diffusion of the instrument: many municipalities, above all in inner areas, have initiated no inventory at all, citing shortages of personnel, time and technical competences. Finally, the prevailing attention to private heritage tends to neglect disused public heritage, which constitutes, by contrast, a significant component of the problem. These critical issues confirm the need for operational instruments that are more uniform, more sustainable and applicable in the most fragile administrative contexts as well: the elaboration of a

1 Presidential Decree 380/2001 regulates building activities in terms of authorisation and penalties, without specifically addressing derelict properties. Legislative Decree 42/2004 applies only to properties subject to cultural heritage restrictions. There is no national framework governing the survey of derelict properties, with consequences at both the operational and knowledge-gathering levels; it is within this context that the methodological contribution of this study is situated.

2 Article 21 of Regional Law 58/2023 of the Abruzzo Region provides for the establishment of the "Register of Properties Made Available for Urban Regeneration", with the voluntary registration of disused or under-utilised properties by public and private entities, mirroring in every respect the provisions of the Emilia-Romagna Region. It should be noted that, as of today (January 2026), the register has not yet been activated and no guidelines appear to have been issued to local authorities.

clear and standardised methodology becomes an essential step in supporting administrations in the construction of reliable and comparable knowledge bases, directed towards orienting more effective regeneration policies.

Institutional experiences and bottom-up initiatives

Beyond the regulatory instruments, autonomous inventory experiences promoted by individual administrations or by local actors exist; at regional and municipal level, however, no official registers dedicated to the systematic inventory of abandoned assets — public or private — are found, and this confirms the absence of a stable institutional infrastructure and the dependence upon sporadic initiatives uncoordinated among themselves.

Some virtuous municipalities have carried out inventories of disused public heritage on the occasion of applications for funding (PNRR, LAG funds, regional programmes), but with heterogeneous methodological approaches that prevent the aggregation and comparison of data. In several territories, Unions of Municipalities have experimented with forms of inter-municipal inventory, bringing to light the advantages of the supra-municipal scale; administrative discontinuity, the lack of dedicated technical structures and the absence of national guidelines have, however, frequently compromised the continuity, updating and homogeneity of the results.

Alongside institutional initiatives, bottom-up experiences promoted by non-institutional actors are recorded. In several Italian cities — among them Bologna, Rimini, Ravenna, Riccione, Milan, Pavia and Turin — cartographic maps of abandoned heritage have been developed, elaborated by municipal administrations, citizens' associations or student committees, frequently through collaborative platforms and instruments of civic mapping. Although devoid of a rigorous methodological framework, these initiatives perform an important role in processes of activating local communities and in generating public awareness of the theme of abandonment; the lack of institutional recognition, however, limits their operational effectiveness and the possibility of their integration into administrative processes.

A significant contribution also comes from the academic world, which in recent years has developed numerous research projects dedicated to the regeneration of villages and to the recovery of historic built heritage. Among these, the initiative launched in 2020 in the village of San Giovanni Lipioni (CH) is distinguished, where the association Riabitare San Giovanni, in collaboration with the University of Bologna and with a research group coordinated by Professors Carlo Costantino, Anna Chiara Benedetti and Giorgia Predari, promoted a mapping of abandoned built heritage and the testing of recovery interventions. The survey recorded fifteen building aggregates, of which only nine proved suitable for reuse thanks to the identification of the owners and to their willingness to participate in the project. In parallel with the mapping, the working group analysed the building typologies, the construction techniques and the characteristic elements of the historic fabric, translating this knowledge into an operational project for the recovery of a building sample.

The initiative has produced concrete results: some residential units have been recovered, the conditions have been created for restoring the habitability of the village, and actions of socio-economic and cultural revival have been activated, based upon principles of sustainability and environmental compatibility. The demographic impact, in an extremely fragile context, has been significant: the village recorded six new residents, a considerable increase for a community of barely 137 inhabitants, to the point of attaining international media resonance, being cited by the New York Times in the article "An Italian Town Full of the Elderly Wants to Feel Young Again" (22 January 2024).

Although representing a precious contribution in terms of technical and cultural depth, this type of initiative too presents limits of transferability: it requires specialist competences, long timescales and resources that local administrations, above all the smallest, can hardly sustain autonomously.

Some municipalities, such as Ravenna and Mantua, have moreover prepared forms for reporting properties or land in a state of abandonment, but these are isolated instruments, not embedded within a coherent inventory system. Overall, the experiences analysed delineate a heterogeneous picture, composed of local practices that are frequently isolated and characterised by very different levels of depth, continuity and operational capacity, testifying to the growing interest in the theme but also evidencing

the difficulty of having available shared instruments capable of supporting local administrations.

Systemic gaps and emerging opportunities

The evidence gathered shows that the heterogeneity of these experiences is not incidental but reflects structural gaps in the system of survey and management of abandoned heritage. The principal critical issue concerns the absence of clear and readily applicable operational methodologies: shared national guidelines are lacking, and the instruments available today frequently prove either too generic or excessively complex for local administrations. To this is added the diffusion of initiatives on a voluntary basis, which tends to produce partial mappings, difficult to update and poorly integrated with territorial policies.

What results are inventories that are discontinuous, rapidly obsolete and incapable of conveying a representative picture of the entire stock of unused heritage; moreover, a significant divide persists between the advanced experimentation developed in academic settings and the operational capacities of administrations, above all in the most fragile contexts. Alongside these critical issues, however, significant opportunities emerge: the growing political recognition of the theme creates a context favourable to the adoption of more structured instruments; the diffusion of accessible technologies, such as GIS platforms and open-source databases, reduces economic and technical barriers; the numerous local experiences constitute a heritage from which useful lessons may be drawn and effective practices identified. The mobilisation of diverse actors — institutions, citizens, associations, universities, social enterprises — moreover represents a precious resource, which may be drawn upon through participatory and multi-actor approaches that strengthen the community dimension of regeneration processes.

8.3 DEVELOPMENT OF THE METHODOLOGY AND GUIDELINES FOR PUBLIC ADMINISTRATIONS

This section illustrates the process of constructing the methodology and presents in a coherent manner its fundamental components: on the one hand the strategic guidelines, which define the conceptual framework and the general orientations

for public action; on the other the kit of operational instruments, which gathers concrete devices and application procedures useful in supporting administrations in the implementation of the pathway of inventory and management of abandoned heritage.

Strategic guidelines for the mapping and reuse of abandoned heritage

The strategic guidelines constitute the reference document defining the principles, objectives and methodological directions for public administrations and territorial actors intending to initiate processes of mapping and enhancement of abandoned heritage. In inner areas, built and landscape heritage is to be understood as a structural component of the territorial arrangement, whose valorisation depends upon concrete conditions of access, use, maintenance and governance.

The initiation of pathways of mapping and reuse requires an integrated approach, articulated into three fundamental moments: (1) the mapping of abandoned heritage, (2) the activation of processes of reuse and (3) monitoring and management over the long term.

Only the integration of these phases makes it possible to transform knowledge of the heritage into an operational basis for effective and durable interventions. From this perspective, such interventions may constitute a concrete lever for sustainable and inclusive territorial development, founded upon the participation of local communities, upon environmental protection and upon social and economic innovation.

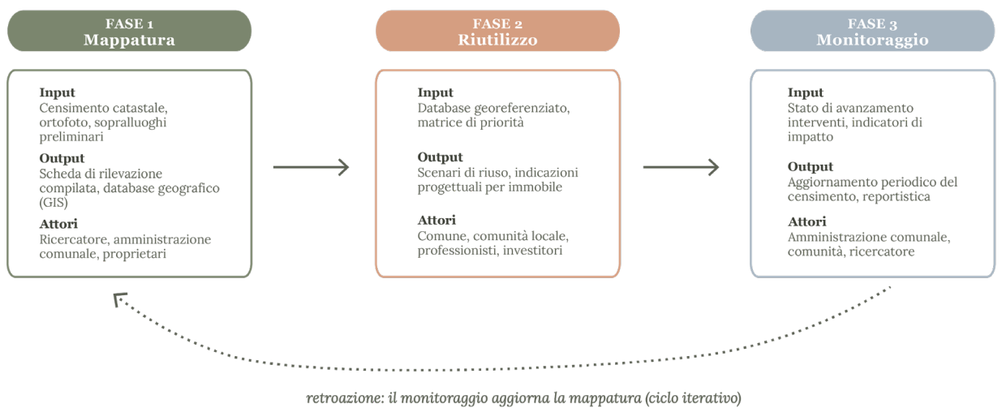


Figure n 62.
Operational methodology. Diagram of the three phases of the process (mapping, reuse, monitoring) with their respective inputs, outputs and actors.
Source: elaboration by the author.

Phase 1. The mapping of abandoned heritage: objectives and approaches

The mapping of abandoned heritage represents a fundamental epistemic and operational step, since it makes it possible to quantify the phenomenon and to understand its nature, distribution and potential. The process takes its start from the identification and location of disused properties, constructing a georeferenced informational base permitting spatial analyses and integrated territorial readings; alongside this stands the assessment of the state of conservation, which distinguishes between irreversible abandonment, advanced but recoverable blight, and recent disuse, thereby furnishing a picture useful to the definition of intervention priorities. In parallel, the gathering of historical, cultural and social information contributes to reconstructing the functional evolution of buildings, the reasons for their abandonment and the identitary value attributed to them by local communities. The mapping proposed in this research concerns abandoned public heritage, but is founded upon a methodological framework that may be applied to private heritage as well. The integration of documentary sources and direct surveys makes it possible, on the one hand, to identify potentially disused properties, reconstruct their ownership and functional history and verify the presence of constraints or programmed transformations; and, on the other, to ascertain in the field their real condition, survey their physical and structural characteristics, document them photographically and georeference them with precision, while technologies such as GIS (Geographic Information System) and drones further broaden the capacity for analysis, above all in areas of difficult access. The involvement of the local community constitutes a distinctive element of the approach proposed. Participatory mapping makes it possible to gather reports of abandoned properties not always known to the administration and pursues a dual purpose: on the one hand, to integrate technical knowledge with local knowledge; on the other, to build a sense of ownership of the project, increasing the probability that the subsequent phases of reuse will see an active participation of the community and will not be perceived as interventions imposed from above.

The information gathered must converge in a structured database which, for each site surveyed, includes: a unique identification code; the denomination of the property with any local toponyms; georeferenced location; cadastral data (sheet and parcel); building typology; original function and last known use; current ownership (public, private or mixed) with identification of the owner where possible; state of conservation classified according to predefined categories; any landscape or cultural constraints; historic-cultural value; opportunities for enhancement with hypotheses of compatible uses; geolocated photographic documentation; and a notes field for qualitative information. The database must be constructed according to open and interoperable standards, updatable over time through defined procedures, consultable by different parties according to differentiated levels of access, and exportable for subsequent analysis. Where the resources available do not permit an immediate exhaustive inventory, it is necessary to define criteria of priority in order to identify the properties to be surveyed first. Such criteria reflect the morphologies by degree of disuse identified in the section dedicated to Morphologies by degree of disuse. The first criterion concerns the degree of blight: buildings in danger of collapse or with partial collapses require urgent intervention for public safety; properties in advanced abandonment but with intact load-bearing structures represent strategic priorities because recoverable with sustainable investment; buildings in recent disuse constitute the most promising category for rapid preventive interventions at contained cost. The second criterion concerns historic and cultural importance: assets subject to constraints or of historic-artistic significance, ecclesiastical or historic public heritage, merit priority for their testimonial value, as do buildings which, although not formally constrained, perform an identitary function for the community.

Geographical position and accessibility constitute a further criterion and influence the opportunities for reuse: properties situated in historic centres or in readily accessible areas present greater possibilities of enhancement; buildings in landscape contexts of value may attract tourist or cultural functions; isolated buildings or those in marginal areas require, by contrast, specific strategies. Finally, ownership and availability represent a pragmatic criterion: it is appropriate initially to privilege properties in public ownership upon which the administration

may intervene directly, or properties whose owners express a willingness to transfer or to enter into partnership, avoiding complex ownership situations — such as fragmentation, litigation or the untraceability of owners — which would require lengthy resolution.

Phase 2. The reuse of abandoned heritage: principles and strategies

As highlighted in Chapter 4, the reuse of abandoned heritage is situated within a complex context, marked by dynamics of touristification (see Touristification and the transformation of territorial use) which risk excluding permanent residents (Russo, 2002; Milano, 2018) and by a housing emergency (see The housing emergency and the paradoxes of existing heritage) which renders paradoxical the presence of hundreds of thousands of empty houses alongside people without housing. Reuse strategies must therefore be oriented towards avoiding exclusionary touristification and contributing to a response to the housing emergency, privileging forms of stable residency (Balducci et al., 2017). Within this framework, the enhancement of cultural and architectural heritage assumes a central role: preserving the historic and social identity of territories, avoiding the irreversible loss of material testimonies — buildings, construction techniques, typologies — and immaterial ones — knowledge, stories, symbolic meanings (Choay, 1992; Settis, 2010). Reuse moreover represents an opportunity to revitalise local economies through the creation of direct employment (recovery, management) and indirect employment (services, supplies), the activation of local entrepreneurship, the attraction of investment and the generation of proximity economies (Magnaghi, 2010). Countering depopulation requires the creation of material conditions (housing, services, economic opportunities) that retain the resident population and attract new inhabitants (Dematteis, 2011). The promotion of sustainable development models privileges the reuse of the existing over land take, the employment of eco-compatible materials and technologies, the drawing upon of local resources and the construction of circular and proximity economies.

The fundamental principles guiding interventions translate these aims into operational orientations: environmental and social sustainability requires interventions that minimise environmental impact by privileging natural materials, low-impact techniques and energy efficiency; that respect the landscape and the historic-morphological context; that favour social inclusion and the participation of communities, avoiding processes of gentrification and exclusion; and that generate benefits diffused across the territory. Flexibility and adaptation presuppose that abandoned buildings can rarely return to their original function: it is therefore necessary to identify compatible uses, to design new functions upon the physical characteristics of the properties and to provide for temporary or multifunctional uses that may be tested and are susceptible of evolution over time. Territorial integration requires that reuse be connected to existing local networks and services, draw upon the relations with the surrounding landscape and settlement context, and be coordinated with other territorial policies, from the SNAI to spatial planning, thereby contributing to the construction of integrated territorial systems. Interventions of restoration and conservation must preserve the original characteristics of buildings, safeguarding historic structural elements (load-bearing masonry, floors, roofs), traditional materials (stone, timber, brick, lime renders), local construction typologies and architectural details such as cornices, portals and ornamental elements. From this perspective it is fundamental to employ techniques and materials compatible with the historic ones, privileging the use of local materials and traditional construction methodologies, and avoiding invasive or irreversible interventions that compromise the authenticity of the artefact. Contemporary additions must be clearly distinguishable, according to the principles of conservative restoration — minimum intervention, reversibility, historical legibility — and integrated with compatible performance improvements, such as energy efficiency, seismic safety and accessibility, always with respect for the historic and identitary values of the building.

Such principles are rooted in the theoretical tradition of Italian restoration, beginning with the reflection of Brandi (1963), and find recognition in the principal international documents, from the Venice Charter (ICOMOS, 1964) to the Nara Document on

Authenticity (1994)[3], which underline the importance of interventions respectful of the matter, the history and the cultural significance of assets. These principles of conservative restoration, however, apply properly to the minority share of heritage subject to protection pursuant to Legislative Decree 42/2004 or endowed with a recognised historic-artistic value. For the greater part of the abandoned heritage of inner areas (minor rural buildings, former twentieth-century schools and public offices, warehouses, workshops, disused accommodation facilities, unfinished buildings, artefacts that present no canonically understood cultural value and are subject to no regime of protection) a different approach is required: to extend by analogy the logic of integral conservation (minimum intervention, intangibility of the matter, philological reversibility) constitutes an error of perspective with significant operational consequences, since it renders the transformability of buildings rigid, raises costs to the point of rendering them close to or higher than those of new construction and, paradoxically, ends by precluding the very reuse that ought to guarantee their survival. The disciplinary reflection of architectural technology has long since elaborated an alternative approach for this category of assets, attributable to the tradition of adaptive reuse and to the performance-based approach to the recovery project. From this perspective, buildings devoid of cultural value are not objects to be conserved but resources to be used responsibly: their value resides not in historic matter but in the use value they may reacquire through new functions and in the environmental value they embody — land already consumed, materials and energy already immobilised, emissions avoided relative to demolition and reconstruction (Radogna and Vasapollo, 2026). As Radogna underlines in his research on the disused heritage of Abruzzo, buildings that in the past would have been candidates for demolition must today be considered resilient capacities of places, capable of contributing to processes of regeneration by revealing environmental and use values even in the absence of cultural value (Radogna, 2022; Radogna et al., 2025). From this derive criteria of intervention profoundly different from those of conservative restoration. The adaptive reuse project privileges the flexibility and adaptability of technological and environmental systems, the employment of dry and reversible construction solutions according to the logic of design for disassembly, the addition of new volumes that are clearly recognisable, the selective substitution of sub-systems with insufficient performance, and even the reuse of materials deriving from partial demolitions, in coherence with the principles of the circular economy which regard the existing built environment also as a deposit of material resources (Radogna and Vasapollo, 2026). Above all, reuse is not exhausted in bringing the building back into operation relative to present needs, but designs its future reusability in relation to requirements that will evolve: the experiences conducted by the Department of Architecture of the University "G. d'Annunzio" on disused public buildings in small municipalities of Abruzzo — such as the former hostel and the former school of Scontrone, and the former prison of San Valentino in Abruzzo Citeriore — show how interventions of controlled transformation, founded upon reversible solutions and eco-compatible materials, may restore use value to artefacts devoid of architectural quality, embedding them within regeneration strategies of territorial scale (Radogna and Vasapollo, 2026). For the methodology proposed in this research, the distinction between protected heritage and heritage devoid of protection therefore assumes a direct operational value and suggests a gradation of intervention approaches articulated across three levels. For assets subject to constraints or of recognised historic-cultural value, the principles of conservative restoration recalled above apply in full. For heritage not protected but endowed with identitary value for the community — recognisable through the "historic-cultural value" field of the mapping form and through the reports gathered in participatory processes — a recovery respectful of typological and material characters, yet open to substantial functional and performance transformations, is appropriate. For heritage devoid both of

3 The Venice Charter, adopted at the Second International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, sets out a number of fundamental principles of modern restoration, including the preservation of material authenticity, the distinguishability of contemporary interventions, and respect for the context. The Nara Declaration subsequently expanded on this line of thinking, emphasising how the concept of authenticity varies according to different cultural contexts. This consideration is particularly relevant to the heritage of inland areas, where authenticity is not limited to formal architectural quality, but is linked to the relationship between buildings, ways of living and the landscape.

protection and of identitary value, finally, adaptive reuse may be deployed in its full form, including volumetric additions, substitutions of sub-systems and, in cases of irrecoverability, selective demolitions with recovery of materials. This gradation, which the survey form makes it possible to effect already at the epistemic stage by cross-referencing the field relating to constraints with the assessment of cultural value and state of conservation, moreover has a regulatory significance: as highlighted by the research conducted for the municipalities of Abruzzo, the absence of technical norms dedicated to heritage devoid of value produces opposite and equally damaging outcomes, permitting unjustified demolitions where rules are lacking and preventing adaptation to habitability requirements where rules are modelled upon protected heritage (Radogna and Vasapollo, 2026). The definition of differentiated technical standards for the reuse of unprotected heritage therefore represents one of the recommendations that the experimentation will convey to the regional and national levels. As emerged from the analysis of reuse practices (Ch. 5), the most sustainable models balance tourist functions with residential, cultural and productive ones, integrating tourism within a diversified local economy (Dall'Ara and Villani, 2015; Beel et al., 2017). In this sense community cooperatives (see Socially based reuse: community economies) demonstrate a particular capacity to offer integrated services (Menzani and Zamagni, 2010); alberghi diffusi (see Tourism-based reuse: temporary dwelling and the albergo diffuso) prove more effective when they are embedded within an inhabited context and contribute to maintaining a stable presence of residents (Dall'Ara and Villani, 2015); the most robust cultural projects (see Culturally and creatively based reuse) avoid processes of gentrification by drawing upon the active role of local communities (Evans, 2005; Sacco, 2016, 2018). The identification of new functions must take account of the physical structure of the building, of landscape, cultural and planning constraints, of the requirements and vocations of the territory that have emerged through consultation, and of the economic sustainability of management. Possible uses comprise cultural and social functions — such as event spaces, workshops, libraries, coworking spaces — residential functions (social housing, residences for remote working, guest accommodation) which contribute to regenerating depopulated territories and to promoting a new local vitality, agricultural and productive activities (agritourism establishments, processing workshops, agricultural holdings, training centres), forms of rural and cultural tourism (alberghi diffusi, bed & breakfasts, hostels and refuges) and services to the community, such as clinics, nurseries, centres for the elderly or multipurpose spaces. In all phases of the reuse process the involvement of the local community is essential, since in the design phase it makes it possible to gather proposals and verify consensus through participatory workshops and public consultations; in the realisation phase it permits, through participatory building sites and the involvement of local artisans, the strengthening of local competences and the drawing upon of traditional knowledge and techniques; and in the management of the heritage it is realised in the active role of community cooperatives, associations or local social enterprises, which assume daily responsibility for activities, guarantee continuity over time and keep the project rooted within the social fabric of the territory. At the same time, recovery frequently requires multi-actor partnerships between public, private and third sector, which may assume differing forms: from the concession of public properties to private or third-sector operators with obligations of recovery and management, to free loan for use or use at a symbolic rent with constraints upon the designated use; from public–private partnerships for joint investment, to the constitution of social enterprises or community cooperatives as managing bodies; through to the involvement of community foundations or the adoption of community land trusts in order to guarantee forms of permanent collective ownership.[4] Projects must guarantee long-term economic sustainability, based upon analyses of economic and financial feasibility that assess initial investment, management costs, expected revenues and payback periods; upon a

4 A community land trust separates ownership of the land – which is held collectively – from that of the buildings, with the aim of ensuring that the regenerated housing remains affordable over time and of limiting speculative practices. In inland areas, this approach could offer a solution to the risk of exclusionary touristification, which occurs when regeneration projects funded by public money are subsequently taken over by the private market, thereby reducing or undermining the objective of providing permanent housing.

diversification of income sources that avoids dependence upon a single activity; and upon a progressive implementation of interventions, beginning with low-investment functions and expanding them according to demand.

The resources available comprise European, national and regional public funds, flanked by private financing such as that of banking foundations, by civic crowdfunding, by impact investing and by sponsorship, which may contribute significantly to the launch and consolidation of projects. At the same time, the employment of innovative technologies makes it possible to reduce management costs, improve energy efficiency and render interventions more sustainable, while networks of collaboration between local authorities, universities, research centres and associations favour the exchange of competences, mutual learning and the diffusion of best practices (OECD, 2020). The use of fiscal and regulatory incentives may finally further strengthen these processes, facilitating the recovery and enhancement of rural and abandoned heritage (MiC, 2022).

Phase 3. Monitoring and management over the long term

The success of recovery projects is measured in the capacity of the functions activated to sustain themselves over time, avoiding a situation in which regenerated properties fall once more into conditions of abandonment; for these reasons it is necessary to provide from the outset of the process for a structured system of monitoring, evaluation and continuous management, founded upon a clear and shared governance model (Della Spina et al., 2022). The definition of multi-annual management plans represents an essential step: such plans must establish measurable medium- and long-term objectives, identify the roles and responsibilities of the actors involved, define the economic and human resources required with the relative financial cover, programme routine and extraordinary maintenance, and provide for performance indicators useful in monitoring the progress of activities and in orienting any adjustments (OECD, 2020). The plan must be realistic relative to the resources available, flexible so as to adapt to changes of context, and shared with all the parties involved, in order to guarantee transparency and accountability. The continuous involvement of the local community constitutes an indispensable element for management sustainability; in this sense periodic public assemblies, instruments of consultation, the structured gathering of suggestions and complaints with prompt responses, and the drawing upon of volunteering for certain functions contribute to preventing conflicts, strengthening the sense of belonging and maintaining a constant dialogue between managers and citizens. Participation is at once a democratic device and a mechanism of social maintenance, which makes it possible to intercept emerging needs promptly and to adapt activities coherently with the expectations of the community. It becomes genuinely effective, however, only when it entails a real sharing of decision-making power, avoiding forms of merely symbolic involvement that fuel frustration and mistrust (Arnstein, 1969)[5]. Systems of monitoring and evaluation must combine quantitative and qualitative instruments: stakeholder feedback through questionnaires, interviews and focus groups; performance indicators relating to the use of spaces (number of users, occupancy rates of accommodation facilities, revenues generated, jobs created); and assessments of social, economic, cultural and environmental impact over the medium term (Mazzucato, 2018). The analysis of the data gathered must orient a process of continuous improvement, founded upon logics of organisational learning (Argyris and Schön, 1978): this implies the possibility of modifying management when necessary, introducing new activities requested by users, recalibrating the economic model should critical issues emerge, strengthening the most appreciated aspects and intervening promptly upon any problems. In sum, the mapping and reuse of abandoned heritage in inner areas require an integrated framework that combines methodological rigour in the epistemic phase, strategic flexibility in the design phase and management sustainability over the long term, founded upon the active participation of local communities, regarded not as mere beneficiaries but as central actors in processes of territorial regeneration.

5 In her essay *A Ladder of Citizen Participation* (1969), Sherry Arnstein distinguishes eight levels of involvement, ranging from manipulation and therapy – forms of non-participation – to citizen control, via consultation, partnership and delegation of powers. Although it dates back more than fifty years, the model remains a useful tool for critically analysing participatory processes, distinguishing between substantive and merely formal forms. As the author observes, "The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you".

BOX n. 4 - Operational Guidelines for the Mapping and Reuse of Abandoned Heritage

The operational guidelines presented here are intended to translate the strategic framework outlined in the preceding sections into a set of tools, procedures and applicative criteria designed to support public administrations in the concrete implementation of the process of mapping, reuse and management of abandoned heritage. These guidelines are conceived as a replicable methodological kit, adaptable to the specificities of individual territories, aimed at ensuring coherence, transparency and continuity throughout all phases of the process

1. Mapping of abandoned heritage

1.1 Objectives

Mapping is regarded as the first step of the process and is pursued for both cognitive and operational purposes: the identification and localisation of abandoned buildings; the assessment of their state of conservation; the reconstruction of their history of use and cultural value; the identification of potential for reuse; and the definition of intervention priorities. Through this phase, a solid information base is constructed, held to be indispensable for orienting subsequent choices.

1.2 Methodological approach

Mapping is understood to require an integrated approach combining:

- **documentary and archival research, employed to identify potentially disused buildings, reconstruct their ownership history and verify existing constraints or planned transformations;**
- **field surveys, aimed at ascertaining the actual condition of buildings, documenting their physical characteristics and georeferencing them with precision, also by means of GIS technologies and, where necessary, drones for areas that are difficult to access;**
- **involvement of the local community, through reporting mechanisms, workshops and interviews, whereby technical knowledge is integrated with situated knowledge and a sense of ownership of the project is fostered;**
- **the construction of a structured, interoperable and updatable database, containing registry, cadastral, physical, historical, cultural, legal and functional information for each site surveyed.**

1.3 Priority criteria

Where resources do not allow for an exhaustive survey, selection criteria are required, based on:

- **degree of deterioration, distinguishing between irreversible abandonment, advanced but recoverable deterioration, and recent disuse;**
- **historical and cultural value, with priority given to protected assets or those of considerable significance;**
- **location and accessibility, whereby opportunities for reuse are assessed in relation to the territorial context;**
- **ownership and availability, with preference given to public or private buildings with cooperative owners, so as to avoid complex legal situations.**

2. Reuse of abandoned heritage

2.1 Objectives

The reuse phase is aimed at enhancing cultural and architectural heritage, revitalising local economies, counteracting depopulation, and promoting models of sustainable development founded on environmental protection, social innovation and community participation

2.2 Guiding principles

Interventions are to be oriented by a number of fundamental principles:

- **environmental and social sustainability, achieved through low-impact techniques, energy efficiency, social inclusion and the prevention of gentrification processes;**
- **flexibility and adaptability, in recognition of the fact that abandoned buildings can rarely be restored to their original function and therefore require compatible, multifunctional uses;**
- **territorial integration, whereby reuse is connected to service networks, local policies and the landscape context;**
- **cultural enhancement, through the preservation of materials, construction techniques and local identities.**

2.3 Operational guidelines

The operational guidelines for reuse include:

- **restoration and conservation for protected assets or those of recognised historical-cultural value, through interventions respectful of historic fabric, authenticity and the principles of conservative restoration (minimum intervention, reversibility, historical legibility);**
- **adaptive reuse for heritage without formal protection, oriented towards functional and technological flexibility, the adoption of reversible and dry-assembly solutions (design for disassembly), and the enhancement of the use value and environmental value of existing built structures;**
- **the identification of new compatible functions, such as cultural and social spaces, temporary or permanent residences, agricultural and productive activities, diffuse hospitality facilities, and community services;**

• community participation, engaged in design, implementation and management so as to ensure social embeddedness and continuity over time;

• public–private and third-sector partnerships, through concessions, loan agreements (comodati), community cooperatives, social enterprises and foundations;

• economic sustainability, achieved through feasibility analysis, diversification of revenue streams and the progressive implementation of interventions;

• the use of fiscal and regulatory incentives, so as to facilitate the recovery and enhancement of heritage

2.4 Tools and resources

Administrations may draw upon:

• European, national and regional public funds;

• private financing, civic crowdfunding and impact investing;

• innovative technologies for sustainable management;

• collaborative networks with universities, research centres and associations.

3. Long-term monitoring and management

The sustainability of interventions is held to require a system of continuous management capable of averting the risk of renewed abandonment. Provision must be made for:

• multi-year management plans, with measurable objectives, clearly defined roles, allocated resources, and strategies for ordinary and extraordinary maintenance;

• mechanisms for ongoing participation, through public assemblies, consultations and active listening tools;

• monitoring and evaluation systems, based on quantitative and qualitative indicators, impact analysis and stakeholder feedback;

• processes of continuous improvement, allowing activities to be adapted, new functions introduced, critical issues corrected, and the most effective elements reinforced.

Kit of operational instruments for application

The elaboration of the strategic guidelines defines the conceptual framework within which the process of mapping and reuse of abandoned heritage is situated; in order for such directions to be translated into effective practices, however, it is necessary to have available operational instruments that guide the action of public administrations in a concrete manner.

This subsection presents the methodological kit developed in support of the application of the methodology, articulated around three principal components: the survey form, which constitutes the pivotal instrument for the systematic gathering of information; the procedures for the organisation, classification and updating of the data, indispensable in guaranteeing coherence and interoperability; and the indications for technological integration through territorial information systems and digital platforms, which make it possible to draw upon and render usable the informational heritage produced.

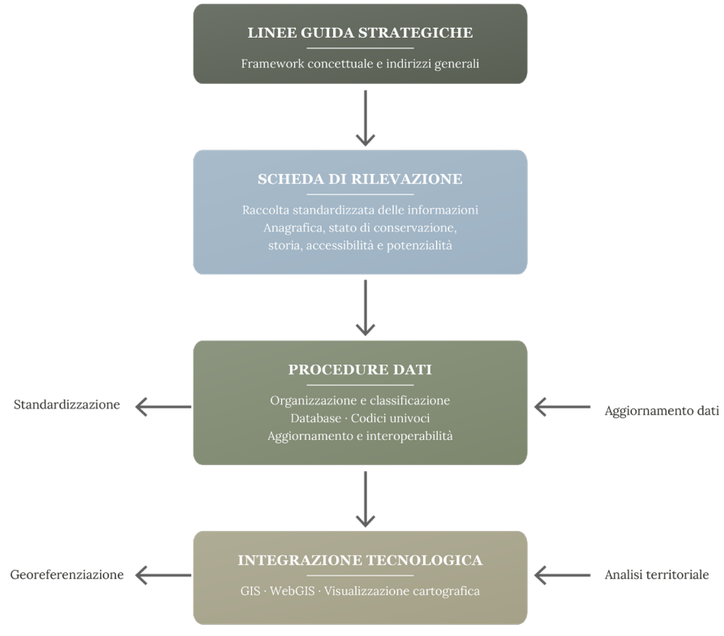


Figure n 63.
Kit of operational instruments.
Source: elaboration by the author.

The survey form as central instrument

The survey form constitutes the principal operational device through which information relating to abandoned heritage is gathered, organised and rendered comparable, assuming a pivotal

role within the methodological process delineated.
Its design was guided by three operational objectives: (i) administrative accessibility and usability, which guarantee the possibility of completion by municipal technical officers and local operators without requiring additional specialist competences, ensuring clarity of fields, simplicity of instructions and immediacy in the gathering of data; (ii) standardisation, which ensures uniformity and comparability of data; and finally, the form was conceived so as to (iii) ensure technological compatibility, thereby facilitating the digitalisation of data and their integration into territorial information platforms.
The process of elaborating the form combined bibliographic research, critical analysis of existing instruments and direct engagement with the operational requirements of the administrations of the Basso Sangro-Trigno inner area. This pathway made it possible to identify certain recurrent critical issues to be avoided: excessive complexity, which risks compromising its use; a merely cataloguing approach, which does not orient decisions; inadequacy relative to the technical and organisational resources available in small municipalities; and the lack of a specific focus on disused heritage, frequently absent from generic instruments of building inventory.

Structure and contents of the form
The resulting structure is articulated into six sections that reflect a methodological progression: from the identification to the assessment of the asset, from the description of the current state to the operational proposal.
The first section gathers the general information constituting the property's identity record: unique identification code, denomination with any local toponyms, administrative location, geographical coordinates for georeferencing, cadastral data, general building typology, specific building setting, approximate surface area. The second section examines in greater depth the physical, historical and legal characteristics of the asset, including a synthetic description of the property, the period of construction, the state of conservation (with particular attention to blight and structural damage), the current ownership and the legal status of the asset. The third section reconstructs the history and use of the heritage, reporting the original function, the last known use, the reasons for abandonment and any previous recovery interventions, even if not completed. This historical reconstruction draws in particular upon oral memories and the tacit knowledge of the local community, proving fundamental in orienting reuse choices coherent with the identity of these places.
The fourth section assesses physical accessibility and safety conditions: type of road and reachability, distance from the inhabited centre, safety conditions with reporting of evident hazards, concrete possibilities of intervention including any legal or practical limitations such as constraints, logistical difficulties or ownership fragmentation. The fifth section introduces the evaluative and propositional dimension, including the historic, cultural, architectural or landscape value of the property, the possibilities of recovery with indication of the potentially compatible uses, a qualitative assessment of potential demand and the identification of the resources that may be activated for recovery, including public and private funds or civic crowdfunding initiatives. The sixth section translates the assessments into operational indications, proposing interventions distinguished by urgency and typology, a classification of intervention priorities across three hierarchical levels, and suggested timescales differentiated between short, medium and long term. The form concludes with systematic photographic documentation recording the general view, details of the blight, the landscape context and elements of value.
The form may be used in paper format and subsequently digitised, or directly on digital media, or by means of free digital forms such as, for example, Google Forms or KoBoToolbox, which eliminate manual transcription and accelerate the production of the final database.
The mapping form is a single one and may be applied both to public and to private properties: the objective is to have available a standardised, repeatable and readily updatable instrument, capable of avoiding duplication and of guaranteeing a homogeneous informational base for the subsequent phases of analysis and reuse.
The form elaborated is reproduced below.

Integration in a GIS environment: opportunities and modalities

The integration of the data gathered through the survey form into a Geographic Information System (GIS) represents an optional but strongly recommended step where competences and resources permit, since the digitalisation of the information and its organisation in a coherent format — based upon unique identification codes, standardised fields and geographical coordinates in decimal format — constitutes the basis for a more advanced and complete use of the informational heritage produced by the inventory.

The GIS environment significantly amplifies the usefulness of the mapping, making it possible to carry out territorial analyses, to support strategic planning and to communicate results in a more immediate and effective manner. Spatial visualisation makes it possible to identify rapidly territorial concentrations, recurrent patterns and relations with significant elements of the context, while proximity analyses render it possible to assess the accessibility of properties, their distance from essential services or their degree of isolation. Integration with layers relating to landscape, cultural or environmental constraints moreover makes it possible to understand with greater precision the opportunities and critical issues bound up with reuse.

Cartographic production represents a further added value, since it makes it possible to generate thematic maps, georeferenced representations and technical drawings useful for reports, public presentations, planning documents and regeneration projects. In this way GIS becomes an instrument of decision support, facilitating the identification of priority areas for intervention, the assessment of integrated territorial strategies and the coordination with existing planning instruments.

Although not indispensable, GIS integration may qualitatively transform the potential of the inventory: even a register managed with simpler instruments retains full methodological validity, but where competences and resources permit, the adoption of a GIS significantly broadens the capacity for analysis, the quality of planning and the effectiveness of public communication.

MAPPING FORM
FOR ABANDONED / UNDERUTILISED HERITAGE

The purpose of this mapping form is to gather information on abandoned heritage, with a view to constructing a local- and regional-level database that may facilitate actions of valorisation, recovery and management.

1. GENERAL INFORMATION

Identification code
Assigned to the asset in order to facilitate its tracking

Name of the site / structure
Historic name, if it exists, or attributed name

Municipality

Province

Region

Geographical coordinates (lat/long)
For GIS mapping

Cadastral data

Type of heritage
E.g. residential, industrial or ecclesiastical building, open space

Building context

Superface area

2. CHARACTERISTICS OF THE ASSET

Physical description
Dimensions, construction typology, materials employed

Date of construction
If known, or an approximation

State of conservation
Level of deterioration, possible structural damage, lack of maintenance

Current owner
Municipality, private individual, public body, unknown

Legal status of the asset
Private property, public property, occupied, abandoned

3. HISTORY AND USE OF THE HERITAGE

Historic function
Role of the asset in the past: dwelling, workplace, church, school...

Last known use
Year and type of use

Reasons for abandonment
Economic crisis, depopulation, changes in production, natural disasters...

Any previous recovery interventions
Restoration or recovery works already carried out, if known

4. ACCESSIBILITY AND SAFETY

Physical accessibility to the site
Roads, paths, signage, distance from inhabited centres

Safety conditions
Risk of collapse, presence of asbestos, unsound structures

Feasibility of intervention
Landscape constraints, lack of funding, logistical difficulties

5. POTENTIAL FOR VALORISATION AND INTERVENTION

Historical, cultural, architectural or landscape value
Why the site is significant and merits attention

Possibilities for recovery and reuse
Possibilities for recovery and reuse...

Potential resources for recovery
Funding sources, partnerships, projects already under way

6. INTERVENTIONS AND PRIORITIES

Suggested interventions

Structural consolidation, conservation, awareness-raising...

Priority of intervention
Low · Medium · High

Suggested timeframe
Indications as to the time required

7. PHOTOGRAPHIC SECTION

Photo n. 1	*Photo n. 2*

8.4 METHODOLOGICAL APPLICATION

Having developed the theoretical-methodological framework (strategic guidelines and kit of operational instruments), this application phase documents its testing in the context of the Basso Sangro-Trigno, making it possible to test the methodology empirically, verifying its effective usability, identifying operational critical issues and validating the hypothesis that municipal technical officers with ordinary competences may autonomously conduct systematic inventories of abandoned heritage.

Selection of the case study

The choice of the territory and of the municipality in which to conduct the experimentation followed criteria at once pragmatic and of territorial representativeness. As examined in greater depth in Chapter 6, the Basso Sangro-Trigno inner area constitutes one of the most emblematic contexts of the dynamics of marginalisation that characterise many Italian inner areas: a territory composed of thirty-eight municipalities of the province of Chieti, marked by critical demographic dynamics, long-term processes of depopulation, structural economic fragility and, at the same time, by an environmental and cultural heritage of great value. Within this framework, Colledimacine was selected as the operational case study through a process that combined criteria of opportunity and of representativeness.

A first determining element was institutional willingness: among the municipalities of the SNAI area contacted in the course of the research, Colledimacine was the only one to express a concrete willingness to collaborate. This difficulty of engagement, far from episodic, reflects a structural critical issue of inner areas, where administrations with reduced staffing, bureaucratic overload and a chronic scarcity of time and resources struggle to participate in initiatives of applied research, even when these are potentially useful for the territory[6].

The choice of Colledimacine is therefore also the result of a project-

6 The issue of small municipalities' lack of engagement and limited capacity to respond to external inputs is well documented in the literature on inland areas; Lucatelli et al. (2022) highlight how this weakness represents a structural limitation of the SNAI, which has failed to narrow the gap in administrative capacity between municipalities.

oriented social capital rendered possible by the commitment of mayor Andrea Schina, whose willingness represented an essential enabling factor for the launch of the experimentation. Alongside institutional willingness, Colledimacine presents characteristics that render it a representative case of the dynamics of ultra-peripheral inner areas: an extremely contained[7] demographic size, a reduced territorial extension and a concentration of built heritage render it a context favourable to experimentation. The municipality has been marked by a long-term process of depopulation, from the over five hundred inhabitants of the 1950s to the present 149, with an old-age index among the highest in the area, which has produced a progressive abandonment of public and private buildings, rendering the theme of disused heritage particularly significant.

Although a highly representative case, Colledimacine presents limits of generalisability: the methodology might require adaptations in larger municipalities, with dispersed hamlets or with more complex administrative arrangements; moreover, the strong motivation of the local administration constituted a facilitating factor not always replicable. These limits do not, however, reduce the value of the experimentation, which is to be understood as a test under extreme conditions, useful for assessing the robustness and transferability of the methodology — themes that will be taken up in the final discussion (Chapter 9).

Delimitation of the field of investigation

The field of application of the experimentation was circumscribed to heritage in municipal public ownership, excluding private heritage and that belonging to other public bodies (State, Region, Province, ecclesiastical bodies). This choice, dictated by requirements of operational feasibility, made it possible to work on a set of properties for which the administration has complete documentation and direct access, avoiding the complexities bound up with the identification of private owners, with authorisations for site visits and with the frequent situations of ownership fragmentation that haracterize many inner areas. Public heritage, moreover, represents a strategic field for administrative action, since it permits direct interventions, the definition of uses and the activation of partnerships, whereas on private heritage the options for intervention are more limited.

This delimitation rendered the experimentation sustainable in terms of time and resources, while nonetheless configuring a partial inventory, which therefore does not convey the picture of abandonment in its full complexity. In many municipalities of inner areas, indeed, unused private heritage is quantitatively more significant than public heritage.

This limit was, however, anticipated and coherent with the objective of the experimentation, which aimed at testing the methodology — form, procedures, timescales and competences required — rather than at producing an exhaustive inventory. The future extension to private heritage will require specific methodological additions (discussed in Ch. 9) but will be able to build upon the instruments refined and tested in this first application.

Within municipal public heritage, operational criteria were defined in order to identify which properties fall within the category “disused or underused” to be inventoried:

- buildings that no longer accommodate their original function: properties built or acquired for specific functions (schools, public housing, administrative offices, cultural centres) which no longer perform that function and have not been reconverted to other uses;
- buildings closed and not accessible to the public: properties that are no longer accessible, that accommodate no activities or stable presences;
- buildings with sporadic or partial use: properties open only occasionally for sporadic events, or whose use concerns only limited portions while other parts prove unused.

Excluded from the inventory were, by contrast, road infrastructures (roads, bridges, squares), technological networks (aqueducts, sewers, public lighting), uncovered non-built areas

7 149 inhabitants according to ISTAT (figures as at 31 December 2025).

(land, municipal woodland) and ruins[8] no longer identifiable as buildings. The focus is on built heritage in the strict sense: closed and defined volumes that constituted, or might constitute, habitable or usable spaces.
These criteria, while requiring certain application clarifications in the most compromised cases, furnished operational orientations sufficiently clear to guide the identification of the properties to be inventoried.

Operational phases of the experimentation

The experimentation took place between July 2025 and January 2026 through a process articulated into five principal phases, which saw the progressive involvement of the municipal administration, the testing of the methodological instruments and the validation of the results.

Figure n 64. **Timetable of the experimentation.** Source: elaboration by the author

Phase 1: First contact and launch of the collaboration (July 2025)
The initial phase entailed the identification of and contact with the municipalities of the Basso Sangro-Trigno SNAI area in order to present the research project and gather expressions of willingness to collaborate. All the municipalities were contacted through formal communications sent to the mayors, presenting the objectives of the research, the methodology proposed and the benefits expected for the administration (construction of a register of disused public heritage, support for funding applications, acquisition of replicable methodological instruments).
The response was in the majority of cases absent or negative, with administrations citing lack of time, shortages of personnel, overload of compliance requirements, or simply not responding to the approaches. This difficulty of engagement constitutes in itself a significant finding: it evidences that the small municipalities of inner areas, although potentially interested in instruments that might facilitate the management of their heritage, are structurally in difficulty in devoting resources even to collaborations that might generate benefits.
The willingness of Colledimacine therefore proved precious and made it possible to proceed with the experimentation.
The first meeting with the administration of Colledimacine (late July 2025) saw the participation of the mayor and of the head of the technical office.
The meeting was directed towards a detailed presentation of the research project, setting out its objectives, methodology, timescales and the commitment required of the administration. It was moreover useful in gathering initial information on disused public properties on the basis of the indications furnished by the mayor and the technical officer, and in agreeing the modalities and timescales of the collaboration, defining roles, responsibilities and a calendar of subsequent steps, as well as in verifying the effective and formal willingness of the administration.
The outcome of the meeting was very positive: the administration expressed concrete interest, furnished a first informal list of approximately 10–12 public properties potentially disused or underused, and agreed to devote time and resources to the experimentation in the following months. The mayor set out his motivation thus: the municipality possesses several buildings that currently find no use and of which it has no overall picture; a systematic inventory would make it possible to understand precisely which assets it owns, in what condition they are and which interventions prove to be priorities. It would moreover be a useful instrument for orienting the search for funding and recovery opportunities.
This motivation confirms that administrations perceive the usefulness of inventory instruments when these are presented not as abstract bureaucratic requirements but as operational devices responding to concrete needs of knowledge and management.

8 In technical and legal terminology, the term 'ruin' generally refers to buildings that are severely damaged, characterised by a partial or extensive collapse of their vertical and/or horizontal structures, and by the loss of essential structural elements, to the extent that reconstruction or a radical transformation of the building is required.

Phase 2: Exploratory site visit and preliminary test of the form (August–September 2025)

The second phase entailed joint site visits across the territory of Colledimacine with the participation of the mayor and of the municipal technical officers. The objectives were to verify the effective state of the properties indicated in the preliminary reconnaissance, to identify any further disused properties not initially mentioned, to test a first draft of the survey form and to gather feedback on the comprehensibility, completeness and functionality of the instrument.

The site visits took place over the months of August and September 2025, during which all the abandoned public buildings previously identified were visited. The route through the historic centre made it possible to identify the properties visually, to observe from the exterior their state of conservation and their principal characteristics, and to gather contextual information thanks to the mayor's narratives relating to the history of the buildings, their past uses, the reasons for their abandonment and their ownership histories. During this phase a first draft of the survey form was used, elaborated on the basis of the analysis of existing instruments and of the theoretical framework.

The form was not completed collectively during the site visits but was employed as an operational reference in order to verify the clarity of the fields, the availability of the information required and the effective practicability of the instrument under real working conditions, making it possible to identify certain aspects to be refined before its definitive delivery to the municipal technical officers.

On the basis of the observations that emerged, the form was fine-tuned through the clarification of potentially ambiguous fields, the addition of explanatory examples, the simplification of sections that had proved too complex and the insertion of items deemed to be missing, such as that relating to the date of disuse. The formatting was moreover revised so as to render the sequence of completion more intuitive.

This process of refinement, conducted before the launch of the test, represented a crucial step in guaranteeing that the instrument proved effectively suited to use by the municipal administration. The approach adopted, inspired by the criteria of action research, made it possible to calibrate the form upon the operational requirements of its potential users, avoiding solutions imposed from above and favouring a greater adherence to the real conditions of small municipalities. In this sense, the co-design of the instrument together with its end users proved decisive[9]: the form was progressively modelled through a continuous dialogue with the administration, ensuring that it responded concretely to their technical competences, their constraints and their operational needs.

Phase 3: Autonomous application test by the municipal technical officers (September–November 2025)

The central and most significant phase of the experimentation concerned the operational test in which the municipal technical officers autonomously completed the forms for all the disused public properties identified.

Having received the refined version of the form, together with brief introductory instructions setting out its objectives and furnishing general indications for completion, a calendar for its return was agreed (September–November), leaving the administration the flexibility necessary to organise the site visits according to its own availability, thereby integrating the work among ordinary activities.

Over the course of the period envisaged, the technical officers proceeded to: organise the site visits, planning the visits at times compatible with other work activities; complete the forms during or immediately after the site visits; consult municipal documentation (cadastre, inventories, resolutions) for information not obtainable from direct observation; produce photographic documentation of the properties; and confer internally among themselves and with the mayor for qualitative assessments (historic-cultural value, potential for reuse, priorities).

This modality of testing, carried out under real working conditions and without continuous external supervision, was essential in verifying the effective applicability of the methodology within an ordinary administrative context. The inventory required

9 It should be noted that this collaboration concerned the design phase of the instrument, not the completion of the questionnaire, which was not carried out collectively.

in total approximately 25–30 hours distributed over two and a half months (September–November), including site visits, completion of forms, consultation of documentation and internal discussion. This finding confirms that the principal barrier is not technical complexity but the availability of time that may be devoted, confirming what emerged in the analysis of the causes of abandonment (see Causes and dynamics of abandonment) concerning the limited availability of technical resources in small municipalities. At the end of the agreed period the technical officers delivered 11 complete forms, one for each property inventoried, and the quality of completion proved generally good: clear and coherent information, comprehensible textual descriptions, documentary photographs attached. This result constitutes the principal empirical validation of the methodology, demonstrating how municipal technical officers with ordinary competences can effectively use the instrument developed in order to conduct a systematic inventory autonomously, producing data of a quality sufficient for the operational purposes envisaged.

Phase 4. Assignment of intervention priority: from qualitative assessment to the multi-criteria grid

One of the objectives of the inventory is to furnish the administration with elements for establishing priorities of intervention among the properties inventoried. Since not all properties require immediate intervention, nor does the administration possess the resources to intervene simultaneously upon the entire stock, it is essential to have available criteria that orient decisions as to where to concentrate attention and investment. In the experimentation, intervention priority was assigned by the municipal technical officers qualitatively across three levels (High, Medium, Low) on the basis of an overall assessment that considered:

- structural urgency: properties in danger of collapse or with risks to public safety;
- historic-cultural value: buildings of particular identitary or architectural significance;
- potential for reuse: properties for which concrete ideas and potential demand exist;
- availability of opportunities: the presence of calls or projects under way that might fund interventions.

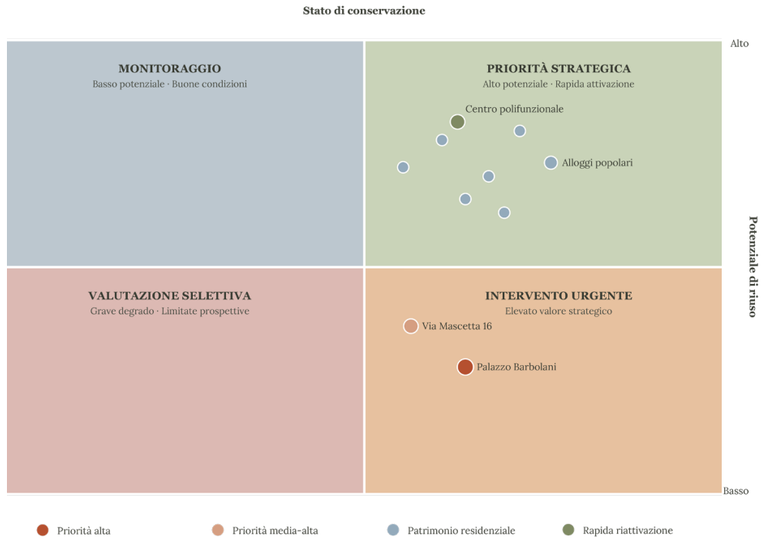


Figure n 65.
Matrix of intervention priorities.
Source: elaboration by the author on the basis of the inventory.

This approach, flexible and adaptable, requires no complex calculations or quantitative assessments and is capable of drawing upon the expert judgment of technical officers and administrators; it presents limits, however, in terms of the subjectivity of the assessments, generating problems of comparability between different contexts. In order to render the process more structured, more objective and, above all, more replicable, a multi-criteria assessment grid was prepared which makes it possible to attribute scores according to the various factors and to obtain an overall judgment of priority. Box no. 5 illustrates in detail the criteria used, the scores associated with each of them and the method of calculating the final score, through which the level of intervention priority is defined.

BOX 5 – Prioritisation Grid for Interventions

Criterion 1 – Structural urgency (weight: 30%)
- Imminent collapse or unsafe structure: 5 points
- Advanced deterioration with significant structural damage: 4 points
- Moderate deterioration, structures still intact: 3 points
- Good structural condition: 2 points
- Excellent condition: 1 point

Criterion 2 – Historical-cultural value (weight: 25%)
- Protected building of high architectural value: 5 points
- Unprotected but noteworthy building of merit: 4 points
- Building of some historical interest: 3 points
- Ordinary building without particular value: 2 points
- Recent building without historical value: 1 point

Criterion 3 – Potential for reuse (weight: 25%)
- Clear function identified, with certain demand: 5 points
- Several possible functions, with probable demand: 4 points
- Some reuse possibilities to be verified: 3 points
- Limited potential: 2 points
- Poor prospects for reuse: 1 point

Criterion 4 – Accessibility and location (weight: 10%)
- Historic centre, excellent accessibility: 5 points
- Good accessibility, favourable location: 4 points
- Fair accessibility: 3 points
- Difficult accessibility: 2 points
- Isolated area, very difficult access: 1 point

Criterion 5 – Availability of resources (weight: 10%)
- Funding already available or highly likely: 5 points
- Accessible specific funding calls: 4 points
- Generic funding possibilities: 3 points
- Difficulty in securing funding: 2 points
- No evident opportunity: 1 point

Calculation of the overall score:
Each building is assigned a score for each criterion.
The overall score is calculated by summing the partial scores multiplied by their respective weights:
Total score = (Urgency × 0.30) + (Value × 0.25) + (Potential × 0.25) + (Accessibility × 0.10) + (Resources × 0.10)
The total score ranges from 1 (minimum) to 5 (maximum). On the basis of this score, priority may be classified as follows::
- Score ≥ 4.0: HIGH priority
- Score 3.0–3.9: MEDIUM priority
- Score < 3.0: LOW priority

Phase 5. Reuse and monitoring

Although the experimentation was focused upon the inventory, the process activated a preliminary reflection on the possible strategies of reuse of the properties identified. This discussion, while not translating into operational projects, made it possible to verify the capacity of the form to orient concrete assessments regarding uses and the conditions necessary in order to activate them.

For Palazzo Barbolani, the building of greatest value and complexity, hypotheses of enhancement emerged that were predominantly cultural (as museum, exhibition space or artists' residency) with possible tourist-accommodation additions only in a complementary and subordinate capacity, or of multifunctional use.

The principal constraints concern the high investment requirement, the need for partnership in management and the presence of historic-architectural constraints. The strategies envisaged include an urgent structural consolidation, the search for funding specific to cultural heritage and the activation of collaborations with third-sector parties.

Figure n 66.
Palazzo Barbolani.
Source: Sangro Aventino Turismo

For the multipurpose centre, characterised by lesser complexity and by spaces already suitable, community functions (events hall, workshops, coworking), personal services or recreational activities were hypothesised. The interventions required prove more contained and the estimated costs more sustainable. The strategy suggested provides for the securing of the building, the involvement of the community in the definition of the functions and the search for funding dedicated to small municipalities.

Figure n 67.
Multifunctional centre
Source: photographs by A. Schina

For the public housing units, of reduced dimensions, options of social housing, temporary guest accommodation or inclusion in projects of dispersed accommodation were considered. The principal critical issues concern the weakness of the local property market, refurbishment costs and the fragmentation of the units. The strategies envisaged include a gradual recovery, priority designation for permanent residency and the exploration of cooperative models of management.

Figure n 68.
Public housing units.
Source: photographs by A. Schina.

Overall, this exercise confirmed that the inventory is not limited to producing a snapshot of the existing but constitutes a knowledge base useful for orienting realistic reuse scenarios, assessing their costs, constraints and opportunities.

The phase of monitoring and management over the long term has not yet been initiated, since the inventory was completed recently; during the experimentation, however, certain indications emerged as to how the administration intends to use and update the register over time. The mayor expressed the intention to proceed with the formal constitution of a "Register of the Disused Public Heritage of the Municipality of Colledimacine" through an Executive Committee resolution, in order to recognise officially the inventory carried out and to establish the register as a permanent instrument of the authority. This formal step represents an important element in consolidating the use of the instrument within administrative practices.

The administration moreover envisages making the register public through publication on the institutional website, thereby guaranteeing transparency and accessibility both to the citizenry and to potential parties interested in collaborating on recovery initiatives.

As regards updating, the intention is to proceed with a periodic revision, at least biennial, which would make it possible to verify the state of the properties inventoried, identify any new disused buildings and remove those recovered; this activity will be integrated into the ordinary functions of the technical office, in order to guarantee continuity over time without requiring additional resources.

Moreover, the administration envisages using the forms produced as a documentary basis for participation in funding calls that require the precise identification of the properties subject to intervention. The availability of an updated register will make it possible to respond more rapidly to funding opportunities, overcoming one of the most frequent critical issues in small municipalities: the difficulty of preparing the necessary documentation within short timescales.

Finally, the results of the study could be shared with the other municipalities of the area, in order to promote analogous actions of heritage inventory and to disseminate operational instruments that might constitute a common good, opening the way to forms of supra-municipal coordination in the management and enhancement of public heritage.

8.5 RESULTS: CHARACTERISATION OF THE DISUSED PUBLIC HERITAGE OF COLLEDIMACINE

The inventory conducted at Colledimacine identified 11 properties in municipal ownership in a state of abandonment or significant underuse, all located in the historic centre of the municipality. This figure, apparently modest in absolute terms, acquires considerable weight when related to the demographic size of the municipality: for a population of 149 inhabitants, 11 disused public buildings configure a significant share of the overall

public heritage, testifying to how prolonged depopulation has produced a structural excess of heritage relative to management capacities and to the requirements of the resident community. The total surface inventoried amounts to 2,330 m² of covered surface overall, with a marked heterogeneity of dimensions. The concentration of all the properties in the historic centre is not incidental: it reflects the processes of depopulation that have struck the original historic nucleus with the greatest intensity — where both post-war public residential building and monumental heritage were located — and configures at the same time a problem, blight concentrated in the area of greatest identitary value, and an opportunity, namely the possibility of spatially concentrated regeneration strategies, with economies of scale for multiple interventions and immediate visibility of results.

Typological distribution and state of conservation

From a typological standpoint, the heritage inventoried is articulated into three principal categories. Public housing units constitute the quantitatively dominant component, with 9 units equal to 82% of the total, located principally in Piazza Clemente di Leo and in Via Mascetta. These are public residential buildings realised in the 1950s within the framework of post-war housing policies: units of reduced dimensions, of terraced typology or in small multi-family buildings, of simple construction technology with load-bearing masonry and hollow-tile-and-concrete floors, devoid of architectural elements of particular value.

Figure n 69.
Public housing units.
Source: photographs by A. Schina.

The state of conservation is generally compromised, with deteriorated roofs, missing or damaged fixtures, renders with widespread detachment and interiors in precarious condition. Disuse has occurred in a progressive and continuous manner: some dwellings were abandoned recently, between 2020 and 2023, when the last elderly tenants died or moved away; others have been disused for longer, from the 2000s onwards. This temporal sequencing testifies to a process of depopulation still under way, not a concluded phenomenon.

Palazzo Barbolani represents the property of greatest historical, architectural and dimensional significance, with its 1,800 m² equal to 77% of the total surface inventoried. Built between 1860 and 1890, it belonged to Count Raffaele Vulsse Barbolani and constitutes a strongly identitary element for the community: a symbol of the village's past, a visual reference within the historic centre, an object of local memories and narratives. The architectural typology is that of the noble palace, with a structure in exposed local stone, an articulation across three storeys above ground, a monumental entrance portal, windows with stone surrounds and an internal courtyard. The state of conservation presents a paradoxical and emblematic condition: the external envelope was partially refurbished, probably in the 1990s, while the interiors prove entirely compromised, with partial collapses of floors, absence of internal roofing, invasive vegetation and damage to the load-bearing structural elements. The form classifies it as "in danger of collapse", requiring urgent structural consolidation as a prerequisite for any hypothesis of refunctionalisation. This contradiction testifies to a history of uncompleted recovery: the municipality invested limited resources in refurbishing the exterior but did not succeed in bringing the recovery of the interiors to completion for insufficiency of funds, with the result that the palace, disused for over forty years, continues to deteriorate notwithstanding the partial intervention.

The multipurpose centre, with its 300 m² across two levels, is the most recent public building among those inventoried, built in the early 1990s and disused in 2016 following damage to its roofing caused by atmospheric events and by the concurrent lack of available managers. Relative to the other properties inventoried, it presents a less compromised state of conservation, with load-

bearing structures apparently intact and problems circumscribed principally to the roofing and the building services, and it is therefore configured as the most immediate candidate for a recovery intervention.

Figure n 70. Identification of the buildings inventoried in the municipality of Colledimacine. Source: elaboration by the author.

Intervention priorities and potential for reuse

The classification of intervention priorities, elaborated through the multi-criteria grid described in the preceding section, identifies three properties of high priority: Palazzo Barbolani, on account of the risk of irreversible blight and of its symbolic value for the community; the multipurpose centre, on account of the

high potential for effective use and of the relative accessibility of the investment required; and the dwelling at Via Mascetta no. 16, on account of its peculiar characteristics bound up with its ownership history. The public housing units fall predominantly within medium priority, with some cases of high priority for those with more serious structural damage.

The potential for reuse differs significantly for each typology: for the public housing units, the most compatible uses comprise forms of social housing at contained rents for new residents, temporary guest accommodation or inclusion in projects of dispersed accommodation; the choice of use should, however, privilege permanent residency over seasonal tourist uses, so as to avoid the risks of exclusionary touristification already evidenced in the analysis of reuse practices. For Palazzo Barbolani, cultural and multifunctional hypotheses emerge, subordinate to the search for partnerships and specific funding; for the multipurpose centre, the existing configuration orients towards community uses with relatively contained start-up times.

One case merits specific examination for the methodological implications it entails: the dwelling at Via Mascetta no. 16, of only 30 m², passed into municipal ownership through the absence of heirs of the original owner — a dynamic destined to increase within a demographic context characterised by extreme ageing and continued depopulation, in which the emigration of the younger generations has interrupted the intergenerational transmission of heritage within communities of origin. The municipality thus finds itself inheriting properties it did not choose to acquire, frequently in poor condition and without resources to recover them adequately.

The form moreover notes that the dwelling was the object of a previous “total recovery and rebuilding” which did not, however, translate into effective use, the property being once again in a state of abandonment. This dynamic evidences a fundamental methodological principle: physical building recovery, in order to produce durable results, must be accompanied by a concrete project of use that identifies the function, finds an available manager and verifies its economic sustainability over time. In the absence of these conditions, the risk is that of generating refurbished heritage devoid of designation, with a dispersal of

public resources and a discouraging effect upon the prospects for future interventions.[10]

Methodological validation and operational implications

The analysis of the 11 forms completed autonomously by the municipal technical officers furnishes significant indications as to the quality of the data-gathering process and as to the robustness of the methodology under real operational conditions. Completion proves complete for all the properties inventoried, confirming that the level of detail required is adequate to the information available and to the ordinary competences of the technical officers, who were able to have recourse exclusively to accessible sources such as municipal archives, the cadastre, direct site visits and contextual knowledge, without the need for complex archival research or external specialist consultancy. The inventory required in total 25–30 hours distributed over two and a half months, confirming that the principal barrier to implementation resides not in the technical complexity of the methodology but in the availability of time that may be devoted, an element coherent with what emerged in the analysis of the administrative fragilities of the small municipalities of inner areas. Certain critical issues that emerged in completion point towards possible future additions. The field relating to the estimate of the resources required for recovery proved the most difficult to complete precisely: the generic responses obtained reflect the impossibility of quantifying interventions economically in the absence of detailed design, and a possible addition might provide for grids of parametric estimation by type of intervention and state of conservation. The photographic documentation likewise proved uneven across the properties, suggesting the need for more explicit operational indications regarding the minimum number of photographs and the types of standard framing to be adopted. Notwithstanding these margins for improvement,

10 The phenomenon of heritage sites being restored but lacking a genuine intended use has been documented in various contexts across Italy and Europe, and some analyses by ANCE indicate that, particularly in inland areas, a proportion of restoration projects funded by public resources do not result in stable, long-term use. Very often, just a few years after the work is completed, the buildings return to a state of under-utilisation, demonstrating that physical regeneration alone, without structured policies and appropriate management models, is not sufficient to guarantee continued use.

the feedback gathered from the technical officers was explicitly positive, with appreciation for the clarity of the structure, the usefulness of the explanatory examples and the capacity of the form to stimulate systematic reflection on properties that were known but had never been analysed in a coherent manner.

The results of the inventory produce concrete operational implications for the administration, which now has available a structured knowledge base on its own abandoned public heritage, an instrument for the prioritisation of interventions and documentation already prepared for applications to funding calls. The overall picture of disused heritage moreover makes it possible to elaborate integrated territorial strategies — from the aggregation of public housing units into forms of dispersed accommodation, to the coordination between the recovery of Palazzo Barbolani and cultural initiatives, through to the connection between the multipurpose centre and community services — which would be difficult to pursue in the absence of a systematic and comparable knowledge of the properties.

Figure n 71. Characterisation of the public heritage inventoried. Source: elaboration by the author on the basis of the inventory.

9. FUTURE PROSPECTS: TOWARDS A REPLICABLE MODEL

The experimentation conducted at Colledimacine, documented in the preceding chapter (Chapter 8), has furnished empirical evidence as to the feasibility and the utility of the methodology proposed for the inventory of abandoned public heritage.

The passage from a localised experience to a model that is generalisable and replicable in different contexts, however, requires a critical reflection on the limits of the experimentation, on the conditions necessary for scalability, and on the strategies that the various levels of policy making ought to adopt in order to facilitate the diffusion of the instrument.

This chapter is articulated into three principal sections. The first (see Limits of the experimentation and operational critical issues) critically analyses the methodological and operational limits of the experimentation, identifying the areas that require further development and the extensions necessary for more complete applications. The second section (see The role of inter-municipal planning and territorial governance) addresses the inter-municipal dimension and that of territorial governance, arguing that the scale of the individual municipality is inadequate for effective policy and proposing models of supra-municipal cooperation. The third section (see Recommendations for the various levels of policy making) formulates operational recommendations for the various levels of policy making — municipal, inter-municipal, regional and national — directed towards creating systemic conditions favourable to the widespread adoption of the methodology.

The overall objective of the chapter is to transform particular empirical evidence into a general strategic framework capable of orienting public policy, guiding other administrations in the replication of the methodology, and contributing to the construction of a more coherent and coordinated national approach to the question of abandoned heritage.

9.1 LIMITS OF THE EXPERIMENTATION AND OPERATIONAL CRITICAL ISSUES

Every empirical research presents limits bound up with methodological choices, with the context of application and with the resources available, and the experimentation conducted at Colledimacine is no different. The critical analysis of these limits does not diminish the value of the work carried out but, on the contrary, increases its scientific rigour, making it possible to define with greater precision the conditions of validity of the results and to orient future developments.

This section therefore examines the principal limits that emerged, furnishing indications useful in refining the approach adopted and in favouring its application in other contexts.

Limitation to municipal public heritage

The choice to circumscribe the inventory to heritage in public ownership alone represents a significant limitation relative to the broader objective of mapping the phenomenon of abandonment as a whole. According to estimates of the Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica (Osservatorio Patrimonio Culturale Privato, 2022), disused private heritage represents between 70% and 85% of the total in small Apennine municipalities, and the inventory conducted at Colledimacine, although accurate within its own perimeter, intercepts only a part of the problem, yielding an inevitably partial and undersized picture.

This entails several implications: (i) public heritage presents specific typological characteristics that do not reflect the variety of abandoned heritage overall. The 11 properties inventoried at Colledimacine are predominantly 1950s public housing units, a historic palace and a recent multifunctional centre, whereas the most common typologies of private heritage are absent: scattered rural houses, small dwellings of the historic centre, agricultural buildings, artisan workshops. Consequently, the inventory conducted — limited to public heritage for reasons of resources — does not make it possible to intervene upon urban blight in its entirety, since private abandonment continues to generate critical issues, risks and a persistent perception of neglect. Moreover, the focus upon public heritage excludes from the experimentation one of the most significant systemic causes of abandonment: the ownership fragmentation deriving from unresolved successions, co-ownership among numerous heirs and complex legal situations. The extension of the instrument to private heritage will require specific additions in order to manage cadastral searches, the tracing of emigrated owners and situations of conflict between co-owners and heirs.

Case study on a single municipality and limits of scalability

The experimentation conducted on a single municipality may reduce the possibility of assessing the scalability of the methodology and of verifying its applicability in different contexts. Colledimacine presents highly specific characteristics — an extremely reduced population (149 inhabitants), a monocentric configuration, advanced depopulation, a fragile local economy — that do not reflect the heterogeneity of the municipalities of inner areas.

In contexts with differing characteristics, operational challenges not intercepted by the experimentation might emerge: municipalities with several hamlets, for example, would require more complex site inspections and longer timescales; demographically more substantial entities (1,000–3,000 inhabitants) might have a far more extensive public heritage, imposing a phased management; less marginal territories might present more recent dynamics of abandonment and properties in better condition; the presence of significant tourist flows might generate tensions between residential and tourist uses.

The experimentation on a single municipality has moreover not made it possible to test essential aspects of the inter-municipal dimension: coordination between administrations, the management of aggregated registers and the forms of cooperation necessary for regeneration strategies on a wider scale. The supra-municipal domain is the one most suited to inventories and reuse policies, but it has not been possible to verify its operation.

The eleven properties inventoried have made it possible to validate the methodology in its minimal configuration, testing the form and the basic procedures; it has not, however, been possible to assess its sustainability in contexts with far more extensive holdings or under more complex institutional conditions, characterised by lesser administrative availability, cultural resistances or shortages of personnel.

This limit does not weaken the methodology: rather, it clarifies its conditions of applicability and indicates the adaptations necessary for a future extension on a wider scale.

Limited time span and sustainability over time

The experimentation took place over a time span of approximately six months (July 2025 – January 2026), a period sufficient to test the inventory methodology and verify its operational feasibility in its initial phase, but too brief to assess essential aspects bound up with sustainability over time, above all considering that one of the principal risks of registers of abandoned heritage is their rapid obsolescence in the absence of constant updating. In this sense, the experimentation has made it possible to define clearly the procedures for the construction of the register, but it has not been able to test empirically the mechanisms of periodic updating, the emergence of new disused properties, the removal of those recovered or, more generally, the capacity of the administration to maintain over the long term the organisational and managerial commitment required by an instrument of this kind.

Likewise, the limited time available has not made it possible to observe how and to what extent the methodological instruments proposed will effectively be used by the administration — whether in the definition of operational priorities and in applications for public funding, or in the activation of partnerships with private or third-sector parties, or finally in communication with the citizenry — with the consequence that the applicative effectiveness of the methodology remains, at least in part, to be verified through prolonged use and through concrete results that will be able to emerge only over the medium term.

It must moreover be considered that the most significant effects of policies for the reuse of abandoned heritage manifest themselves over long temporal horizons, frequently between five and ten years. It should nonetheless be specified that building recovery hardly constitutes in itself the trigger of processes of socio-economic revival: more frequently, it is the economic, demographic and social reactivation of a territory that creates the conditions within which the reuse of buildings becomes possible and sustainable. The methodology proposed is therefore to be understood not as an autonomous lever of regeneration but as an instrument supporting broader processes, whose effectiveness will be assessable only through systems of monitoring that follow their evolution over the medium to long term.

Operational critical issues that emerged

Alongside the structural methodological limits, the

experimentation has evidenced certain operational critical issues which, while not compromising the results, require refinement for future applications.

One of the most evident difficulties concerns the estimation of recovery costs: the municipal technical officers furnished very generic assessments ("significant investment", "high costs", "over a million euros"), declaring the impossibility of formulating reliable estimates in the absence of preliminary designs and updated bills of quantities. This limit confirms that the instrument operates at an intermediate level of detail, useful in orienting strategic decisions but not a substitute for technical and economic feasibility studies. In order to improve the homogeneity and comparability of the data it would be expedient to integrate the methodology with parametric grids based upon costs per square metre differentiated by building typology, state of conservation and nature of the intervention.

Analogously problematic proved the recording of completion times. The absence of systematic measurements during the applicative phase represents a limit of the research, since the temporal estimates furnished by the technical officers (30–60 minutes per property) are purely indicative in character and do not make it possible to assess the operational sustainability of the method in municipalities with extensive property holdings. For a more reliable planning, the introduction of instruments of precise recording appears necessary, which would allow administrations to quantify precisely the requirement of human resources and the working time needed.

These critical issues do not reduce the validity of the methodology but clarify its incremental nature: the objective was not the construction of a completed register but the verification of the procedures necessary to render its future realisation possible in a systematic and transferable manner on the part of public administrations. The problems that emerged represent essential epistemic elements for orienting the evolution of the instrument towards more robust and institutionalisable forms.

Extension to private heritage: methodological considerations

The extension of the methodology to abandoned private heritage represents a necessary step towards completing the epistemic picture, but it introduces specific challenges that require significant methodological additions. This subsection analyses the principal critical issues and anticipates certain considerations that will subsequently be examined in greater depth in the operational recommendations.

Specific challenges of private heritage

The first obstacle concerns the certain identification of owners. Unlike public heritage, for which ownership is clear and documented, in private heritage it is frequently necessary to carry out cadastral searches in order to identify formal registered holders, to verify that the cadastral holders correspond to the effective owners (cadastral data are frequently obsolete, with deceased owners never updated), to reconstruct hereditary successions in order to identify all co-owners in cases of unformalised inheritance, and to trace emigrated owners through population registers that may not be up to date. This preliminary phase of ownership identification may require significant time and competences, configuring itself as the principal obstacle to extension.

Ownership fragmentation constitutes one of the principal causes of the persistence of abandonment. Situations of co-ownership among numerous heirs, with divergent positions or with some parties untraceable, generate legal stalemates that are difficult to overcome. The inventory must therefore identify all co-owners with their respective shares, record the willingness of each towards projects of reuse, register any litigation and report situations that might require judicial intervention.

A further critical issue concerns access to the properties: unlike public heritage, to which the administration may have free access, in the case of private heritage access to properties requires formal authorisation from the owners, who may be untraceable or uncooperative; and in the absence of authorisation, the inventory must confine itself to external observation, with inevitable informational gaps.

Necessary methodological additions

The implementation of an inventory of abandoned private built heritage requires the adoption of rigorous protocols, in line with

what is evidenced by the literature on ownership complexity and on the fragmentation of real property rights in Italy. Systematic cadastral research, the reconstruction of chains of succession and the tracing of owners through the municipal population register and national registers, including the AIRE, constitute indispensable steps in addressing that "ownership opacity" which represents one of the principal obstacles to the regeneration of private heritage (Urbani, 2017). Such procedures must nonetheless maintain a balance between accuracy and operational sustainability, avoiding investigations disproportionate to the objectives of the inventory.

The survey form requires specific fields for private heritage, in coherence with the monitoring practices tested in various European contexts (Empty Homes Programme, UK; Leegstandbeheer, NL), including the outcome of contact with owners, willingness to grant access, openness to forms of transfer or partnership, and an indication of any complex ownership situations.

For properties not internally accessible, completion based upon external observation must be accompanied by an explicit declaration that the internal spaces have not been verified. Such attention to transparency and to the quality of evaluative processes is coherent with the approach promoted by the National Plan for Sustainable Urban Regeneration, which invokes the need for adequate technical instruments, rigorous procedures and reliable standards in order to guarantee effective and responsible interventions in the governance of the territory (CNAPPC, 2017).

In parallel, the management of personal data requires a structure compliant with Regulation (EU) 2016/679 and with the guidelines of the Garante per la protezione dei dati personali (Italian Data Protection Authority), which underline the importance of transparent privacy notices, records of processing activities and procedures of anonymisation for the publication of aggregated data. Although such requirements may appear bureaucratic, they constitute an essential condition for the legal legitimacy of the inventory and for its social acceptability.

In this context of urban governance, the involvement of private owners is fundamental, and the activation of incentivising instruments — above all in contexts marked by high ownership inertia — may be configured as a possible strategy for success: information on calls and funding, services of free technical assistance and possible fiscal concessions represent essential levers for preventing participation from remaining marginal and for avoiding a reproduction of the limits of the voluntary registers already tested in Italy.

Given the complexity of the extension to private heritage, a gradual approach appears expedient, and it should be configured in phases: phase 1 would provide for the completion of the inventory of public heritage as an initial knowledge base (already tested); phase 2 would consist in testing the extension to private heritage on a limited sample of properties (10–15 units) in order to test procedures and identify operational critical issues. Should the experimentation prove effective, phase 3 should provide for the progressive extension to identifiable abandoned private heritage; finally, phase 4 should introduce periodic updates integrating both public and private heritage. This incremental approach favours progressive learning and the adaptation of the methodology on the basis of operational feedback, reduces blockages due to the complexities of private heritage and permits the gradual development of operational competences.

Instruments of administrative support

The analysis of the operational critical issues that emerged in the experimentation — from the difficulty of standardising procedures to the need to guarantee constant updating of the register — confirms that the objective of the present work is not the formalisation of a completed register but the definition of a methodological process that enables administrations to construct and manage it autonomously over time. From this perspective, the availability of clear and replicable administrative instruments represents an essential condition for transforming the methodology proposed into a stable institutional practice, sustainable and transferable to other contexts.

A first element concerns the formalisation of the process through deliberative acts.

Before launching the inventory operationally, it is useful for the administration to formalise the decision through a resolution (of the municipal executive or of the council, according to the competences defined by the municipal Statute) that identifies

the purposes of the inventory by making explicit its epistemic and operational objectives, defines the territorial and typological scope, identifies the responsible parties, provides for dedicated resources, authorises access to documentation, establishes indicative timescales for realisation and provides for the modalities of publication of the results. This step does not have a merely procedural value: it legitimises the work of the technical officers, facilitates access to the necessary information and renders transparent the authority's commitment towards the citizenry. At the conclusion of the inventory, a second resolution should approve the results and formally establish the register as a permanent instrument of the administration, define the modalities of publication (municipal website, consultation at the offices, possibly a digital platform), establish procedures of updating (frequency, responsibility, modalities), identify the envisaged uses of the register and possibly institute a commission for its monitoring and periodic updating.

In order to facilitate adoption by other administrations, it would be useful for supra-municipal bodies (Regions, Provinces) or trade associations (ANCI) to prepare template models that are modifiable and adaptable according to local specificities.

Alongside the deliberative acts, it proves fundamental to define a protocol of periodic updating that averts the obsolescence of the register, defining the frequency of verifications (at least biennial for heritage in areas with slow dynamics, annual for more dynamic contexts), the operational responsibilities (head of the technical office, a specific figure, possibly a commission) and the modalities by which to check the state of the properties already inventoried, identify any new cases of abandonment and remove from the register the buildings recovered or alienated.

The system should guarantee the traceability of modifications, recording the date and author of every update and preserving previous versions of the register so as to permit comparison over time. It is moreover useful to produce periodically synthetic data on the evolution of the heritage inventoried and to communicate the updates transparently, through the publication of the updated version on the municipal website, the informing of interested territorial stakeholders (LAGs, community cooperatives) and periodic occasions of public reporting.

Finally, in order to render the process more homogeneous and sustainable, it is useful for the administration to have available standardised operational templates such as forms for reporting by citizens, simplified forms for periodic verifications, checklists for site inspections and templates for communication with owners — above all in the case of extension to private heritage — which would contribute to reducing the heterogeneity of practices and to guaranteeing coherence in the gathering of information. Taken together, these administrative instruments do not constitute an end in themselves but represent the organisational infrastructure necessary for the method proposed to be adopted, maintained and replicated over time, making it possible to transform an experimental activity into an institutionalised procedure that sustains the construction and evolution of the register even in contexts characterised by limited resources or by non-specialist technical competences.

9.2 THE ROLE OF INTER-MUNICIPAL PLANNING AND TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE

The experimentation conducted at Colledimacine has shown clearly that the municipal scale, above all in the small centres of inner areas, does not represent an adequate level at which to address the question of disused heritage effectively and systemically. This limit concerns not only the scarcity of technical and economic resources but reflects a broader structural condition: administrative fragmentation, institutional weakness and the difficulty of constructing coherent territorial strategies in contexts characterised by reduced populations, minimal staffing and discontinuous design capacities. The literature on territorial governance has long underlined how policies of local development and regeneration require wider scales of intervention, which grasp the interdependencies between municipalities and draw upon functional complementarities (Pileri, 2015; Dematteis and Governa, 2005).

From this perspective, the inter-municipal dimension represents an opportunity and a necessary condition for transforming the inventory of abandoned heritage into a strategic instrument of planning and development. Supra-municipal cooperation makes it possible to overcome the limits of fragmentation, to

share resources and competences, to construct integrated territorial visions and to access funding that requires critical mass and adequate administrative capacity. The sections that follow examine in greater depth the reasons for this necessity, the models of governance available and the modalities through which an inter-municipal register may become an epistemic and operational infrastructure for more effective territorial policies.

Beyond the individual municipality: the necessity of the inter-municipal scale

The small municipalities of Italian inner areas present structural limits that render difficult the autonomous management of complex processes such as the inventory of disused heritage. The reduced staffing complement, frequently composed of a few individuals called upon to cover heterogeneous functions, limits the possibility of devoting time and competences to strategic initiatives; the literature on the administrative capacity[11] of small municipalities evidences how the scarcity of human resources and the lack of specialisation constitute one of the principal obstacles to the design and management of regeneration policies (Barca, 2012). To this organisational fragility is added economic fragility: very contained municipal budgets render it difficult to invest in technologies, training or specialist consultancy, with the consequence that many administrations lack the instruments necessary to address the question of disused heritage systematically. Administrative fragmentation contributes further to weakening the capacity for action, since each municipality tends to operate within its own boundaries, with the risk of duplicating initiatives, competing for limited resources and failing to draw upon territorial complementarities.

Numerous experiences of local development show how the scale of the individual municipality is not sufficient for constructing territorial systems capable of attracting investment, generating economies of scale or sustaining complex regeneration initiatives (Trigilia, 2005), evidencing the need for a wider and more coordinated level of intervention.

The experimentation conducted at Colledimacine confirms these limits empirically: even a relatively contained inventory requires a significant commitment in terms of time and competences, hardly sustainable by administrations with minimal staffing. If the reasoning is extended to a wider set of municipalities, the need clearly emerges for an inter-municipal approach that makes it possible to share workloads, instruments and competences, overcoming the structural constraints that characterise the scale of the individual municipality.

Models of governance for inter-municipal cooperation

Inter-municipal cooperation may assume differing institutional and organisational forms, each with a different degree of formalisation and stability. The choice of the most appropriate model depends upon the territorial context, upon the maturity of relations between administrations and upon the availability of resources. Inter-municipal agreements represent the simplest and most immediate form of collaboration: they allow municipalities to share methodologies, instruments and technical personnel without creating new administrative structures. This flexibility renders them particularly suited to the initial phases, when the principal objective is to launch a common pathway without unduly stringent constraints.

More structured models, such as Unions of Municipalities, offer by contrast a stable institutional framework, endowed with its own organs and an autonomous budget. The literature evidences how such forms of cooperation may strengthen the administrative capacity of small municipalities, improve the efficiency of services and favour access to funding that requires critical mass and managerial continuity (Baldini et al., 2009). In these cases, the management of the inventory and of the register of disused heritage may be assumed as an associated function, with a single technical office capable of guaranteeing specialist competences that are difficult to obtain at municipal level. In the specific context of inner areas, and in particular in the areas already included in the

11 The concept of administrative capacity has been progressively developed in the literature on territorial governance as a central component of institutional quality, referring to the technical expertise of administrations, their organisational efficiency and their ability to devise, manage and implement complex public policies. Studies on the quality of regional government show that, within European contexts, significant institutional disparities persist between territories, with direct consequences for the management of cohesion policies (Charron et al., 2014). It has been highlighted that territories with more robust administrations tend to translate available resources into more substantial development outcomes, whilst institutionally less structured contexts face greater difficulties in doing so (Rodríguez-Pose & Garcilazo, 2015).

National Strategy for Inner Areas, inter-municipal cooperation does not represent an additional option but a structural condition of institutional functioning. The SNAI areas indeed have at their disposal configurations of multi-level governance that are already consolidated — steering committees, lead municipalities, coordination offices — which constitute a precious organisational infrastructure for sustaining complex processes such as the inventory of disused heritage. The results observable in these contexts demonstrate that supra-municipal collaboration is practicable and effective in coordinating integrated policies and in mobilising significant resources (Barca et al., 2014), rendering natural the extension of the inventory to a wider territorial scale.

Alongside the SNAI structures, the LAGs[12] too, active for decades in rural development, represent a consolidated reference for forms of territorial governance that aggregate municipalities, enterprises and civil society within shared strategies (Gargano, 2021). In many regions, moreover, supra-municipal programmes and digital platforms furnish methodologies, instruments and technical support to municipalities, creating an institutional environment favourable to the adoption of uniform models of inventory and to the construction of integrated databases.

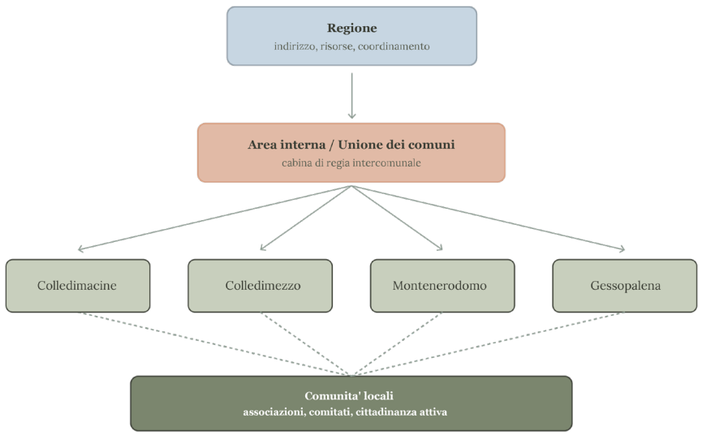


Figure n 72.
Proposed scheme of inter-municipal governance.
Source: elaboration by the author.

12 LAGs (Local Action Groups): bodies established under the European rural development policy (the LEADER approach) that promote public-private partnerships, participatory local planning and the management of territorial development measures, by funding and coordinating integrated initiatives at sub-regional level.

The *inter-municipal register: structure and functioning*

Independently of the model of governance adopted, the constitution of an inter-municipal register represents the strategic objective for maximising the utility of the instrument: an aggregated register makes it possible to overcome the fragmentation of information, to construct a homogeneous knowledge base and to identify territorial patterns that would not emerge from isolated municipal registers.

The structure of the register should provide for a single database, with standardised fields and a system of coding that identifies each property univocally, guaranteeing at the same time the possibility of integrating information specific to individual municipalities. Consultation should occur across several levels, permitting both an overall view of disused heritage at territorial scale and the detailed analysis of individual municipalities. Operational management requires a stable technical coordination, responsible for the maintenance of the platform, for support to the municipalities and for the production of periodic reports. The governance of the register should be articulated across two levels: a political steering committee, composed of the mayors or their delegates, charged with defining strategic orientations; and a technical coordination, formed of the heads of the technical offices, which guarantees methodological and operational coherence.

This multi-level model is coherent with the indications of the literature on collaborative governance, which underlines how hybrid structures may integrate political leadership and technical competences (Ansell and Gash, 2008)[13].

Integration with wide-area planning

The inter-municipal register must not be conceived as an isolated instrument but as an integral part of the instruments

13 Ansell and Gash propose a model that identifies certain conditions which make multi-stakeholder decision-making processes more conducive: leadership capable of facilitating dialogue, clear rules of the game, and the gradual building of trust amongst participants. A key aspect is that the process unfolds over time, through dialogue and mutual learning, enabling the stakeholders to define shared objectives and more stable forms of coordination. This approach has subsequently been adopted in various areas of territorial governance, particularly in European contexts characterised by significant institutional fragmentation, such as in the case of policies for rural and mountain areas.

of spatial planning; its integration with the Provincial Territorial Coordination Plans, with the Landscape Plans and with wide-area strategies makes it possible to amplify its utility and to orient public policies towards the reuse of existing heritage.

The register may constitute a fundamental knowledge base for identifying priority areas of intervention, orienting public investment, supporting policies for the containment of land take — in accordance with what is established by the Global Agenda 2030[14] — and constructing integrated territorial strategies.

The availability of updated and georeferenced data on disused heritage represents an added value for planning, as recent experiences of integration between HBIM[15] and GIS environments for the management of built heritage show (Pozzoni et al., 2024). Such an informational base, if integrated with wide-area instruments, may favour the construction of network policies that draw upon the complementarities between municipalities and promote inter-municipal projects of regeneration, tourism, culture and services. In this sense, the register may become a device of coordination between differing sectoral policies, contributing to the construction of a shared territorial vision.

From fragmentation to system: territorial strategies of reuse

The inter-municipal scale makes it possible to move beyond the logic of isolated interventions and to construct territorial strategies of reuse based upon networks of places, functions and services, ensuring that disused heritage may become a strategic resource where it is inserted within integrated projects involving several municipalities and drawing upon complementary territorial vocations. Experiences such as alberghi diffusi, community cooperatives and inter-municipal cultural networks show how the supra-municipal dimension is capable of generating economies of scale, greater visibility and a capacity to attract investment.

The inter-municipal register may constitute the knowledge base for constructing such strategies, identifying clusters of properties, territorial corridors of abandonment or opportunities for thematic reuse. In this way, disused heritage is no longer regarded as a set of isolated problems but as a widespread territorial resource capable of nourishing projects of local development founded upon cooperation and complementarity.

The role of wide-area bodies

Wide-area bodies — Provinces, Unions of Municipalities, SNAI areas — may perform a decisive role in coordinating the inventory, in supporting the municipalities and in guaranteeing the continuity of the process over time. In this sense the literature on multi-level governance evidences how these bodies are fundamental in bridging the divide between the local and the regional level, facilitating coordination and the circulation of information. Their involvement may assume differing forms: technical support, management of the information platform, coordination of updates, promotion of the register among investors and institutions, integration with planning instruments.

In contexts characterised by strong administrative fragmentation, the role of wide-area bodies becomes essential in guaranteeing stability, continuity and operational capacity; they may act as institutional intermediaries, facilitating cooperation between municipalities and ensuring that the inventory and the inter-municipal register do not remain episodic initiatives but are consolidated as permanent instruments of territorial governance.

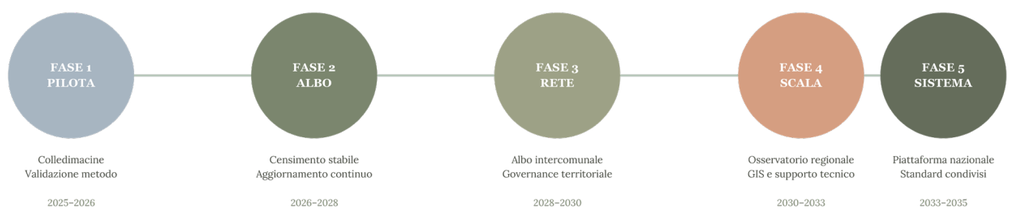


Figure n 73.
Roadmap for the implementation of the proposed model.
Source: elaboration by the author..

14 The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted in 2015, includes among its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Goal 11 'Sustainable cities and communities', which promotes more inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities, and Goal 15 'Life on land', which concerns the reduction of land use.

15 The term HBIM (Heritage Building Information Modelling) refers to the application of BIM methodologies to existing buildings, whether historic or of monumental significance. It involves the creation of parametric three-dimensional models that integrate data on materials, history and state of conservation with the model's geometry. The integration of HBIM and GIS makes it possible to link the scale of an individual building to that of the wider area, enabling this information to be used both for specific conservation interventions and for broader heritage management strategies. These are tools that require specific expertise and scarce resources, but which are gradually becoming more accessible even to less well-organised local authorities, thanks to the spread of open-source solutions and the simplification of surveying techniques. For an overview of developments in these methodologies as applied to rural heritage, see Moyano et al. (2021).

9.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE VARIOUS LEVELS OF POLICY MAKING

The experimentation conducted at Colledimacine and the analysis developed in the preceding sections seek to show that the construction of a replicable model for the inventory and management of disused heritage requires a coordinated commitment on the part of all levels of government. No municipality, above all in inner areas, can address the complexity of the phenomenon alone; at the same time, no regional or national policy can prove effective without a solid local rootedness and without the capacity of administrations to translate the instruments into everyday practices.

The recommendations that follow do not constitute a prescriptive list of measures but delineate a multi-level strategic framework identifying the conditions necessary for the methodology proposed to be adopted, adapted and rendered sustainable over time.

Figure n 74.
Policy recommendations by institutional level.
Source: elaboration by the author.

Livello	Azione prioritaria	Orizzonte	Priorità
Comunale	Istituzionalizzare il censimento · Integrare l'albo nel PUG/PRG	1–3 anni	Alta
Intercomunale	Albo condiviso · Strategie territoriali integrate	2–5 anni	Molto alta
Regionale	Linee guida, GIS regionale · Supporto tecnico e finanziario	3–5 anni	Alta
Nazionale	Legge quadro nazionale · Piattaforma unitaria e integrazione SNAI	5–10 anni	Strategica

Recommendations for the municipal level

The municipal level represents the indispensable point of departure for any policy of management of disused heritage, since even in the most fragile contexts municipalities remain the actors with the closest knowledge of the territory, its dynamics and its critical issues. From this perspective, the first recommendation concerns the need to regard the inventory not as an extraordinary project to be activated only in the presence of specific opportunities, but as an ordinary practice of territorial governance, stably integrated within the activities of the administration. From the fieldwork it has emerged that the methodology is sustainable even in administrations with minimal staffing, provided that the activity is formally recognised, programmed with continuity and incorporated into the routine of the technical office; formalisation through deliberative acts, the identification of an internal focal point and the provision of a minimum dedicated time therefore become essential conditions for preventing the inventory from remaining an episodic initiative destined to lose effectiveness over time.

A second domain concerns the integration of the register into planning and regulatory instruments, since it should not be perceived as a separate archive but as a component of territorial knowledge that informs and orients planning choices. Its insertion into the PUG or the PRG, its inclusion in the Technical Implementation Rules and its coordination with sectoral instruments make it possible to transform the inventory into a device that guides municipal policies towards the reuse of existing heritage, contributing to the containment of land take and to the regeneration of inhabited centres.

A further element concerns the need to guarantee minimal but stable resources, since, although it requires no substantial investment, the sustainability of the inventory over time depends upon the availability of funds for the maintenance of the digital platform, for the training of personnel and for any technical consultancy. In this sense, the capacity to intercept external funding — regional, national or European — represents a decisive factor, above all for the smaller municipalities, which frequently have extremely reduced budgetary margins.

Finally, the municipal level must draw upon the role of the local community, recognising that the participation of citizens, associations and economic actors may contribute to the gathering of information and to the definition of ideas for reuse, to the construction of partnerships and to the legitimation of public choices. Transparency in the communication of results, the sharing of the register and the opening of spaces for discussion represent fundamental instruments for transforming the inventory into a collective process rather than an exclusively

technical activity, thereby strengthening the bond between administration and community and increasing the possibility that the heritage inventoried will become the object of shared and sustainable projects.

Recommendations for the inter-municipal level

The inter-municipal level represents the most effective scale at which to address abandoned heritage in inner areas systemically, as discussed in section 9.2. In these contexts, cooperation between municipalities is a necessary condition for overcoming administrative fragmentation, sharing competences and resources and constructing territorial strategies that draw upon local complementarities and vocations. The recommendations concentrate upon the promotion of stable forms of aggregation, upon the construction of inter-municipal registers and upon the definition of integrated development strategies.

A first domain concerns the strengthening or activation of forms of cooperation already present within these territories, drawing upon Unions of Municipalities, LAGs and community cooperatives or promoting agreements wherever such structures are not operative. Overcoming competitive logics and parochialism, frequently rooted in small municipalities, is fundamental in recognising that cooperation generates collective advantages, reduces costs, extends administrative capacity and makes it possible to address problems that transcend municipal boundaries. The positive experiences present within the territory, analysed in Chapter 5, may perform an important demonstrative role, contributing to building trust and to consolidating collaborative practices.

The constitution of inter-municipal registers is a strategic step: aggregating the data deriving from several municipalities makes it possible to construct a wider and more articulated knowledge base, revealing territorial patterns that do not emerge from isolated registers and orienting reuse policies beyond the municipal dimension. The creation of shared digital platforms, the identification of a lead municipality or of a supra-municipal body for coordination, and the definition of common rules for the management and updating of the register guarantee methodological coherence, continuity over time and a balanced distribution of operational responsibilities.

Inter-municipal cooperation must translate into integrated strategies that transform disused heritage into a resource for network projects, drawing upon the complementarities between municipalities and strengthening territorial identity. The elaboration of Inter-Municipal Strategic Plans dedicated to disused heritage may define a shared vision, identify specific vocations, select priority projects and establish modalities of coordination and monitoring. The inter-municipal register thus assumes the role of a platform for the construction of common visions and for joint applications to funding that requires critical mass and adequate administrative capacity.

The sharing of competences and resources — such as associated technical services, joint training of personnel, shared purchasing of technologies and consultancy — makes it possible to overcome fragmentation, reduce costs and increase the quality of the competences available. In territories with reduced staffing and competences distributed unevenly, inter-municipal cooperation becomes an instrument of capacity building that strengthens administrative resilience and sustains complex processes such as the recovery of disused heritage.

Finally, in the areas already included in the National Strategy for Inner Areas, inter-municipal cooperation finds a further strength in the presence of structures of multi-level governance that are already operative.

The integration of the inventory into the SNAI strategies, coordination with the other lines of intervention and the use of the dedicated resources may contribute to consolidating the role of the register as a cross-cutting instrument, in dialogue with policies for services, mobility, digitalisation and local development. The inter-municipal level is therefore a strategic dimension that transforms disused heritage into a lever of shared territorial development.

Recommendations for the regional level

The regional level performs a crucial role in creating conditions favourable to the widespread adoption of the inventory methodology and, more generally, in coordinating the efforts necessary to sustain policies of reuse of disused heritage on

a wide territorial scale, without, however, substituting itself for municipal administrations. Regions indeed represent the intermediate level of multi-level governance: on the one hand they translate national orientations into operational instruments; on the other they support municipalities through legislation, resources and competences, contributing to reducing territorial inequalities and to guaranteeing minimum standards of quality.

A first domain of intervention concerns the regulatory dimension. In many Italian regions a specific legislative framework dedicated to registers of disused heritage is still lacking, with the result that inventory practices develop in an inconsistent and frequently episodic manner. The adoption of regional laws that formally recognise the inventory as an instrument of public interest, define minimum methodological standards, establish obligations or incentives for municipalities and provide for forms of procedural simplification for the properties inventoried represents a fundamental step in consolidating the methodology and integrating it into territorial policies. Such legislation should moreover be coordinated with regional legislation on spatial planning, urban regeneration, land take, housing policy and the development of inner and mountain areas, with the objective of constructing a coherent and integrated framework.

Alongside the regulatory dimension, technical support is essential. Regions may perform a determining role in making available operational instruments that facilitate the work of municipalities, above all the smaller ones. Detailed guidelines, model forms and databases, standardised operational procedures, indications for integration with GIS systems and templates for administrative acts constitute a body of instruments that may significantly reduce organisational costs and increase the homogeneity of the data gathered. The creation of regional GIS platforms, capable of aggregating municipal data and yielding an overall territorial view, represents a further element of strengthening, since it permits more in-depth analyses and facilitates regional programming.

Technical support should be accompanied by structured programmes of training, and the possibility for technical officers and administrators to participate in continuous training pathways, to engage with excellent experiences, to participate in regional and national networks and to access dedicated services of technical assistance contributes to strengthening local competences and to guaranteeing the sustainability over time of the activities of inventory and register management. In territories characterised by reduced staffing and unevenly distributed competences, this type of support represents an essential condition for preventing the methodology from remaining confined to a few better-equipped municipalities.

A further domain concerns financial support. Through dedicated calls, reward mechanisms within ordinary programmes and the use of European structural funds, regions may finance both inventories and recovery projects, promote the constitution of inter-municipal registers and support pilot initiatives that demonstrate the feasibility of complex interventions. The capacity of regions to orient resources towards projects coherent with territorial strategies represents a decisive element in guaranteeing continuity and sustainability over time, above all in territories where municipal budgets do not permit significant investment.

Finally, regions may perform an important role in monitoring and in the diffusion of knowledge. The creation of regional Observatories dedicated to disused heritage, which gather data, document best practices, produce periodic reports and facilitate networking between administrations, contributes to constructing a stable and updated information system that orients regional policies on the basis of evidence rather than of perceptions.

The integration of the inventory into regional strategies for inner areas and into the Landscape Plans may moreover strengthen the coherence between sectoral policies and favour more effective and coordinated interventions, transforming disused heritage into a strategic lever for countering depopulation, sustaining housing policy, promoting forms of dispersed hospitality and drawing upon local cultural and productive heritage.

Recommendations for the national level

The national level bears a decisive responsibility in creating a coherent regulatory framework, in guaranteeing adequate resources and in coordinating policies which, by their nature, transcend regional boundaries; without a structured commitment on the part of the State, regulatory fragmentation and territorial

inconsistency risk perpetuating themselves, compromising the possibility of constructing a unitary strategy for the inventory and reuse of disused heritage in inner areas. From this perspective, the recommendations addressed to the national level concern the definition of common standards, the integration of the inventory into national policies for inner areas, financial and technical support to local administrations and the simplification of the procedures that today obstruct recovery interventions.

A first domain of intervention concerns the need to define shared national standards, since the current regulatory framework — characterised by regions that have legislated autonomously and by others devoid of specific instruments — produces approaches that are difficult to compare and obstructs the construction of a homogeneous information system. The adoption of a national framework law[16] could furnish a unitary frame, defining common principles, minimum methodologies, criteria of data interoperability and modalities of publication and updating of the registers, while leaving regions the possibility of adapting such indications to their own specificities and thereby contributing to reducing the fragmentation that characterises the national panorama today.

Alongside the regulatory dimension, the national level may perform a fundamental role in integrating the inventory of disused heritage into policies for inner areas, in particular into the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI), by rendering the inventory a mandatory action for all SNAI areas, allocating a share of the resources to its realisation and inserting specific indicators into the monitoring systems, so as to consolidate the role of the register as a cross-cutting instrument and to strengthen the coherence of territorial policies. The provision of reward mechanisms for inter-municipal projects, for interventions coherent with the registers and for initiatives that integrate heritage recovery with other strategic lines would moreover contribute to strengthening the cooperative dimension of public policy.

Cross-cutting guiding principles

Beyond the specificities of the various levels of government, certain recommendations assume a cross-cutting value and define a set of principles capable of rendering more solid and sustainable the entire process of inventory, management and reuse of disused heritage, configuring themselves not as isolated measures but as general orientations that suggest an approach, an institutional posture and a method of work. A first principle concerns the adoption of an incremental and realistic approach: the recovery of abandoned heritage requires long timescales and cannot be addressed as an immediate or totalising intervention, and it proves more effective to proceed by successive steps, launching circumscribed pilot projects, progressively consolidating the competences acquired and extending the field of action only when operational conditions permit. From this perspective, a partial but operative register is preferable to a perfect but continually deferred one, and gradualness in the extension to private heritage — beginning with a limited sample and subsequently extending its coverage — represents a pragmatic strategy that avoids blockages and rigidities[17].

A second principle concerns the centrality of the local dimension, since methodologies must be sufficiently flexible to adapt to the specificities of contexts, drawing upon the expert knowledge of municipal technical officers, administrators and local communities. The higher levels of government should therefore furnish instruments and support without imposing standardised solutions, recognising that territorial diversity constitutes a resource and not an obstacle, and that co-design with local actors represents an essential element for the success of regeneration policies.

A third principle concerns integration between sectors and institutional levels: disused heritage is indeed an intrinsically

16 The Urban Regeneration Bill introduces operational definitions, procedural simplifications and incentives for the regeneration of existing buildings, but it does not address the issue of registers of derelict properties, nor does it provide guidelines for local authorities to carry out a survey, thus representing a missed opportunity to establish a unified framework for action. See ANCE (2024), Hearing before the Senate's 8th Committee on the Urban Regeneration Bill, for a critical analysis of the bill.

17 The principle of incrementalism in public policy (Lindblom, 1959) describes how decisions are often made through gradual adjustments rather than through comprehensive planning. When applied to urban regeneration policies, it suggests that limited and flexible interventions may prove more effective over time, as they allow for adaptation, correction and learning.

cross-cutting question, which intersects spatial planning, landscape, social policy, economic development and demographic dynamics, rendering necessary a coordination that avoids fragmentation and overlap and that situates the register within broader territorial strategies, in dialogue with spatial planning and with the programming of public investment.

A fourth principle concerns, finally, sustainability and a long-term vision, since the regeneration of disused heritage requires continuity beyond electoral cycles, multi-year programming, stable resources and mechanisms of monitoring that allow strategies to be adapted over time, drawing upon the capacity of administrations to construct shared visions and to privilege structural impacts over immediate results.

Finally, transparency — understood as the publication of data, the communication of progress and the continuous evaluation of results — represents an essential condition for building trust, strengthening public accountability and sustaining over time the relationship between institutions and communities.

The national level may moreover promote the creation of a unitary information platform, capable of aggregating the data deriving from regional and municipal registers and of yielding an overall view of the phenomenon, offering interactive maps, aggregated statistics, synthetic property records, case studies and funding opportunities, thereby facilitating the matching of supply and demand and the construction of a stable, accessible and updated informational ecosystem.

Alongside regulatory and financial instruments, the national level may sustain the recovery of disused heritage through targeted fiscal policies, providing for tax relief for private properties entered in the registers and made available for projects of reuse, tax credits for recovery interventions and simplified procedures for the donation of abandoned properties to public or third-sector bodies, thereby incentivising the participation of private owners and extending the base of properties effectively available for regeneration projects.

A further domain concerns support for research and innovation, since the funding of experimental projects, the creation of networks of competence between universities and research centres and the promotion of innovative technologies for inventory and

recovery — from artificial intelligence to drones, from sensors to economic, financial and innovative models — may contribute to developing replicable solutions and to strengthening the capacity of administrations to address a complex and continually evolving phenomenon.

Finally, the national level may intervene on a theme of particular significance for inner areas, namely the relationship between tourism and residency, since — as discussed in Chapter 4 — the tourist conversion of residential heritage risks aggravating the scarcity of dwellings for permanent residents, obstructing the demographic revitalisation of these territories. The introduction of limits on short-term lets, the provision of residential quotas in projects funded with public money and the definition of criteria of economic affordability may contribute to maintaining a balance between tourist attractiveness and the right to housing, preventing the enhancement of disused heritage from translating into new forms of housing pressure.

9.4 TOWARDS A “PACT FOR DISUSED HERITAGE”

The complexity of disused heritage in inner areas requires a coordinated and continuous commitment on the part of all levels of government and of the multiple territorial actors involved. From this perspective, it is possible to envisage the signing of a “Pact for Disused Heritage”, understood as a frame of shared commitments that would orient public action towards common objectives and strengthen the coherence of policy[18].

The Pact might be articulated into a set of differentiated but complementary responsibilities: to the State would fall the task of defining a unitary regulatory framework, simplifying authorisation procedures, allocating dedicated resources and promoting a national platform for the gathering and diffusion of data; to

18 Within the European context, there are instruments similar to the proposed Pact: in France, the Contrats de ville, as part of the politique de la ville, constitute a well-established model of multi-level governance between the State, regions and local authorities, based on verifiable mutual commitments and shared resources; in Scotland, the Local Outcome Improvement Plans (LOIPs) provided for by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 formalise agreements between local authorities and communities on shared territorial objectives, with public accountability mechanisms that strengthen institutional responsibility. In both cases, effectiveness lies in the ability to build a shared vision amongst different stakeholders, transforming cooperation into a stable governance structure – which is the decisive condition for the success of any territorial pact (Putnam, 1993).

the Regions, that of adopting coherent legislation, activating territorial observatories, supporting inventory programmes financially and furnishing technical support to municipalities; to the Municipalities, that of integrating the inventory into the ordinary practices of territorial governance, updating the registers periodically and promoting recovery projects in partnership with public and private actors; and to local communities, finally, the role of contributing knowledge, historical memory and active participation to the processes of design and management.

In order to guarantee the effectiveness of the Pact, mechanisms of monitoring based upon periodic reports, shared indicators and public occasions of verification would need to be provided for, so as to assess the progress achieved, identify recurrent critical issues and update the strategies on the basis of the evidence gathered. A national steering committee, composed of representatives of the central administrations, the Regions, local authorities, the SNAI areas and the research community, could coordinate the implementation of the Pact, facilitate cooperation between the various institutional levels and promote the diffusion of knowledge and best practices.

In this way, the Pact would assume the function of a device of multi-level governance guaranteeing continuity, vision and coherence to policies of inventory and reuse of disused heritage, transforming a set of fragmented initiatives into a shared strategy oriented towards the long term.

Maria Lai, *Binding to the mountain*, Ulassai, 8-9 september 1981.
Fotography of Piero Berengo Gardin

CONCLUSION

On the preceding page ***A Black Pine at Night*****, Passo delle Capannelle, Pizzoli, Abruzzo, Italy.**
Photograph by M. Kenna, 2016

The research took its start from a central question: is it possible to develop an operational methodology for the inventory of abandoned public built heritage in inner areas that is rigorous epistemically, sustainable administratively and transferable at inter-municipal and regional scale?
At the conclusion of this trajectory, the answer emerging from the experimentation conducted is affirmative, but with the caveats and clarifications that every empirical research imposes.
As regards epistemic rigour, the methodology developed has demonstrated its capacity to produce accurate and systematic data on abandoned public heritage, yielding for each property a quantitative and qualitative characterisation sufficiently detailed to support informed administrative decisions. The survey form designed makes it possible to gather information on the state of conservation, the ownership regime, the surface area, the original designated use and the potential for reuse, constructing a knowledge base that local administrations do not possess in the majority of cases and that represents the indispensable prerequisite for any policy of regeneration.
As regards administrative sustainability, the experimentation at Colledimacine has demonstrated that the inventory process is manageable by municipal technical officers within their ordinary competences, without any need for additional economic investment or extraordinary specialist competences — a result far from self-evident in contexts characterised by local administrations structurally under-endowed with human and financial resources (Carrosio, 2019). As regards transferability, the results are more partial: the experimentation on a single municipality has not made it possible to test fully the replicability of the model in different contexts, and the conditions of Colledimacine — a municipality of 128 inhabitants with a relatively limited public heritage and an administration willing to collaborate — do not reflect the heterogeneity of the municipalities of Italian inner areas. This limitation, discussed in detail in Chapter 9, does not invalidate the model but delimits its perimeter of validity, indicating the directions in which the research must be further developed.
To the first subsidiary question — what the morphologies, causes and dimensions of building abandonment in the inner areas of Abruzzo are, and to what extent the regulatory and

planning instruments available today are adequate to address it — the research has offered an articulated answer. The analysis conducted in Chapters 3 and 7 has yielded a picture of abandonment as a multidimensional and stratified phenomenon, whose full understanding requires the interweaving of demographic, economic, regulatory and cultural dynamics that have sedimented within the territory over the course of decades. The regulatory instruments available today, from the SNAI classification to the regional registers of unused properties, have proved inadequate not for want of political will but for the absence of a shared definitional frame and of uniform operational standards rendering the data comparable and usable at supra-local scale (Barca et al., 2014; Salzano, 1998).

To the second subsidiary question — whether a survey form designed to be managed by municipal technical officers is capable of producing data that are sufficiently complete and reliable — the answer emerging from the experimentation is substantially positive, with certain important clarifications. The form developed proved comprehensible and usable in the field, producing data of a quality sufficient for the purposes of the inventory. Its application, however, evidenced certain areas for improvement, in particular in the assessment of the structural state of buildings — an aspect requiring specific technical competences not always available in small municipalities — and in the management of situations of ownership uncertainty, frequent in the public heritage of municipalities with complex administrative histories.

To the third subsidiary question — what institutional, regulatory and governance conditions are necessary for an approach tested at municipal level to be adopted systematically at inter-municipal and regional scale — the research has responded through an analysis of the enabling conditions and of the critical nodes that obstruct the scalability of the model. As argued in Chapter 9, the necessary conditions concern at least three dimensions: the availability of a regional regulatory framework that renders the inventory of abandoned heritage mandatory and standardised, overcoming the voluntariness that characterises the registers currently provided for by Regional Law 58/2023 of Abruzzo; the construction of stable forms of inter-municipal cooperation that make it possible to share technical competences and administrative resources; and the activation of mechanisms of regional and national support that accompany local administrations in the inventory process, furnishing training, instruments and adequate incentives.

The three research hypotheses formulated in the introduction have on the whole found empirical confirmation, albeit with the nuances that the complexity of the phenomenon imposes. The first hypothesis — namely that abandonment is not an inevitable outcome but the product of systemic processes addressable with targeted operational instruments — has been confirmed by the theoretical analysis as much as by the fieldwork: where administrations have adequate epistemic instruments and political will at their disposal, abandoned heritage may be transformed into a resource for regeneration. The second hypothesis (that the inter-municipal scale represents the minimum effective dimension for regeneration policies) has been confirmed by the analysis of the structural limits of individual municipalities and by the literature on policies of local development in inner areas (Barca et al., 2014; Carrosio and Faccini, 2018). The third hypothesis (that the systematic production of knowledge constitutes an indispensable precondition for evidence-based policy) has been confirmed forcefully by the experimentation: in the absence of reliable data on abandoned heritage, any policy of regeneration risks being fragmentary, episodic and difficult to assess in its effects (Healey, 1997).

Original contributions of the research

The research contributes to existing scholarly debate on three distinct planes, each of which brings elements of originality relative to the available literature. On the epistemic plane, the first original contribution concerns the systematisation of the phenomenon of building abandonment in the inner areas of Abruzzo as an autonomous and structured object of analysis. If the literature on Italian inner areas has produced in recent years significant contributions on demographic, economic and governance dynamics (Barca et al., 2014; De Rossi, 2018; Carrosio, 2019), the specific question of abandoned built heritage has remained at the margins of scholarly debate, treated predominantly as a side effect of depopulation rather than as a

phenomenon with its own logics, morphologies and dynamics (Oteri, 2019). The present research contributes to filling this gap, proposing a reading of abandonment as a multidimensional phenomenon that interweaves demographic, economic, regulatory and cultural dimensions, and yielding for the first time a systematic mapping of the morphologies of abandonment in the area of the Basso Sangro-Trigno. In this sense, the work is situated within and contributes to an emerging strand of research which, from differing disciplinary perspectives — from urban planning to rural geography, from architectural history to public policy — is progressively constructing a more coherent interpretive framework of the phenomenon of abandonment in Italian and European inner areas (Varagnoli et al., 2020; Bartolomucci, 2020).
The second epistemic contribution concerns the critical analysis of the regulatory and planning instruments available for addressing abandoned heritage in inner areas. The research has conducted a systematic survey of the existing regulatory framework at national and regional level, evidencing with precision the definitional gaps, the regulatory incoherences and the operational limits that obstruct effective policy. In particular, the analysis has brought to light how the absence of a shared national legal definition of "abandoned asset" produces significant operational consequences, preventing the construction of reliable and comparable inventories and rendering difficult the elaboration of targeted policy (Salzano, 1998). This contribution has a significance extending beyond the case of Abruzzo, since the gaps identified characterise the Italian regulatory framework as a whole and represent a critical node that any reform of the sector will have to address.
On the methodological plane, the principal contribution of the research consists in the development of an original methodology for the inventory of abandoned public heritage in inner areas, designed specifically to be applicable with the ordinary resources of municipal administrations. This represents a significant element of novelty relative to existing instruments, which in the majority of cases require specialist competences, additional economic resources or the involvement of external parties — conditions difficult to satisfy in the small municipalities of inner areas (INU, 2022). The methodology proposed is distinguished by three specific characteristics: operational simplicity, which renders it accessible to municipal technical officers without specialist training in the field of abandoned heritage; informational completeness, which makes it possible to gather data sufficiently detailed to support administrative decisions and regeneration policies; and scalability, which permits its application at the level of the individual municipality as much as, with the necessary adaptations, at inter-municipal and regional scale. The empirical validation of the methodology through the experimentation at Colledimacine constitutes a further element of originality: unlike many methodological proposals that remain on the theoretical plane, the present research has subjected the instruments proposed to verification in the field, gathering empirical evidence as to their effectiveness and identifying with precision the areas for improvement.
An additional methodological contribution concerns the application of the action-research approach to the theme of abandoned heritage in inner areas. If this approach is consolidated in other domains of urban planning research and of public policy (Healey, 1997), its systematic application to the specific question of the inventory and enhancement of disused heritage in inner areas represents a relatively unprecedented novelty within the Italian context. The research has demonstrated that the action-research approach is particularly fruitful in this context, since it makes it possible to overcome the distance between academic production and the operational capacities of local administrations, yielding to the latter instruments that are immediately usable and contributing to the strengthening of their institutional capacity.
On the strategic plane, the original contribution of the research consists in the formulation of a framework of recommendations for the scalability of the inventory model, articulated across the various levels of government and founded upon a principle of gradualness and operational realism. The proposal for a "Pact for Disused Heritage" as an instrument of multi-level coordination represents a propositional contribution extending beyond the technical dimension of the inventory, addressing the question of governance as a necessary condition for transforming isolated experimental practices into systemic and durable public policy. In this sense, the research is situated within the broader debate

on the reform of policies for Italian inner areas (Barca et al., 2014; De Rossi, 2018), contributing a concrete proposal that integrates the epistemic dimension — the inventory — with the institutional one — multi-level governance — and the operational one — the instruments for local administrations. This integration between the three dimensions represents perhaps the most original contribution of the research as a whole: not an inventory as an end in itself, not an abstract institutional proposal, but a coherent system in which knowledge, governance and operability sustain one another with a view to transforming abandoned heritage from a problem into a resource for the regeneration of Italian inner areas.

Limits of the research

Every empirical research presents limits bound up with methodological choices, with the context of application and with the resources available, and the present research is no exception. The critical analysis of these limits does not diminish the value of the work carried out but, on the contrary, defines with greater precision its perimeter of validity and orients future developments towards the most productive directions.

The first and most significant limit concerns the circumscription of the inventory to heritage in municipal public ownership alone. As documented in Chapter 9, this choice, motivated by reasons of operational feasibility and of data accessibility, excludes from the experimentation the quantitatively most significant portion of abandoned heritage in inner areas: according to estimates of the Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica, in small Apennine municipalities disused private heritage represents between 70% and 85% of the total. The inventory conducted at Colledimacine therefore intercepts only a part of the problem, yielding an inevitably partial and undersized picture. This limitation has both quantitative and qualitative implications: public heritage presents specific typological characteristics — predominantly public housing units, disused school buildings, former municipal offices — that do not reflect the variety of abandoned heritage overall, in which the most widespread typologies are scattered rural dwellings, small houses of the historic centre and agricultural buildings. Policies of regeneration based solely upon public heritage therefore risk intervening upon only a part of urban blight, while private abandonment continues to generate critical issues, structural risks and a persistent perception of neglect that penalises the overall image of these villages (Varagnoli et al., 2020).

The second limit concerns the experimentation on a single municipality. Colledimacine is an emblematic case in certain respects — advanced depopulation, monocentric configuration, willingness of the administration to collaborate — but presents highly specific conditions that do not reflect the heterogeneity of the municipalities of Italian inner areas. In contexts with differing characteristics, operational challenges not intercepted by the experimentation might emerge: municipalities with several hamlets would require more complex site inspections and longer timescales; demographically more substantial entities might have a far more extensive public heritage, imposing a management by phases and priorities; territories with significant tourist flows might present tensions between residential and tourist uses that the methodology is not equipped to address explicitly. The experimentation on a single municipality has moreover not made it possible to test essential aspects of the inter-municipal dimension — coordination between administrations, the sharing of data and competences, the construction of integrated territorial visions — which nonetheless constitute one of the central recommendations of the research. This limitation suggests the need for pilot experimentation in diversified contexts before a large-scale generalisation of the model may be proposed (Schön, 1983).

The third limit concerns the temporal dimension of the experimentation. The inventory conducted at Colledimacine represents a snapshot of abandoned public heritage at a specific moment, but it does not make it possible to assess the stability over time of the data gathered nor the effectiveness of the instruments proposed in supporting processes of effective regeneration. The passage from knowledge to action — from the inventory to the effective recovery and reuse of the properties inventoried — requires timescales and conditions that lie beyond the temporal horizon of doctoral research, and whose outcomes depend upon institutional, economic and political factors that the research can influence only in part (Healey, 1997). The full validation of the

methodology would therefore require a longitudinal monitoring verifying to what extent the data produced by the inventory have effectively been used by administrations to orient policies and investment decisions.

The fourth limit concerns the question of the ownership fragmentation of abandoned private heritage, which constitutes one of the most significant systemic causes of abandonment in inner areas and which the present research has not been able to address directly. The complexity of the legal situations bound up with unresolved successions, co-ownership among numerous heirs and emigrated or untraceable owners represents a critical node that any extension of the methodology to private heritage will have to address with specific instruments — cadastral searches, procedures of mediation between co-owners, mechanisms of public acquisition — which require legal and administrative competences extending well beyond those ordinarily available in small municipalities. This limit concerns not only the methodology proposed but reflects a deeper gap in the Italian regulatory system, which lacks effective instruments for unblocking abandoned private heritage in the hands of owners who are uninterested or unable to intervene.

The fifth limit, finally, concerns the participatory dimension of the research. If the experimentation included occasions of engagement with the municipal administration and a session of participatory reporting of the results, the involvement of the resident communities — and in particular of potential new inhabitants, of local young people and of the associational entities present in the territory — remained limited. An action research fully coherent with its own epistemological principles ought to have included a more structured participatory process, integrating the tacit knowledge of local communities into the construction of the methodology and the evaluation of the results. This limitation indicates the need, for the future developments of the research, to devote greater attention to the participatory dimension, recognising in resident communities active subjects of processes of territorial regeneration.

Concluding reflections

Reinhabiting inner areas is a process that requires long temporal horizons, courageous strategic choices and a political will that transcends municipal boundaries and the short cycles of ordinary programming. These are not residual territories at the margins of the national settlement system but a vast and morphologically complex area that accommodates a significant share of the population, guards a cultural and environmental heritage of extraordinary significance and performs ecological and landscape functions fundamental to the peninsula as a whole. To address the question of inner areas — and, within it, the specific question of abandoned built heritage — therefore means engaging with one of the structural contradictions of the Italian model of development: that between a country which recognises its cultural heritage as an identitary and strategic resource and which at the same time permits its progressive deterioration for want of adequate regulatory instruments, sufficient financial resources and the political will to intervene systematically. This contradiction is not exhausted in the physical dimension of built heritage but is interwoven with the broader dynamics of the housing emergency and of touristification analysed in the course of the research. The abandoned heritage of inner areas is situated at the crossroads of these processes: it constitutes a potential resource for responding to unmet housing needs, but it also represents the terrain upon which the extractive logic that contributed to generating the original abandonment risks reproducing itself, when recovery is oriented towards tourist valorisation rather than towards permanent residency.

Addressing this challenge requires integrated policies acting on several fronts: facilitating access to abandoned heritage for permanent residency through fiscal incentives and mechanisms of facilitated public acquisition; regulating tourist uses in order to safeguard the residential function, limiting conversions to short-term letting and introducing minimum residential quotas in projects benefiting from public funding; developing forms of social housing in villages by recovering disused public buildings in partnership with the third sector; and testing innovative models of access to housing (residents' cooperatives, community land trusts, cohousing) capable of transcending the traditional dichotomy between ownership and rental. The nexus between touristification and the housing emergency evidences how both

phenomena are expressions of a single crisis in the governance of the built heritage of inner areas: addressing it requires a rethinking of territorial priorities that places the residential function at the centre relative to tourist valorisation and property rent, recognising that the physical recovery of heritage, without the return of a stable human presence, risks producing territories that are aesthetically restored but socially emptied.

The present research has operated on a specific and circumscribed plane: that of the operational instruments for the inventory of abandoned public heritage in inner areas. This is a partial contribution, but one founded upon the premise that the production of systematic and reliable knowledge constitutes the necessary — albeit not sufficient — prerequisite for any evidence-based policy of regeneration. In the absence of reliable data on what exists, where it is located, in what condition it is and to whom it belongs, any intervention risks remaining fragmentary, episodic and difficult to assess in its effects. The inventory is therefore not an end in itself but an enabling condition: the first stage of a process that from knowledge must lead to action, from action to transformation, and from transformation to regeneration.

This process cannot be reduced to the technical dimension of spatial planning alone, nor can it be governed exclusively through national policies elaborated independently of local contexts. It requires the construction of a system of multi-level governance in which institutions, communities, researchers and professionals operate over temporal horizons compatible with the complexity of processes of territorial regeneration, sharing knowledge, responsibilities and resources. It requires local administrations endowed with the capacity to read their own heritage as a strategic resource, and national institutions capable of recognising in inner areas not a residual question but a priority for the territorial cohesion of the country. It requires, in the final analysis, the overcoming of that interpretive hierarchy which has long confined urban centres to the role of places of modernity and of the future, and inner areas to that of the past and of decline (De Rossi, 2018; Viesti, 2021).

The question of inner areas points, more deeply, to a structural problem concerning the model of territorial development of the country as a whole. The SNAI introduced a significant change of paradigm, shifting the interpretive axis from geography to the rights of citizenship (Barca et al., 2014), but its implementation has revealed the limits of an approach that privileges the strengthening of services over the physical question of built heritage. Filling this gap requires a national policy for disused heritage in inner areas that coherently integrates the epistemic, the regulatory and the operational dimensions — what this research has sought to outline with the proposal of the “Pact for Disused Heritage”.

It is from this perspective that the concept of the edge elaborated by Kevin Lynch in The Image of the City (1960) acquires for this research a significance extending beyond the urban metaphor: Lynch observes how urban edges may be transformed from impassable barriers into thresholds of connection, on condition that they be structured in relation to adjacent territories and rendered traversable materially and visually. This reading resonates also for the territorial margins with which this research has been concerned: inner areas, abandoned villages, the landscapes of the Abruzzo Apennines may likewise cease to be boundaries between what is considered significant and what is not, between what has prospect and what is perceived as destined for disappearance, on condition that they be structured in relation to adjacent territories, rendered accessible to new inhabitants, new economies and new visions, and recognised not as residues of the past but as resources for future development.

The abandoned heritage of inner areas represents, from this perspective, a set of potentialities not yet activated: buildings that housed functions vital to local communities, settlements that formed and transformed over time, landscapes that sustained economies and cultures today profoundly altered. To restore to this heritage a function, a use and a prospect is not confined to building recovery: it represents an act of territorial rebalancing for communities marked by decades of systematic disinvestment.

It is upon this premise that the research has constructed its own contribution: in the conviction that producing reliable knowledge is the first step towards orienting effective policy, and that effective policy is the necessary condition for transforming abandoned heritage from a structural problem into a concrete resource for the regeneration of inner areas.

Future developments of the research

The limits that emerged in the course of the research make it possible to identify the principal directions along which the work may be further developed, articulated into four distinct and mutually complementary domains of research, each of which identifies a specific prospect for deepening and extending the results achieved.

A first direction concerns the extension of the methodology to abandoned private heritage. As evidenced in Chapters 3 and 9, disused private heritage represents the quantitatively prevalent component of abandonment in inner areas, estimated at between 70% and 85% of the total (INU, 2022); its exclusion from the experimentation therefore constitutes the principal limit of the research. The application of the methodology to this typology of heritage requires certain substantial additions: in the first place, it appears necessary to define standardised procedures for cadastral research and the identification of owners, taking account of the frequent situations of hereditary co-ownership and of the cases of emigrated or untraceable parties; in the second place, instruments of mediation and incentivisation must be developed capable of favouring the involvement of private owners in processes of recovery and reuse, moving beyond an approach founded exclusively upon coercive instruments; finally, it proves expedient to elaborate criteria for assessing the potential for reuse that consider jointly the physical conditions of the properties, the dynamics of the local market and the expectations of the resident communities. From this perspective, the experiences of the North American Land Banks (Mallach, 2010) and the mechanisms of public acquisition of abandoned heritage tested in certain European contexts constitute useful references to be examined and adapted to the Italian context.

A second line of enquiry concerns the testing of the methodology in differentiated territorial contexts, with the objective of verifying its replicability and of calibrating the operational instruments in relation to differing local conditions. The realisation of a coordinated experimentation across a sample of municipalities selected on the basis of heterogeneous characteristics (demographic size, morphological configuration, intensity of tourist flows and administrative capacity) would make it possible to assess the robustness of the methodology and to identify the adaptations necessary in the different contexts of application. From this perspective, the inter-municipal scale appears the most appropriate level for future experimentation: the construction of inventories coordinated across several municipalities, sustained by the technical support of supra-local parties such as unions of municipalities, mountain communities or regional development agencies, would indeed make it possible to overcome the structural limits of smaller administrations and to have available knowledge bases sufficiently extensive to sustain integrated territorial strategies (Carrosio and Faccini, 2018). The Basso Sangro-Trigno, thanks to the consolidated experience matured as a pilot area of the National Strategy for Inner Areas and to the network of institutional relations developed in the 2014–2020 programming cycle, constitutes a particularly suitable context in which to test such a change of scale.

A third domain of development concerns the digital evolution of the methodology. The experimentation conducted at Colledimacine was based upon deliberately essential instruments, consisting of a paper survey form and an elementary database, which demonstrated their effectiveness in a context characterised by limited organisational and financial resources. The adoption of digital instruments nonetheless offers significant possibilities of development: the realisation of shared platforms for the gathering, archiving and visualisation of data relating to abandoned heritage would make it possible to reduce the current fragmentation of information, rendering the data accessible and comparable at regional and national scale. Integration with the territorial information systems already available (cadastre, regional SITs and ISTAT databases) could moreover appreciably reduce the time and costs of the inventory, automating the acquisition of existing data and concentrating the activity of municipal technical officers upon field verification. Experiences such as the Sistema Informativo Nazionale Federato delle Infrastrutture (SINFI) and the regional open-data platforms offer, in this respect, significant reference models, albeit in the awareness that the quality and completeness of the information available in inner areas still frequently prove insufficient and require systematic investment in updating (ISPRA, 2023).

A fourth direction concerns the evaluation of the impacts of policies for the recovery of abandoned heritage. This research has concentrated upon the construction of the knowledge base, through the inventory, and upon the definition of governance indications, without addressing the effects that recovery interventions produce over the medium and long term in demographic, economic, social and environmental terms. The definition of a framework for impact evaluation therefore represents one of the most significant domains of research, not least in the light of the limited attention that this theme has received in the existing literature. The availability of solid empirical evidence indeed constitutes an essential condition for orienting public decisions and assessing the effectiveness of the various strategies of intervention (Healey, 1997). From this perspective, longitudinal studies capable of following over time the evolution of the municipalities that have launched processes of recovery of disused heritage, comparing them with analogous territorial contexts devoid of such interventions, could furnish useful indications both as to the repercussions of the policies adopted and as to the conditions that favour their success.

Alongside these four domains of enquiry, the research suggests a reflection of a more general character on the role that a systematic knowledge of abandoned heritage may assume in the evolution of policies for Italian inner areas. The National Strategy for Inner Areas has represented a significant step in the recognition of the specificities of these territories, but its implementation has evidenced the difficulties of translating strategic orientations into operational instruments capable of bearing continuously upon processes of territorial decline (De Rossi, 2018).

The construction of homogeneous and updated knowledge bases on disused heritage constitutes a precondition for the definition of more effective policies, founded upon reliable data, sustained by adequate instruments of coordination between the various institutional levels and supported by resources coherent with the complexity of the challenge.

From this perspective, a national policy for disused heritage in inner areas could represent an important instrument for countering depopulation and promoting durable processes of territorial regeneration. In order to translate this intention into concrete interventions, the availability of solid knowledge bases will have to be accompanied by a clear assumption of political responsibility, recognising abandoned heritage as a strategic question for the future of inner areas and guaranteeing continuity in public action.

The pursuit of this objective requires a trajectory of research, experimentation and institutional consolidation that necessarily exceeds the limits of the present work, whose intent is to make available a methodological structure susceptible of being verified, adapted and further developed in differing territorial contexts.

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GLOSSARY

A

Abandonment (of buildings). A condition of prolonged cessation of use of a building or artefact, accompanied by the interruption of maintenance and by progressive processes of deterioration. In this research the term is taken in its multidimensional complexity — definitional, morphological, regulatory — in the absence of a shared national legal framework, and it is interpreted not as an inevitable outcome of marginalisation but as the product of systemic processes (economic, demographic, cultural and regulatory) addressable with targeted operational instruments.

Accommodation Density (AD). Reflects the number of bed places available per unit of surface area, evidencing how tourist infrastructure may influence the density and overcrowding of an area. AD = Bed places / Territorial extent.

Action research (*ricerca-azione***).** A methodological approach in which the production of knowledge and the transformation of the problematic situation proceed iteratively and in an interwoven manner, through direct intervention in the field and the involvement of local actors. It structures the entire framework of the research, articulated into four phases with reciprocal feedback.

***Albergo diffuso* (dispersed hotel).** A model of hospitality that recovers for accommodation purposes distinct building units within an inhabited centre, with unitary management and shared services, maintaining the horizontal structure of the village. In this research it is analysed among the tourism-based reuse practices: effective where it grows gradually, is inserted within an inhabited context and adopts forms of local governance; at risk of exclusionary drift where it concentrates ownership in external parties (the Sextantio case).

Altimetric zone. The classification, for statistical purposes, of Italian municipalities on the basis of their altitude threshold values into five zones. The classification criteria are set out in the 1958 publication (ISTAT, *Circoscrizioni statistiche*, Metodi e norme, series C, no. 1, August 1958). Mountain, hill and plain altimetric zones are distinguished. The mountain and hill altimetric zones have been divided, in order to take account of the moderating action of the sea upon the climate, into inland mountain and inland hill zones and coastal mountain and coastal hill zones respectively, the latter comprising those territories, excluded from the plain zone, that are washed by the sea or lie in proximity to it.

B

Birth rate. The ratio between the number of live births in the year and the average resident population, multiplied by 1,000.

Business density. The ratio between the number of enterprises and resident persons (number of enterprises per 1,000 resident persons).

C

Civic crowdfunding. The widespread gathering of economic resources from citizens and communities in support of projects of collective interest. It is indicated among the sources of funding complementary to public funds for the launch and consolidation of reuse projects.

Cohesion policies. The set of European and national instruments directed towards reducing development disparities between territories. They constitute the frame within which the SNAI and the comparative strategies analysed in Chapter 2 (Scotland, Switzerland, Italy) are situated.

Commons (*beni comuni*). Material and intangible resources recognised as functional to the exercise of fundamental rights and to the free development of the person, manageable through forms of shared administration between citizens and institutions. In this research the perspective of the commons orients the forms of collective management of reactivated heritage (community cooperatives, community foundations, community land trusts).

Community cooperative. A cooperative enterprise constituted by the inhabitants of a territory in order to produce goods and services of collective interest (from essential services to the management of local heritage and economies), in response to the thinning-out of public and private provision. In this research it is analysed as a paradigmatic form of socially based reuse, capable of offering integrated services but exposed to the fragility of dependence upon its promoters.

Community land trust. A model of permanent collective ownership of land and property, of Anglophone origin, in which a non-profit body holds ownership so as to guarantee housing affordability and community use over the long term. In this research it is invoked among the forms of partnership and management capable of preventing speculative drift in processes of reuse, with reference to the Scottish experience of community land ownership.

Conservative restoration. An approach to intervention founded upon the principles of minimum intervention, reversibility and historical legibility, rooted in the Italian theoretical tradition and in the international documents (Venice Charter, 1964; Nara Document, 1994). In this research its proper field of application is circumscribed to assets under protection or of recognised historical-cultural value.

Cultural, use and environmental value. The triad of values adopted in order to orient interventions on existing heritage: alongside cultural value (historical and testimonial) stand use value, reactivable through new functions, and embodied environmental value — land already taken, materials and energy already immobilised, emissions avoided relative to demolition and reconstruction. It makes it possible to accord design dignity to heritage devoid of canonical cultural value as well.

Cycle of marginalisation. A circular, self-sustaining mechanism whereby depopulation, the contraction of services and the reduction of accessibility mutually reinforce one another: the loss of population justifies the closure of services, which in turn accelerates emigration, progressively eroding the territory's capacity to retain inhabitants and generate development. It constitutes the interpretive framework within which the research situates the causes of building abandonment.

D

Death rate. The ratio between the number of deaths in the year and the average resident population, multiplied by 1,000.

Degree of urbanisation. The classification of the degree of urbanisation (Degurba) of municipalities is provided for by Regulation (EU) 2017/2391 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Tercet) and by Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1130. It was updated in 2018, following the publication of the methodology by Eurostat and the revision of the FUAs, and identifies three typologies of municipality:

1. "Cities" or "Densely populated areas";

2. "Towns and suburbs" or "Intermediate density areas";

3. "Rural areas" or "Thinly populated areas".

The methodology is based upon the criterion of geographical contiguity and upon minimum population thresholds of the regular grid with cells of one square kilometre (Geostat 2011 Population grid). One or more cells of this grid are associated with each municipality. On the basis of population density within the grid, cells are classified as "urban centres" (where density is not below 1,500 inhabitants per square kilometre and the population in contiguous cells is not below 50,000 inhabitants), "urban clusters" (contiguous cells with a density not below 300 inhabitants per square kilometre and a population in contiguous cells not below 5,000 inhabitants) and "rural cells" (where they fall within neither of the two preceding cases). The class "Cities" comprises those municipalities for which more than 50 per cent of the population falls within urban centres. The class "Rural areas" comprises those municipalities for which more than 50 per cent of the population falls within rural cells. In all other cases municipalities are classified as "Towns and suburbs". The present classification was prepared for the municipalities existing as at 1 January 2018; municipalities ceasing to exist before that date were assigned the Degurba of the municipalities underlying the change.

Depopulation. The progressive and prolonged loss of resident population, through negative natural and migratory balances, which erodes the demographic base of inner territories to critical thresholds of sustainability of services and local economies. It is at once a cause and an effect of building abandonment.

Disuse (degrees of). The articulation of abandoned heritage by intensity and reversibility of deterioration, adopted by the research for operational purposes: recent disuse (buildings recoverable through rapid preventive interventions at contained cost), advanced but recoverable abandonment (significant deterioration with load-bearing structures intact, recovery technically possible but with investment approaching that of new construction), irreversible abandonment (unsafe buildings or those with collapses, priorities for public safety).

Disused heritage. The set of buildings, artefacts and spaces that have lost their original function and are in conditions of non-use or underuse. In this research it is taken as a potential resource for processes of sustainable development: land already taken, materials and energy already immobilised, identitary capital to be reintegrated within vital economic and social cycles.

E

Educational attainment of young people aged 15–19. The percentage incidence of residents aged 15–19 holding a lower secondary school certificate or an upper secondary diploma among residents of the same age.

Employee (*addetto*). A person employed in a legal-economic unit, whether as a self-employed or an employed worker (full-time, part-time or on a training and employment contract). It includes proprietors of the enterprise directly participating in its management, cooperative members, family assistants, senior managers, middle managers, clerical staff, manual workers and apprentices.

Employees per 100 residents. The ratio (%) between the sum of the average annual job positions of the self-employed and of employees and the total resident population.

Employment rate. The percentage incidence of those in employment among the total of residents aged 15 and over.

F

Functional urban areas (FUA). An aggregate of contiguous municipalities, composed of a City (see the definition of City) and its commuting zone. The commuting zone is defined by the commuting flows for work purposes recorded in the 2011 General Population Census. The commuting zone includes those municipalities in which at least 15 per cent of resident workers travel daily to the City in order to work. The territorial typology is provided for by Regulation (EU) 2017/2391 of the European Parliament and of the Council (Tercet) and by Implementing Regulation (EU) 2019/1130.

G

Gentrification. The process of substitution of the original populations following the increase of property values and the transformation of the social and economic fabric of a refurbished area. In this research it is analysed also in the variant of cultural gentrification, observed in the cases of creatively based reuse (Favara, Matera), in which aesthetic and symbolic improvement translates into socio-economic exclusion.

GIS (Geographic Information System). An information system for the acquisition, management and analysis of georeferenced data. In the methodology proposed it supports the location of the properties inventoried and the construction of interoperable and updatable territorial databases.

Gross Occupancy Rate (GOR). The percentage of effective use of the bed places available. GOR = (Tourist overnight stays / (Bed places × 365)) × 100.

H

Housing emergency. The growing difficulty of access to housing that characterises the contemporary Italian context and that, in inner areas, produces the paradox of the coexistence of thousands of empty buildings with unmet housing demand.

Housing hardship. The difficulty of accessing adequate housing owing to economic, social or territorial conditions. In inner areas it assumes "sub-surface" characteristics that escape traditional indicators: not a physical shortage of dwellings, but an impossibility of inhabiting available dwellings owing to the absence of the territorial conditions — work, services, connections — that render dwelling practicable.

Human capital. The set of knowledge, competences, abilities and emotions acquired by an individual during life and directed towards the attainment of social and economic objectives, whether individual or collective.

I

Impact investing. Private investment oriented towards generating, alongside economic return, measurable social and environmental impacts. It is invoked among the sources of funding that may be activated for projects of reuse of disused heritage.

Incidence of foreign residents. The incidence of foreign residents per thousand Italian residents.

Inner areas. Areas significantly distant from the centres providing essential services (education, health and mobility), rich in important environmental and cultural resources and strongly diversified by nature and as an effect of centuries-long processes of anthropisation.

Inter-municipal planning. A dimension of territorial governance founded upon cooperation between several municipalities. In this research it is identified as the minimum effective scale for policies of regeneration of disused heritage, since the individual municipalities of inner areas do not possess the technical, economic and administrative resources necessary to address the problem autonomously (second research hypothesis).

Inventory of disused heritage. The systematic activity of identification, location and characterisation of the abandoned or underused properties of a territory. In this research it constitutes the central object of the methodology developed: a standardised inventory, manageable by municipal technical officers with ordinary resources, is taken as the epistemic precondition of any evidence-based public policy on abandoned heritage.

L

Loan for use (*comodato d'uso*). A contract by which a property is granted free of charge (or at a symbolic rent) to a party undertaking to use it for defined purposes and for a defined duration. In the guidelines of the research it is indicated among the instruments by which administrations may activate disused public heritage, placing constraints upon its designated use.

M

Marginalisation. The process of progressive loss of population, functions and economies affecting inner territories, interpreted by recent literature — and by this research — not as a natural outcome of geography but as the product of political choices and of a systematic public disinvestment in infrastructure and services.

Methodological kit. The integrated set of instruments developed by the research for the inventory of abandoned public heritage: strategic guidelines for orienting choices of priority and governance, and operational instruments (survey form, instructions for data gathering, criteria for assessing the state of conservation and the potential for reuse). Designed to be replicable and manageable by administrations with ordinary resources.

Morphologies of abandonment. The operational systematisation proposed by the research for reading abandoned heritage according to three dimensions: building typologies (historic settlements, open spaces and agricultural territories, individual buildings and artefacts), degrees of disuse and ownership regimes. It constitutes the analytical grid applied to inner Abruzzo and to the Basso Sangro-Trigno in Chapter 7.

N

National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI). A strategic line of intervention of the European structural funds of the 2014–2020 programming cycle which introduces a zoning of the national territory into: A. Hub municipality: a municipality which possesses, simultaneously, the full range of secondary school provision, hospitals hosting a first-level Accident and Emergency department, and Platinum, Gold or Silver railway stations; B. Inter-municipal hub municipality: an aggregate of municipalities bordering the hub municipality; C. Belt municipality: a municipality lying on average less than 20 minutes from the Hub; D. Intermediate municipality: a municipality lying on average between 20 and 40 minutes from the Hub; E. Peripheral municipality: a municipality lying on average between 40 and 75 minutes from the Hub; F. Ultra-peripheral municipality: a municipality lying on average more than 75 minutes from the Hub.

Net internal migration rate. The difference between the internal immigration rate (the ratio between the number of persons entered in the population registers from within the country and the average resident population, multiplied by 1,000) and the internal emigration rate (the ratio between the number of persons removed from the population registers to destinations within the country and the average resident population, multiplied by 1,000).

O

Old-age index. The old-age index is the ratio between the population aged 65 and over and the population aged 0–14, multiplied by 100.

Open localism. A model of territorial rootedness that combines an anchoring to local resources and communities with strong connections to extra-local networks, competences and markets. In the comparative analysis it characterises the most sustainable reuse projects, avoiding both autarkic and extractive drift.

Overall Tourist Overcrowding Index (ICST). An indicator measuring the intensity of tourist overcrowding at provincial level. It combines five key indicators (tourist density, accommodation density, tourist intensity, gross occupancy, share of municipal waste attributable to the tourism sector) in order to assess the overall impact of tourism upon various local dimensions.

Overtourism. A condition of tourist overload in which the intensity of flows exceeds the physical, social and symbolic carrying capacity of a place, compromising its liveability for residents.

P

Pact for Disused Heritage. The concluding proposal of the research: an instrument of multi-level coordination — municipal, inter-municipal, regional and national — integrating standardised inventories, shared criteria of priority, dedicated resources and monitoring, in order to transform abandoned heritage from a widespread critical issue into a strategic lever for the regeneration of inner areas.

Paradox of inner areas. The co-presence, within the same territories, of a vast stock of empty or underused built heritage and of an unmet housing demand, as an effect of ownership barriers, conditions of deterioration, recovery costs and the absence of instruments of intermediation between potential supply and real demand.

Participatory mapping. A modality of inventory that integrates technical survey with reports, workshops and interviews addressed to the local community. It pursues a dual purpose: to integrate technical knowledge with situated knowledge and to build a sense of ownership of the project, increasing the probability of active participation in the subsequent phases of reuse.

Population density. The ratio between the resident population and the surface area of the municipality in km².

Project area / pilot area (SNAI). An inter-municipal aggregation selected by the SNAI as the domain of implementation of the area strategy. The Basso Sangro-Trigno — 38 municipalities of the province of Chieti — is the first prototype area of the Abruzzo Region (2015) and constitutes the territorial context of the experimentation conducted by the research.

Project-oriented social capital. The combination of technical competences, strategic vision and determination to operate in contexts of marginality that characterises the promoters of the most successful reuse experiences. In the comparative analysis of Chapter 5 it emerges as a necessary condition cutting across all typologies of reuse, distributed unevenly across territories and difficult to construct artificially through public intervention.

Protection (designation). The legal regime of protection of cultural and landscape assets governed by Legislative Decree 42/2004 (Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio — Code of Cultural Heritage and Landscape), which subjects interventions to authorisation and to the principles of conservation. The distinction between protected heritage and heritage devoid of protection orients, in the methodology proposed, the gradation of approaches to intervention.

R

Regional observatory of dwelling. A permanent epistemic instrument, proposed for the regional scale, founded upon integrated indicators capable of reading simultaneously housing hardship, territorial vitality and the effectiveness of public investment (including the ratio between the cost of an intervention and the units effectively reactivated). In the perspective of the research, the municipal inventory constitutes its elementary informational unit.

Register of unused properties. A survey instrument, provided for by certain regional legislation, which gathers the unused public and private properties available for operations of recovery and reuse. In this research the regional registers are analysed among the existing instruments, evidencing their limits of updating, coverage and interoperability relative to the epistemic requirements of regeneration policy.

Resident population. The population constituted by persons having habitual residence in each municipality, even if at the census date they are absent because temporarily present in another Italian municipality or abroad.

Reuse (practices of). The set of strategies of reactivation of abandoned heritage analysed in Chapter 5, articulated into four typologies: socially based (community economies and cooperatives), tourism-based (temporary dwelling and the albergo diffuso), culturally and creatively based, and productively and industrially based. Their transferability depends upon the enabling conditions present or constructible in each territory.

S

Second homes. Dwellings not stably occupied, used seasonally or occasionally. In inner areas they constitute a significant share of the stock, with distortive effects upon the effectiveness of public recovery investment: at Bussi sul Tirino, 67% of the stock covered by the Reconstruction Plan consisted of second homes.

Share of Municipal Waste per Tourist (QRUT). The indicator measures the impact of the tourism sector upon the production of municipal waste, evidencing how the quantity of waste produced per capita is influenced by tourist flow. It is calculated as the difference between per capita waste production, obtained by considering the resident population alone, and per capita waste production calculated using the equivalent population, obtained by adding to the resident population the number of tourist overnight stays recorded in the year, apportioned on a daily basis (365 days). QRUT = (Waste production / Resident population) – (Waste production / (Tourist overnight stays + Resident population / 365)).

SNAI classification. The articulation of Italian municipalities on the basis of their distance from the hubs providing essential services: hubs and inter-municipal hubs, belt areas, intermediate areas, peripheral areas and ultra-peripheral areas. The last three categories constitute the inner areas. In Abruzzo, 230 municipalities out of 305 are classified as inner areas, of which 115 are peripheral or ultra-peripheral.

Social cooperative. A non-profit institution founded with the aim of sustaining human advancement and the social and occupational integration of citizens belonging to the so-called disadvantaged and vulnerable categories (former prisoners, disabled people, single mothers, and so on). It is established and governed by Law 381/1991, which distinguishes several typologies. Type A social cooperatives pursue the general interest of the community in human advancement and social integration through the management of social, health and educational services. Type B social cooperatives carry out agricultural, industrial, commercial or service activities directed towards the occupational integration of disadvantaged persons. Mixed-type social cooperatives carry out both the activities typical of type A cooperatives and those typical of type B.

Social housing. The provision of dwellings and housing services at controlled rents intended for segments of the population that find no response in the market. It is indicated among the compatible uses of recovered heritage, serving as a response to the housing emergency and as support for stable residency.

Special Protection Areas (SPAs). Territories suitable by extent and/or geographical location for the conservation of the bird species listed in Annex I of the Directive concerning the conservation of wild birds (Directive no. 79/409/EEC).

Survey form. The operational instrument of the methodological kit for the standardised gathering of information on each property inventoried: identification, cadastral and locational data, physical and typological characteristics, history of use, ownership and legal regime, state of conservation, constraints, historical-cultural value, accessibility and safety, potential for enhancement, intervention priority and photographic documentation.

T

Territorial mismatch. The systemic divide between the physical availability of housing stock — even where refurbished with substantial public resources — and the absence of the territorial conditions (employment opportunities, services, connections, demographic critical mass) that would render its effective use possible. The concept, elaborated with reference to the post-seismic reconstruction of Abruzzo, evidences the inadequacy of approaches centred upon building recovery alone.

Territorial regeneration. The process of reactivation of the physical, economic, social and cultural dimensions of a territory, which exceeds building recovery so as to encompass services, economies and communities. In this research the reuse of disused heritage is conceived as a component of integrated regeneration strategies, not as a sectoral intervention.

Total Agricultural Area (SAT). The surface within the perimeter of a holding, which therefore includes the Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA) (arable crops, woody agricultural crops, permanent meadows and pastures, kitchen gardens), the surface under wood arboriculture, woodland, unutilised agricultural surface, other surface and that dedicated to the cultivation of mushrooms (whether above ground or underground). Both open-air and protected surfaces are to be considered.

Tourist Density (TD). Measures the concentration of tourists per unit of surface area, furnishing a direct view of physical overcrowding in specific areas. TD = Tourist overnight stays / Territorial extent.

Tourist Intensity (TI). The ratio between tourist overnight stays and resident population; it measures the relative impact of tourism upon the everyday life of residents. TI = Tourist overnight stays / Resident population.

Touristification. The process of progressive reorganisation of a territory in relation to tourist demand, which transforms spaces, heritage and services into commodities for temporary users, with risks of displacement of permanent residents, increases in property values and conversion of dwellings into short-term accommodation. In this research it is analysed as a structural dynamic that reuse strategies must explicitly govern.

U

Underuse. An intermediate condition between full use and abandonment, in which a property is used partially, sporadically or improperly relative to its capacity. The survey form includes underused heritage alongside abandoned heritage, serving a preventive function with respect to the progression of deterioration.

Unemployment rate. The percentage incidence of residents seeking employment among the active population (those in employment plus those seeking work).

Use potential of buildings. The percentage incidence of unused buildings among the total of buildings.

Utilised Agricultural Area (UAA). The set of land under arable crops, kitchen gardens, permanent meadows and pastures, woody agricultural crops and chestnut groves for fruit. It constitutes the surface invested in and effectively used for properly agricultural cultivation.

W

Welfare. The complex of public policies implemented by a State which intervenes, within a market economy, in order to guarantee the assistance and well-being of citizens, deliberately and in a regulated manner modifying the distribution of incomes generated by market forces themselves. The intent is to improve citizens' living conditions.

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SEZIONE A - ALLEGATI TERRITORIALI **A1**

ATLANTE DEI COMUNI

Area Basso Sangro-Trigno

L'atlante raccoglie le schede dei comuni che compongono l'area interna Basso Sangro-Trigno secondo la perimetrazione ufficiale del ciclo di programmazione SNAI 2021-2027 (Rapporto di Istruttoria per la Selezione delle Aree Interne, Dipartimento per le Politiche di Coesione, 2022), cui si aggiunge la scheda del comune di Bomba, incluso nell'area a seguito della riperimetrazione disposta dal Piano Strategico Nazionale per le Aree Interne (Cabina di Regia, 9 aprile 2025) e collocata in coda.
Le schede sono ordinate per sub-ambito, Aventino (11 comuni), Sangro (16), Alto Vastese (10), secondo l'articolazione adottata nel Capitolo 6, e in ordine alfabetico all'interno di ciascun sub-ambito.
Ciascuna scheda riporta gli indicatori reperibili per tutti i comuni: popolazione residente, altitudine, densità abitativa (con relativa superficie territoriale), variazione demografica media annua nel periodo 2011-2026 (calcolata su base censuaria), classificazione SNAI con indicazione del polo di riferimento e del tempo medio di percorrenza, numero di famiglie residenti e relativa dimensione media (fonte ISTAT), nonché zona sismica.

01 **AVENTINO**

CIVITELLA MESSER RAIMONDO

geografie della soglia pedemontana

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

738

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

609 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

58 ab/km²

superficie 12,72 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−1,0 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 861 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

E — Periferico

polo: Chieti · 49,9 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

368

dimensione media 2,3 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

1

sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Borgo pedemontano dell'Aventino, adagiato sulle prime pendici della Maiella orientale a ridosso della valle omonima, con un tessuto storico compatto in pietra. È il comune meno periferico dell'area insieme a Palombaro e Fara San Martino, con il polo di Chieti raggiungibile in meno di cinquanta minuti: una condizione di soglia che ne fa una potenziale cerniera tra l'area interna e i sistemi urbani della costa. La contrazione demografica, più lenta che altrove, convive con un patrimonio edilizio minore diffuso e sottoutilizzato.

soglia pedemontana · accessibilità relativa · Maiella

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

02 **AVENTINO**

COLLEDIMACINE

geografie della permanenza minima

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

149

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

778 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

13 ab/km²

superficie 11,30 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−3,0 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 237 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

F — Ultraperiferico

polo: Chieti · 78,4 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

127

dimensione media 1,5 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

2

sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Borgo monocentrico incastonato tra il versante orientale del Parco Nazionale della Maiella e la valle dell'Aventino: un tessuto compatto di architetture in pietra bianca, cresciuto attorno al palazzo Barbolani e alla chiesa di San Nicola di Bari su una tradizione pastorale e di lavorazione del ferro, segnato dai combattimenti sulla linea Gustav (1943-44). Ultraperiferico e ridotto a una permanenza minima, conserva un patrimonio edilizio largamente sottoutilizzato: la disponibilità di immobili comunali, censiti nella sperimentazione condotta da questa ricerca, ne fa il laboratorio elementare delle strategie di riuso a scala minuta proposte nella Parte IV.

ultraperifericità · patrimonio pubblico dismesso · riuso

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

03 **AVENTINO**

FARA SAN MARTINO

geografie dell'acqua e della manifattura

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

1253

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

449 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

28 ab/km²

superficie 44,69 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−1,3 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 1524 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

E — Periferico

polo: Chieti · 48,3 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

610

dimensione media 2,3 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

1

sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Ai piedi delle gole che incidono il versante orientale della Maiella, il borgo deve alle acque sorgive del Verde la propria vocazione manifatturiera: è uno dei centri storici della produzione italiana di pasta, con stabilimenti tuttora attivi che ne fanno un caso raro di presidio industriale in area interna. La convivenza tra manifattura, Parco Nazionale e tessuto storico configura un modello di riuso a base produttiva già radicato, la cui tenuta occupazionale mitiga, senza arrestarla, la contrazione demografica.

presidio produttivo · acqua · parco

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

04 **AVENTINO**

GESSOPALENA

geografie del doppio paese

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

1137

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

655 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

36 ab/km²

superficie 31,47 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−2,0 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 1550 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

E — Periferico

polo: Chieti · 56,0 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

662

dimensione media 2,1 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

1

sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Il paese vive la condizione del doppio abitato: il vecchio insediamento scavato e costruito nella pietra di gesso, abbandonato dopo le distruzioni della Seconda Guerra Mondiale e oggi rudere musealizzato a cielo aperto e il centro ricostruito che vi si affianca. Questa compresenza rende Gessopalena un osservatorio privilegiato sulle morfologie dell'abbandono di matrice bellica analizzate nel Capitolo 7 e sulle pratiche di riuso a base culturale della memoria, in un territorio che continua a perdere popolazione.

paese “doppio” · abbandono bellico · pietra di gesso

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

05 **AVENTINO**

LAMA DEI PELIGNI

geografie del versante

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
1007
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
656 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
32 ab/km²
superficie 31,37 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−2,0 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 1364 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
E — Periferico
polo: Chieti · 61,6 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
588
dimensione media 2,1 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
1
sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Centro pedemontano disteso sul versante orientale della Maiella, porta di accesso al Parco Nazionale della Maiella e alle sue quote sommitali. Il tessuto storico in pietra, ricostruito in parte dopo i danni bellici, convive con un'espansione novecentesca lungo la viabilità di fondovalle. La perdita di oltre un quarto della popolazione dal 2011 lascia un patrimonio edilizio diffusamente sottoutilizzato, mentre la posizione all'interno del Parco e la prossimità relativa ai centri dell'Aventino offrono condizioni per forme di riuso legate alla fruizione naturalistica e alla residenzialità stabile.

parco · spopolamento · fruizione naturalistica

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

06 **AVENTINO**

LETTOPALENA

geografie della ricostruzione

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
306
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
676 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
14 ab/km²
superficie 21,13 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,2 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 365 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
F — Ultraperiferico
polo: Chieti · 74,6 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
173
dimensione media 2,0 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
1
sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Distrutto dai combattimenti sulla linea Gustav e ricostruito nel dopoguerra a valle del vecchio abitato, di cui sopravvivono i ruderi con l'antica abbazia, Lettopalena incarna la stratificazione tra abbandono traumatico e ricostruzione pianificata che attraversa l'alta valle dell'Aventino. Comune ultraperiferico di dimensione minima, oggi affida le proprie prospettive alla gestione associata nell'Unione Maiella Orientale-Verde Aventino e alla valorizzazione della memoria del vecchio paese come risorsa identitaria.

ricostruzione post-bellica · ultraperifericità · gestione associata

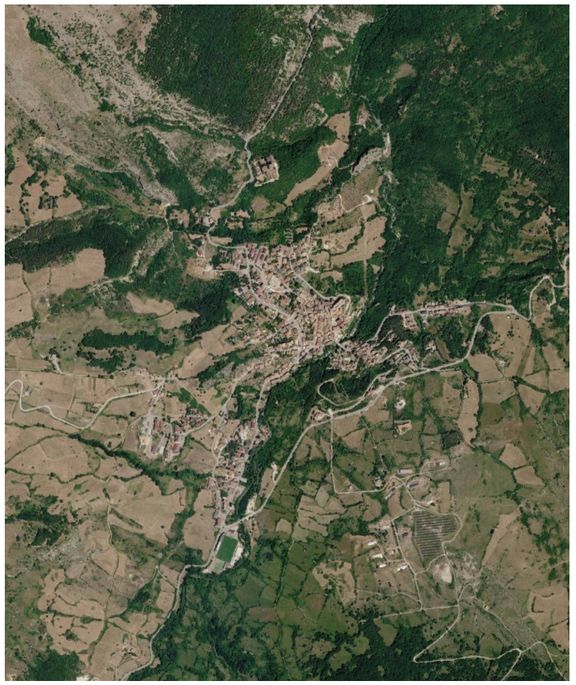
Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

07 **AVENTINO**

PALENA

geografie dell'alta valle

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno



ABITANTI

1196

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

774 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

13 ab/km²

superficie 93,63 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−1,1 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 1412 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

F — Ultraperiferico

polo: Chieti · 74,6 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

596

dimensione media 2,3 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

1

sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Con il territorio più esteso dell'area, quasi 94 chilometri quadrati tra l'alta valle dell'Aventino e i valichi verso la conca peligna, Palena presidia il margine montano sud-occidentale del Basso Sangro-Trigno. Il centro storico, ricostruito dopo le gravi distruzioni belliche, mantiene un ruolo di riferimento per i comuni minori dell'alta valle, con servizi e stagionalità turistica legata alla montagna. L'estensione del territorio e la bassissima densità pongono con particolare evidenza la questione del presidio degli spazi aperti e del patrimonio diffuso.

alta valle · estensione · presidio montano

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

08 **AVENTINO**

PALOMBARO

geografie del margine accessibile

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

921

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

530 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

54 ab/km²

superficie 17,19 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−1,2 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 1108 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

E — Periferico

polo: Chieti · 44,8 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

451

dimensione media 2,2 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

1

sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

È il comune più accessibile dell'intera area — meno di quarantacinque minuti dal polo di Chieti — e insieme un borgo pienamente interno per struttura insediativa e dinamica demografica: una contraddizione che interroga la lettura della marginalità fondata sulla sola distanza. Adagiato sulle pendici della Maiella orientale sopra la valle dell'Aventino, conserva un tessuto storico in pietra con densità relativamente alta e un patrimonio minore diffuso, candidato naturale a strategie di residenzialità stabile rivolte a chi lavora nei sistemi urbani della costa.

accessibilità · residenzialità stabile · pendici della Maiella

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

09 **AVENTINO**

ROCCASCALEGNA

geografie della rocca

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
1011
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
418 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
44 ab/km²
superficie 23,01 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,6 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 1285 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
E — Periferico
polo: Pescara · 55,7 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
526
dimensione media 2,3 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
1
sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Il castello medievale arroccato sullo sperone di roccia, tra i più riconoscibili dell'Appennino, ha trasformato Roccascalegna nel principale attrattore turistico dell'area, con flussi di visitatori senza paragoni nei comuni contermini. Il paese sottostante e le contrade agricole, dove sopravvive un oliveto monovarietale autoctono, restano però esposti a spopolamento e sottoutilizzo: la sfida, indicata dal Capitolo 5, è convertire la visibilità dell'attrattore in economia residenziale e di filiera, evitando la deriva della scenografia senza abitanti.

attrattore · castello · turismo

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

10 **AVENTINO**

TARANTA PELIGNA

geografie della lana e della grotta

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
301
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
491 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
14 ab/km²
superficie 21,90 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,9 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 399 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
F — Ultraperiferico
polo: Chieti · 68,0 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
198
dimensione media 1,9 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
1
sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Stretto nella gola dell'Aventino ai piedi della Maiella, il paese lega la propria identità a due risorse: la tradizione laniera, che ne fece per secoli un centro manifatturiero di vallata, e la Grotta del Cavallone, tra le cavità attrezzate più profonde d'Europa. Gravemente colpito dalle distruzioni della linea Gustav e oggi ultraperiferico, con una popolazione ridotta a trecento abitanti, conserva nel patrimonio proto-industriale dismesso lungo il fiume un giacimento riconoscibile per il riuso a base culturale e produttiva.

archeologia produttiva · grotte del Cavallone · linea Gustav

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

11 **AVENTINO**

TORRICELLA PELIGNA

geografie del crinale e della parola

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
1077
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
908 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
30 ab/km²
superficie 36,11 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,7 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 1391 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
F — Ultraperiferico
polo: Chieti · 67,1 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
667
dimensione media 2,0 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
1
sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Centro di crinale a oltre novecento metri, affacciato sulla media valle del Sangro e sull'Aventino, Torricella è nota come terra d'origine di John Fante: il festival letterario che ne porta il nome è uno dei rari eventi culturali ricorrenti dell'area, capace di attivare reti transnazionali con le comunità dell'emigrazione. Comune ultraperiferico con perdita demografica costante, sperimenta così una forma di riuso immateriale del legame con le diaspore, da ancorare al recupero fisico del patrimonio del centro storico.

diaspora · riuso culturale · festival

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

12 **SANGRO**

BORRELLO

geografie dell'acqua che cade

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
328
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
799 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
23 ab/km²
superficie 14,51 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−0,8 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 368 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
F — Ultraperiferico
polo: Pescara · 70,7 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
169
dimensione media 2,0 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
1
sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Il territorio comunale custodisce le Cascate del Verde, le più alte dell'Appennino, tutelate da una riserva naturale regionale che costituisce il principale capitale ambientale dell'alta valle del Sangro. Il borgo, ultraperiferico e ricostruito dopo le distruzioni belliche, mantiene una popolazione stabile intorno alle trecento unità. La riserva genera una fruizione escursionistica già strutturata: la questione aperta è trattenerne il valore sul paese, collegando visita, ospitalità leggera e riuso del patrimonio edilizio minore.

riserva naturale · cascate · fruizione escursionistica

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

13 **SANGRO**

CIVITALUPARELLA

geografie dell'arroccamento

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
272
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
894 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
12 ab/km²
superficie 22,46 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,6 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 349 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
F — Ultraperiferico
polo: Pescara · 68,3 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
165
dimensione media 2,1 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
2
sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Aggrappato a quasi novecento metri sul versante che precipita verso il Sangro, il borgo è l'immagine stessa dell'insediamento arroccato dell'alto Sangro: un nucleo compatto in pietra, accessibile da un'unica strada di versante, in cui la morfologia che un tempo garantiva difesa è oggi il primo fattore di marginalità. Ultraperiferico, con meno di trecento abitanti, condensa il dilemma dei borghi verticali: costi di accessibilità e cantierabilità elevati a fronte di un valore paesaggistico e identitario intatto.

arroccamento · accessibilità · paesaggio

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

14 **SANGRO**

COLLEDIMEZZO

geografie del lago

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
401
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
447 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
36 ab/km²
superficie 11,05 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,9 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 531 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
E — Periferico
polo: Pescara · 55,8 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
234
dimensione media 2,1 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
2
sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Affacciato sul lago artificiale di Bomba, di cui domina la sponda sinistra da un colle a mezza costa, il paese appartiene alla corona di piccoli comuni che l'invaso ha riorientato verso un'economia di fruizione leggera — sport d'acqua, ciclovie, seconde case stagionali. Periferico ma relativamente prossimo al fondovalle del Sangro e alle sue infrastrutture, aderisce all'Unione Montana dei Comuni del Sangro: la scala intercomunale del lago è qui la dimensione naturale di ogni strategia di riuso.

lago · unione di comuni · stagionalità

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

15 **SANGRO**

FALLO

geografie del minimo

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
121
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
571 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
20 ab/km²
superficie 6,10 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,2 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 146 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
E — Periferico
polo: Pescara · 61,2 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
78
dimensione media 1,8 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
2
sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Con poco più di sei chilometri quadrati e centoventi abitanti, Fallo è tra i comuni più piccoli d'Italia per territorio e popolazione: una micro-istituzione che regge un borgo compatto affacciato sulla valle del Sangro. La dimensione minima rende insostenibile ogni politica autonoma, dal censimento del patrimonio alla gestione dei servizi e fa del comune un argomento vivente a favore della scala intercomunale come dimensione minima efficace, tesi centrale di questa ricerca.

micro-comune · scala intercomunale · dimensione minima

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

16 **SANGRO**

GAMBERALE

geografie dell'altitudine

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
267
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
1324 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
17 ab/km²
superficie 15,56 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,4 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 328 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
F — Ultraperiferico
polo: Pescara · 85,0 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
148
dimensione media 2,1 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
1
sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

A 1.324 metri, Gamberale è il comune più alto della provincia di Chieti e il più lontano dell'intera area dal proprio polo di servizi: ottantacinque minuti di percorrenza medi ne fanno il vertice della perifericità del Basso Sangro-Trigno. Borgo-balcone affacciato sull'alto Sangro verso i monti Pizzi, con il castello recuperato come spazio pubblico, affida le proprie prospettive alla montagna: turismo lento, residenzialità stagionale d'altura e presidio di un territorio in cui l'abbandono e la rinaturalizzazione avanzano insieme.

perifericità · turismo lento · rinaturalizzazione

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

17 **SANGRO**

MONTEBELLO SUL SANGRO

geografie del paese doppio

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

80

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

747 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

15 ab/km²

superficie 5,38 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−1,4 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 99 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

E — Periferico

polo: Pescara · 64,4 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

55

dimensione media 1,7 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

2

sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Il comune — ottanta abitanti sul secondo territorio più piccolo dell'area — custodisce uno dei paesi fantasma più noti d'Abruzzo: il vecchio borgo di Buonanotte, abbandonato nel Novecento per instabilità del versante e sostituito dall'abitato attuale. La compresenza di rudere e paese vivo, già richiamata nel Capitolo 7 tra le morfologie dell'abbandono, pone qui in forma estrema la domanda su cosa significhi riusare un patrimonio quando la comunità residente si è ridotta a poche decine di persone.

Buonanotte · instabilità del versante · rudere e paese vivo

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

18 **SANGRO**

MONTEFERRANTE

geografie della soglia dei cento

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

100

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

783 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

6,54 ab/km²

superficie 15,29 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−2,3 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 141 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

F — Ultraperiferico

polo: Pescara · 68,2 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

69

dimensione media 1,9 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

2

sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Cento abitanti esatti e la densità più bassa dell'intera area, sei abitanti e mezzo per chilometro quadrato, collocano Monteferrante sulla soglia critica al di sotto della quale la nozione stessa di comunità amministrata entra in tensione. Il borgo in pietra, arroccato sopra la valle del Sangro con vista sul lago di Bomba, aderisce all'Unione Montana dei Comuni del Sangro, entro cui va necessariamente pensata ogni prospettiva di censimento, gestione e riuso del suo patrimonio dismesso.

soglia demografica · rarefazione · unione di comuni

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

19 **SANGRO**

MONTELAPIANO

geografie dell'estremo

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

68

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

718 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

8,22 ab/km²

superficie 8,27 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−1,1 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 80 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

F — Ultraperiferico

polo: Pescara · 70,5 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

54

dimensione media 1,5 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

2

sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Con sessantotto residenti è il comune meno popoloso dell'Abruzzo e tra i più piccoli d'Italia: un'istituzione municipale al limite della soglia di esistenza, che amministra un borgo panoramico sopra la valle del Sangro. Montelapiano rappresenta il caso estremo della casistica costruita in questa ricerca, il punto in cui censimento, manutenzione e riuso del patrimonio possono essere pensati soltanto in forma associata e insieme la dimostrazione che la permanenza, per quanto minima, continua a presidiare il territorio.

presidio · forma associata · permanenza

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

20 **SANGRO**

MONTENERODOMO

geografie della memoria antica

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

562

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

1155 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

19 ab/km²

superficie 30,00 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−1,8 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 736 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

F — Ultraperiferico

polo: Pescara · 79,9 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

282

dimensione media 2,4 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

2

sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

A oltre 1.100 metri, tra i pascoli sommitali che guardano la Maiella, il comune custodisce l'area archeologica di Juvanum, municipio romano su preesistenze sannitiche condiviso con Torricella Peligna: il più rilevante giacimento archeologico dell'area. Ultraperiferico e in costante contrazione demografica, unisce così due patrimoni in attesa di un progetto integrato, quello antico del sito e quello moderno del centro abitato, in un territorio dove la transumanza ha lasciato tracciati e architetture pastorali diffuse.

archeologia · pascoli sommitali · transumanza

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

21 **SANGRO**

PENNADOMO

geografie della pietra

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

201

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

447 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

18 ab/km²

superficie 11,02 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−2,9 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 311 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

E — Periferico

polo: Pescara · 58,3 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

148

dimensione media 1,8 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

1

sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Il paese si stringe ai piedi delle lame calcaree, le “Pietre”, che ne segnano il profilo sulla media valle del Sangro e che negli ultimi anni hanno attratto una fruizione sportiva e paesaggistica di nicchia. Periferico, con duecento abitanti e una perdita di un terzo della popolazione dal 2011, dispone di un capitale geologico e scenografico riconoscibile: una risorsa puntuale che può sostenere forme leggere di ospitalità e riuso, se inserita nei circuiti di valle.

morfologie rupestri · fruizione sportiva · circuiti di valle

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

22 **SANGRO**

PIETRAFERRAZZANA

geografie del balcone sul lago

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

126

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

339 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

29 ab/km²

superficie 4,37 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−0,1 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 128 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

E — Periferico

polo: Pescara · 57,2 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

65

dimensione media 2,1 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

2

sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Il territorio comunale più piccolo d'Abruzzo, poco più di quattro chilometri quadrati, regge un paese-balcone affacciato sul lago di Bomba. La popolazione, centoventisei abitanti, è rimasta pressoché stabile dal 2011: un'eccezione nell'area, favorita dalla quota bassa, dalla prossimità al fondovalle e dall'economia leggera del lago. Il caso suggerisce che micro-dimensione e tenuta demografica possono coesistere quando accessibilità e risorsa ambientale si combinano, condizioni da leggere, comunque, alla scala dell'Unione dei Comuni del Sangro.

lago · micro-territorio · stabilità demografica

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

23 **SANGRO**

PIZZOFERRATO

geografie della montagna abitata

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
949
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
1190 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
31 ab/km²
superficie 30,92 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,1 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 1127 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
F — Ultraperiferico
polo: Pescara · 73,8 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
553
dimensione media 2,0 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
1
sismicità alta

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Aggrappato alla rupe che lo rende riconoscibile da tutta l'alta valle del Sangro, a quasi 1.200 metri, Pizzoferrato è con Gamberale il presidio d'altura dell'area: stazione di villeggiatura montana consolidata, con un patrimonio di seconde case che si anima stagionalmente e servizi turistici invernali ed estivi ai margini dei monti Pizzi. La perdita demografica più contenuta rispetto ai comuni contermini segnala la capacità della montagna organizzata di trattenere, o attrarre a intermittenza, popolazione: la sfida è convertire la presenza stagionale in abitare più stabile.

montagna · seconde case · abitare intermittente

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

24 **SANGRO**

QUADRI

geografie del fondovalle

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
672
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
606 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
90 ab/km²
superficie 7,45 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,7 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 863 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
E — Periferico
polo: Pescara · 63,1 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
356
dimensione media 2,3 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
2
sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Disteso sul terrazzo che domina la confluenza dei valloni nel Sangro, Quadri presenta la densità più alta dell'intera area, novanta abitanti per chilometro quadrato su un territorio compatto e una struttura insediativa di fondovalle atipica rispetto ai borghi arroccati circostanti. L'area è nota per il tartufo, risorsa di pregio del Medio Sangro richiamata nel Capitolo 6 e per le preesistenze archeologiche del sito di Trebula: filiera agroalimentare e accessibilità di valle ne fanno un potenziale nodo di servizi per i comuni minori circostanti.

fondovalle · tartufo · nodo di servizi

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

25 **SANGRO**

ROIO DEL SANGRO

geografie del limite

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

101

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

856 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

8,55 ab/km²

superficie 11,81 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−0,1 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 103 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

F — Ultraperiferico

polo: Pescara · 71,1 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

67

dimensione media 1,6 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

2

sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Cento abitanti a quasi novecento metri, su un altopiano boscoso al confine con il Molise: Roio del Sangro è tra i comuni che meglio raccontano la rarefazione dell'alto Sangro, con una densità di otto abitanti e mezzo per chilometro quadrato e una popolazione tuttavia stabile rispetto al 2011. Ultraperiferico, aderente all'Unione Montana dei Comuni del Sangro, presidia un territorio in avanzata rinaturalizzazione dove il bosco, risorsa e insieme sintomo dell'abbandono agricolo, è ormai la matrice dominante del paesaggio.

rarefazione · bosco · stabilità residua

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

26 **SANGRO**

ROSELLO

geografie dell'abetina

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

175

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

924 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

9,10 ab/km²

superficie 19,23 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−2,4 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 253 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

F — Ultraperiferico

polo: Pescara · 69,1 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

145

dimensione media 1,6 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

2

sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Il nome di Rosello è legato all'abetina che ne occupa il territorio verso il confine molisano: una delle poche abetine appenniniche di abete bianco autoctono, tutelata da riserva naturale regionale e habitat di specie rare. Il borgo, ultraperiferico e ridotto a centosettantacinque abitanti dopo una perdita di quasi un terzo dal 2011, affida al capitale forestale e alla fruizione naturalistica la propria prospettiva: una traiettoria di riuso a base ambientale che richiede però ricettività minima e servizi oggi in gran parte assenti.

riserva naturale · capitale forestale · fruizione ambientale

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

27 **SANGRO**

VILLA SANTA MARIA

geografie del saper fare

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
1072
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
334 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
66 ab/km²
superficie 16,23 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,9 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 1433 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
E — Periferico
polo: Pescara · 61,2 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
637
dimensione media 2,1 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
2
sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Incassata nella forra del Sangro sotto pareti di roccia, Villa Santa Maria è la “patria dei cuochi”: la tradizione culinaria legata a San Francesco Caracciolo e la storica scuola alberghiera ne hanno fatto un centro di formazione che esporta professionalità in tutto il mondo — un caso raro di capitale umano specializzato prodotto in area interna. Centro di servizi del medio Sangro, in calo demografico nonostante il ruolo, dimostra che una scuola può essere infrastruttura di sviluppo: ancorarne le ricadute al territorio è la sfida aperta.

capitale umano · formazione · centro di servizi

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

28 **ALTO VASTESE**

CARUNCHIO

geografie del crinale vastese

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
535
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
608 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
16 ab/km²
superficie 32,57 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,2 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 639 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
E — Periferico
polo: Campobasso · 62,9 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
286
dimensione media 2,2 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
2
sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Borgo di crinale dell'Alto Vastese, con il nucleo storico raccolto a spirale sul colle e un vasto territorio agro-silvo-pastorale, Carunchio gravita, come gran parte del sub-ambito, sul polo extraregionale di Campobasso, condizione che misura la debolezza delle relazioni con i centri abruzzesi. Aderente all'Unione dei Comuni del Sinello, ha sperimentato forme di ospitalità diffusa e accoglienza che ne fanno un piccolo laboratorio di riuso a base turistica e sociale nel quadrante più periferico dell'area.

crinale · ospitalità diffusa · Sinello

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

29 **ALTO VASTESE**

CASTELGUIDONE

geografie della contrazione

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
270
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
765 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
18 ab/km²
superficie 15,07 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−2,8 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 416 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
E — Periferico
polo: Campobasso · 55,6 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
172
dimensione media 2,1 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
2
sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Piccolo borgo di crinale affacciato sulla valle del Trigno verso il Molise, Castelguidone ha perso oltre un terzo della popolazione dal 2011: una delle contrazioni più severe dell'area, che lascia un tessuto storico ampiamente sottoutilizzato a fronte di una comunità ridotta a poche centinaia di persone. La gravitazione su Campobasso e la debolezza dei collegamenti interni all'Alto Vastese pongono il comune tra i casi in cui il censimento del patrimonio e la gestione associata dei servizi non sono un'opzione, ma la precondizione della permanenza.

contrazione severa · sottoutilizzo · valle del Trigno

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

30 **ALTO VASTESE**

CASTIGLIONE MESSER MARINO

geografie del centro d'altura

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
1398
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
1009 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
29 ab/km²
superficie 47,98 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−2,0 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 1898 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
F — Ultraperiferico
polo: Campobasso · 81,3 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
771
dimensione media 2,3 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
2
sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

È il comune più popoloso dell'area e insieme uno dei più periferici: quasi millequattrocento abitanti a oltre mille metri di quota, a più di ottanta minuti dal polo di riferimento. Centro di servizi storico dell'Alto Vastese, con tradizioni artigiane e pastorali radicate, ha perso un quarto della popolazione dal 2011 ma conserva la massa critica, scuole, commercio, associazionismo, per candidarsi a presidio ordinatore del quadrante: un ruolo che le raccomandazioni del Capitolo 9 assegnano ai centri maggiori delle aree ultraperiferiche.

massa critica · altura · presidio ordinatore

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

31 **ALTO VASTESE**

CELENZA SUL TRIGNO

geografie della valle di confine

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

758

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

635 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

33 ab/km²

superficie 22,68 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−1,7 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 974 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

E — Periferico

polo: Campobasso · 58,1 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

396

dimensione media 2,3 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

2

sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Affacciato sulla valle del Trigno che segna il confine con il Molise, il borgo presidia il versante abruzzese di un bacino la cui vita di relazione, servizi, lavoro, studio, scorre in larga parte oltre il limite regionale, verso Campobasso e la fondovalle Trignina. Questa condizione di frontiera interna, condivisa con i comuni contermini, rende Celenza un caso esemplare della necessità di politiche interregionali per le aree interne di confine, dove la perimetrazione amministrativa non coincide con la geografia reale degli abitanti.

valle del Trigno · politiche interregionali · confine

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

32 **ALTO VASTESE**

FRAINE

geografie della distanza

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

238

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

718 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

15 ab/km²

superficie 16,09 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−3,3 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 396 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

F — Ultraperiferico

polo: Campobasso · 80,5 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

165

dimensione media 2,0 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

2

sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Ottanta minuti dal polo di servizi e una perdita di quattro abitanti su dieci dal 2011: Fraine cumula la distanza più estrema e una delle contrazioni più rapide dell'intera area, condensando in forma pura il ciclo della marginalizzazione descritto nella Parte I. Il paese, immerso nei boschi dell'Alto Vastese, conserva un tessuto storico in pietra che si svuota più velocemente di quanto si degradi: una finestra temporale breve in cui interventi preventivi di censimento e riuso possono ancora intercettare edifici integri.

ciclo della marginalizzazione · interventi preventivo · bosco

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

33 **ALTO VASTESE**

MONTAZZOLI

geografie del bosco

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
790
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
852 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
20 ab/km²
superficie 39,46 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,8 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 1032 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
F — Ultraperiferico
polo: Pescara · 72,5 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
407
dimensione media 2,3 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
2
sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Su un ampio territorio boscoso a ridosso degli 850 metri, Montazzoli, unico comune dell'Alto Vastese, con Roccaspinalveti, a gravitare su Pescara anziché su Campobasso, unisce un centro storico di impianto compatto a un vasto capitale forestale e pastorale. Ultraperiferico, in calo demografico costante ma dotato ancora di una comunità strutturata, può giocare la carta delle filiere del bosco e della zootecnia estensiva come base produttiva del riuso, nel quadro associativo dell'Unione del Sinello.

filiera forestale · zootecnia · capitale silvo-pastorale

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

34 **ALTO VASTESE**

ROCCASPINALVETI

geografie delle contrade

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
1121
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
725 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
34 ab/km²
superficie 33,01 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,6 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 1434 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
F — Ultraperiferico
polo: Pescara · 80,0 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
568
dimensione media 2,3 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
2
sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

A differenza dei borghi compatti dell'area, Roccaspinalveti si distende in un sistema di contrade sparse attorno al capoluogo: una struttura insediativa diffusa che moltiplica i costi dei servizi e complica ogni censimento del patrimonio, ma che testimonia la persistenza di un'agricoltura di media collina ancora attiva. Secondo comune dell'Alto Vastese per popolazione, ultraperiferico su Pescara, pone alla metodologia di questa ricerca la sfida specifica della mappatura dell'edilizia rurale sparsa, oltre il perimetro dei centri storici.

insediamento diffuso · contrade · edilizia rurale

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

35 **ALTO VASTESE**

SAN GIOVANNI LIPIONI

geografie della vecchiaia

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

139

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

559 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

16 ab/km²

superficie 8,67 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−2,7 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 210 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

E — Periferico

polo: Campobasso · 52,0 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

105

dimensione media 1,7 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

2

sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Con un'età media che i censimenti ISTAT registrano come la più alta della provincia di Chieti e tra le più alte d'Italia, oltre 63 anni, San Giovanni Lipioni è l'epicentro demografico dell'invecchiamento dell'area: centotrentanove abitanti su un piccolo territorio affacciato sulla valle del Trigno. Qui la questione del patrimonio dismesso coincide con quella della cura: ogni strategia di riuso deve partire dai servizi di prossimità per una comunità anziana, prima ancora che dall'attrazione di nuovi abitanti.

invecchiamento · servizi di prossimità · cura

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

36 **ALTO VASTESE**

SCHIAVI DI ABRUZZO

geografie del santuario

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI

616

ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026

ALTITUDINE

1172 m s.l.m.

casa comunale

DENSITÀ

14 ab/km²

superficie 45,57 km²

VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA

−2,7 % / anno

media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 931 ab.

CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027

E — Periferico

polo: Campobasso · 60,7 min

FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI

520

dimensione media 1,6 componenti · dato ISTAT

ZONA SISMICA

2

sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

A quasi 1.200 metri sul crinale che divide Trigno e Treste, Schiavi di Abruzzo custodisce i templi italici che ne fanno il sito archeologico più rilevante dell'Alto Vastese, testimonianza della centralità sannitica di questi rilievi oggi marginali. Il paradosso è tutto qui: un patrimonio di rango sovraregionale in un comune che ha perso un terzo della popolazione dal 2011 e gravita su un polo extraregionale.

archeologia · paradosso patrimonio/spopolamento · crinale

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

37 **ALTO VASTESE**

TORREBRUNA

geografie della permanenza contadina

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
635
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
843 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
27 ab/km²
superficie 23,29 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−2,5 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 924 ab.
CLASSIFICAZIONE SNAI 2021–2027
E — Periferico
polo: Campobasso · 60,3 min
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
405
dimensione media 2,0 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
2
sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Borgo di crinale con la frazione di Guardiabruna, disteso tra campi e boschi dell'Alto Vastese, Torrebruna conserva un paesaggio agrario ancora leggibile e una comunità che, pur dimezzata in due decenni, mantiene pratiche agricole e zootecniche diffuse. Aderente all'Unione dei Comuni del Sinello e gravitante su Campobasso, rappresenta la condizione mediana del sub-ambito: né attrattori né emergenze, ma un capitale ordinario, costituito da case, terre, saperi, la cui tenuta dipende interamente dalle politiche per la residenzialità e i servizi.

paesaggio agrario · capitale ordinario · residenzialità

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · DPCoe, Rapporto di Istruttoria Aree Interne 2021-2027, Regione Abruzzo, 2022 (Censimento 2011, classe SNAI, polo e tempi) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it.

38 **SANGRO · RIPERIMETRAZIONE 2025**

BOMBA

geografie del lago

Abruzzo · Provincia di Chieti · Area interna SNAI Basso Sangro-Trigno

ABITANTI
686
ISTAT, 1° gennaio 2026
ALTITUDINE
429 m s.l.m.
casa comunale
DENSITÀ
40 ab/km²
superficie 17,26 km²
VARIAZIONE DEMOGRAFICA
−1,7 % / anno
media annua 2011–2026 · Cens. 2011: 885 ab.
INQUADRAMENTO SNAI
Area interna
inserito con riperimetrazione PSNAI, 2025
FAMIGLIE RESIDENTI
367
dimensione media 2,2 componenti · dato ISTAT
ZONA SISMICA
2
sismicità media

LETTURA TERRITORIALE

Disteso alle pendici del Monte Pallano, dove le mura megalitiche italiche testimoniano la lunga durata dell'insediamento, il borgo dà il nome al lago artificiale sul Sangro che ne ha ridisegnato il paesaggio e l'economia, orientandola verso la fruizione turistica delle sponde. Paese natale di Silvio e Bertrando Spaventa, con un tessuto storico in pietra ben conservato, è entrato nell'area Basso Sangro-Trigno con la riperimetrazione disposta dal PSNAI nel 2025: la sua inclusione salda il sistema del lago — già condiviso con Colledimezzo, Pietraferrazzana e Villa Santa Maria — dentro un'unica cornice di programmazione.

lago · riperimetrazione · fruizione turistica

Fonti: ISTAT, pop. residente 1° gen. 2026 (provv.) e statistiche geografiche, elab. Tuttitalia.it · ISTAT, Censimento 2011 (elab. Tuttitalia.it) · variazione media annua 2011-2026: elab. autrice · famiglie: Comuni-Italiani.it su dati ISTAT (≈ 2013) · zona sismica: OPCM 3519/2006, elab. Tuttitalia.it · inclusione nell'area: Regione Abruzzo, DGR 24/7/2025 (PSNAI).

SEZIONE A – ALLEGATI TERRITORIALI

Profilo statistico dell'area e dei sub-ambiti

A2

Il profilo restituisce, in forma aggregata e interamente calcolata sui dati verificati dell'Atlante (All. A1), le dimensioni fondamentali dell'area e dei tre sub-ambiti. Tutte le elaborazioni derivano da due fonti: ISTAT, popolazione residente al 1° gennaio 2026 (dati provvisori) e superficie territoriale; Dipartimento per le Politiche di Coesione, Rapporto di Istruttoria 2022 (Censimento 2011, classi SNAI). La variazione media annua è calcolata come tasso composto su 15 anni.

Tavola A2.1. Quadro d'insieme per sub-ambiti (perimetrazione 2021-2027)

Ambito	Pop. 2011	Pop. 2026	Var. 2011-26	Var. media annua	Superficie	Densità	Classi SNAI
Aventino	11.496	9096	−20,9 %	−1,5 %/anno	345 km²	26,4	6 E · 5 F
Sangro	6996	5495	−21,5 %	−1,6 %/anno	230 km²	23,9	7 E · 9 F
Alto Vastese	8854	6500	−26,6 %	−2,0 %/anno	284 km²	22,9	6 E · 4 F
AREA (37 comuni)	27.346	21.091	−22,9 %	−1,7 %/anno	859 km²	24,6	19 E · 18 F
Area con Bomba (38)	28.231	21.777	−22,9 %	−1,7 %/anno	876 km²	24,9	19 E · 18 F

L'area ha perso in quindici anni oltre un abitante su cinque, con un ritmo medio superiore all'1,5 per cento annuo e punte molto più severe nei comuni minori. La densità media, attorno ai 20 abitanti per chilometro quadrato, meno di un decimo del valore nazionale, colloca il Basso Sangro-Trigno tra i territori più rarefatti dell'Appennino. La composizione per classi SNAI conferma la condizione strutturale: nessun comune è classificato come intermedio; l'intera area è periferica o ultraperiferica.

Tavola A2.2. Distribuzione dei comuni per classe demografica (2026)

Classe	n.	Comuni
fino a 150 ab.	8	Colledimacine, Fallo, Montebello sul Sangro, Monteferrante, Montelapiano, Pietraferrazzana, Roio del Sangro, San Giovanni Lipioni
151–500 ab.	10	Lettopalena, Taranta Peligna, Borrello, Civitaluparella, Colledimezzo, Gamberale, Pennadomo, Rosello, Castelguidone, Fraine
501–1.000 ab.	11	Civitella Messer Raimondo, Palombaro, Montenerodomo, Pizzoferrato, Quadri, Carunchio, Celenza sul Trigno, Montazzoli, Schiavi di Abruzzo, Torrebruna, Bomba
oltre 1.000 ab.	9	Fara San Martino, Gessopalena, Lama dei Peligni, Palena, Roccascalegna, Torricella Peligna, Villa Santa Maria, Castiglione Messer Marino, Roccaspinalveti

Oltre metà dei comuni non raggiunge i 500 abitanti e 8 sono al di sotto della soglia dei 150: una polverizzazione amministrativa che rende la scala intercomunale non un'opzione organizzativa ma la condizione minima di esistenza delle politiche.

Tavola A2.3. Valori estremi dell'area (elaborazioni sui dati dell'Atlante)

Indicatore	Comune	Valore
Comune più popoloso	Castiglione Messer Marino	1398 ab.
Comune meno popoloso	Montelapiano	68 ab.
Comune più alto	Gamberale	1324 m s.l.m.
Contrazione più severa 2011-2026	Fraine	−3,3 % / anno
Migliore tenuta 2011-2026	Pietraferrazzana	−0,1 % / anno
Polo di servizi più vicino	Palombaro	44,8 min (Chieti)
Polo di servizi più lontano	Gamberale	85,0 min (Pescara)

Il divario tra gli estremi, dai 44,8 minuti di Palombaro agli 85,0 di Gamberale, mostra che l'area non è internamente omogenea: la perifericità cresce dai margini pedemontani dell'Aventino verso le quote alte del Sangro e i crinali dell'Alto Vastese, che gravitano peraltro su un polo extraregionale (Campobasso).

SEZIONE A – ALLEGATI TERRITORIALI

Morfologie dell'abbandono nell'Abruzzo interno

A3

La sistematizzazione proposta nel Capitolo 3 e discussa nel Capitolo 7, articola il patrimonio abbandonato secondo tre dimensioni incrociate: tipologie, gradi di dismissione, regimi proprietari.
Ogni sezione indica: definizione, caratteri ricorrenti nell'area, esempi e implicazioni per il censimento.

Scheda T1. Insediamenti storici e loro parti
Definizione. Nuclei e porzioni di tessuto storico in condizione di abbandono totale o prevalente: interi paesi vecchi, rioni, cortine edilizie.
Caratteri ricorrenti nell'area. Tessuti compatti in pietra locale su impianti di crinale o di versante; abbandono per eventi traumatici (distruzioni belliche della linea Gustav, instabilità dei versanti) o per svuotamento progressivo; frequente compresenza del "doppio paese": rudere e abitato ricostruito.
Esempi. Il vecchio abitato in pietra di gesso di Gessopalena; il borgo di Buonanotte a Montebello sul Sangro; i ruderi del vecchio abitato di Lettopalena con l'abbazia; porzioni di tessuto svuotato nei centri minori dell'Alto Vastese.
Implicazioni per il censimento. Rilevazione per unità minime (edificio/aggregato) con perimetrazione del comparto; attenzione ai regimi proprietari frammentati; valutazione unitaria del valore d'insieme oltre il singolo manufatto.

Scheda T2. Spazi aperti e territori agricoli dismessi
Definizione. Suoli agricoli e pastorali abbandonati, sistemazioni tradizionali in disuso, manufatti minori del paesaggio agrario.
Caratteri ricorrenti nell'area. Aumento della superficie boschiva; perdita di leggibilità dei tracciati della transumanza; degrado dei manufatti puntuali per abbandono della manutenzione ordinaria.
Esempi. Altopiani boscosi di Roio del Sangro e Rosello; pascoli sommitali di Montenerodomo; paesaggi agrari residuali di Torrebruna e delle contrade di Roccaspinalveti.
Implicazioni per il censimento. Unità di rilevazione areale oltre che puntuale; integrazione con le banche dati agricole e forestali; bosco come indicatore di capitale ambientale e di abbandono colturale.

Scheda T3. Edifici e manufatti puntuali
Definizione. Singoli edifici dismessi, prevalentemente novecenteschi e privi di tutela: ex scuole e uffici pubblici, ex strutture sanitarie e ricettive, opifici, magazzini, edifici incompiuti.
Caratteri ricorrenti nell'area. Diffusione capillare in tutti i comuni per effetto della contrazione dei servizi (chiusura di scuole e presidi); buona consistenza strutturale a fronte di obsolescenza funzionale e impiantistica; assenza di valore culturale e allo stesso tempo elevato valore d'uso potenziale.
Esempi. Patrimonio pubblico dismesso censito a Colledimacine nella sperimentazione (Parte IV); ex edifici scolastici dei comuni; manufatti proto-industriali lungo l'Aventino a Taranta Peligna.
Implicazioni per il censimento. Tipologia prioritaria della metodologia: proprietà prevalentemente pubblica, dati reperibili, trasformabilità elevata, tempi di attivazione brevi.

Tavola A3.1. Gradi di dismissione: criteri di riconoscimento e priorità

Grado	Criteri di riconoscimento	Priorità operativa
Dismissione recente	Involucro integro, impianti presenti anche se obsoleti, assenza di dissesti; cessazione d'uso documentabile entro un decennio.	Massima: interventi preventivi rapidi e a costi contenuti evitano lo scivolamento al grado successivo.
Abbandono avanzato recuperabile	Degrado diffuso di finiture e coperture, infiltrazioni, vegetazione infestante; strutture portanti integre.	Media: recupero tecnicamente possibile ma con costi elevati.
Abbandono irreversibile	Crolli parziali o totali, perdita dell'apparecchio costruttivo, pericolo per la pubblica incolumità.	Sicurezza: messa in sicurezza, demolizione selettiva con recupero dei materiali.

Regimi proprietari
La terza dimensione incrocia le precedenti e ne condiziona l'operabilità: proprietà pubblica (comunale in primo luogo: la più direttamente attivabile, bersaglio della sperimentazione); proprietà privata frammentata (eredità indivise, comproprietari emigrati o irreperibili: il principale ostacolo giuridico al riuso nei tessuti storici); proprietà collettive e usi civici (frequenti sui territori aperti); regimi incerti o contenziosi. La scheda di rilevazione (All. C1) dedica una sezione specifica alla ricostruzione del regime proprietario, assumendone l'incertezza come dato da registrare e non da presumere.

SEZIONE B - ALLEGATI NORMATIVI E PROGRAMMATICI

Quadro della normativa nazionale su patrimonio dismesso, riuso e rigenerazione

B1

Il quadro sintetizza le principali norme nazionali che i comuni delle aree interne possono attivare per la ricognizione, la valorizzazione e il riuso del patrimonio dismesso. La lettura trasversale evidenzia i due vuoti che la ricerca documenta: l'assenza di una definizione giuridica unitaria di abbandono edilizio e l'assenza di standard tecnici dedicati al riuso del patrimonio privo di tutela. Le sintesi hanno carattere ricognitivo e non esaustivo; per l'applicazione puntuale si rinvia ai testi vigenti coordinati.

Norma	Oggetto	Strumenti attivabili dai comuni	Criticità nelle aree interne
D.Lgs. 42/2004 Codice dei beni culturali e del paesaggio	Tutela e valorizzazione del patrimonio culturale e del paesaggio	Verifica dell'interesse culturale; concessione e valorizzazione dei beni tutelati; autorizzazioni paesaggistiche	Modellato sul patrimonio di valore riconosciuto: per estensione analogica irrigidisce anche interventi sul patrimonio privo di tutela
D.P.R. 380/2001 Testo unico dell'edilizia	Titoli e categorie di intervento sul patrimonio edilizio	Manutenzione, restauro e risanamento, ristrutturazione anche con demo-ricostruzione; mutamenti d'uso	Requisiti tecnici pensati per contesti ordinari; difficoltà applicative su tessuti storici minori e riusi flessibili
D.Lgs. 85/2010 Federalismo demaniale	Attribuzione agli enti territoriali di beni statali	Richiesta di trasferimento gratuito di immobili statali per valorizzazione funzionale	Oneri di gestione trasferiti a enti con capacità minime; rischio di accumulare patrimonio senza risorse per attivarlo
D.L. 133/2014, art. 24 — Baratto amministrativo	Partecipazione delle comunità alla cura del territorio	Riduzioni tributarie a fronte di interventi dei cittadini su aree e immobili (pulizia, manutenzione, recupero)	Gettito ridotto dei micro-comuni limita i margini; richiede regolamento comunale e capacità di gestione
L. 158/2017 Misure per i piccoli comuni	Sostegno ai comuni fino a 5.000 abitanti	Recupero dei centri storici; acquisizione di case cantoniere e stazioni dismesse; possibilità di censire il patrimonio da riqualificare	Attuazione e dotazioni finanziarie discontinue; il censimento resta facoltà senza standard tecnico nazionale
D.Lgs. 117/2017 Codice del Terzo settore (artt. 55, 71)	Amministrazione condivisa; sedi degli ETS	Co-programmazione e co-progettazione con gli ETS; concessione di immobili pubblici inutilizzati a canone agevolato a fini di interesse generale	Richiede tessuto associativo strutturato, non ovunque presente; procedure nuove per uffici tecnici minimi
PNRR — M1C3, Piano Nazionale Borghi (2021-2026)	Rigenerazione culturale dei piccoli borghi	Finanziamenti per attrattività, riuso a fini culturali e turistici del patrimonio	Logica competitiva a bando che premia capacità progettuale preesistente; rischio di interventi-vetrina senza gestione
Disegni di legge sulla rigenerazione urbana (iter non concluso)	Cornice nazionale per la rigenerazione	(prospettici) definizioni, incentivi e semplificazioni per il riuso	L'assenza di approvazione lascia il riuso senza definizioni unitarie; attenzione al bias urbano delle proposte

SEZIONE B - ALLEGATI NORMATIVI E PROGRAMMATICI

Apparato programmatico SNAI/PSNAI del Basso Sangro-Trigno

B2

Cronologia degli atti

Anno	Atto / evento
2013-2014	Definizione della Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne nell'Accordo di Partenariato 2014-2020 (Barca et al., 2014); avvio della selezione delle aree.
2015	Il Basso Sangro-Trigno è individuato come area prototipo della Regione Abruzzo (33 comuni della provincia di Chieti, sub-ambiti Aventino, Sangro, Alto Vastese).
2015-2020	Elaborazione e attuazione della Strategia d'area e sottoscrizione dell'Accordo di Programma Quadro; interventi su istruzione, salute, mobilità e sviluppo locale.
2020	DPCM 24 settembre 2020: Mappa aggiornata delle Aree interne per il ciclo 2021-2027 (classificazione dei comuni in fasce A-F).
2022	Rapporto di Istruttoria per la Selezione delle Aree Interne, Regione Abruzzo (DPCoe): riperimetrazione dell'area a 37 comuni con il subentro dei quattro comuni dell'Unione Montana Maiella Orientale-Verde Aventino (Colledimacine, Lettopalena, Palena, Taranta Peligna).
2025	Approvazione del Piano Strategico Nazionale delle Aree Interne (Cabina di Regia, 9 aprile 2025); ulteriore riperimetrazione con l'inserimento del comune di Bomba (presa d'atto: Regione Abruzzo, DGR 24 luglio 2025). L'area raggiunge i 38 comuni.

Tavola B2.1 — I 37 comuni della perimetrazione 2021-2027: classi, poli e tempi (DPCoe, 2022)

Comune	Sub-ambito	Classe SNAI 2020	Polo	Tempo medio
Civitella Messer Raimondo	Aventino	E — Periferico	Chieti	49,9 min
Colledimacine	Aventino	F — Ultraperiferico	Chieti	78,4 min
Fara San Martino	Aventino	E — Periferico	Chieti	48,3 min
Gessopalena	Aventino	E — Periferico	Chieti	56,0 min
Lama dei Peligni	Aventino	E — Periferico	Chieti	61,6 min
Lettopalena	Aventino	F — Ultraperiferico	Chieti	74,6 min
Palena	Aventino	F — Ultraperiferico	Chieti	74,6 min
Palombaro	Aventino	E — Periferico	Chieti	44,8 min
Roccascalegna	Aventino	E — Periferico	Pescara	55,7 min
Taranta Peligna	Aventino	F — Ultraperiferico	Chieti	68,0 min
Torricella Peligna	Aventino	F — Ultraperiferico	Chieti	67,1 min
Borrello	Sangro	F — Ultraperiferico	Pescara	70,7 min
Civitaluparella	Sangro	F — Ultraperiferico	Pescara	68,3 min
Colledimezzo	Sangro	E — Periferico	Pescara	55,8 min
Fallo	Sangro	E — Periferico	Pescara	61,2 min
Gamberale	Sangro	F — Ultraperiferico	Pescara	85,0 min
Montebello sul Sangro	Sangro	E — Periferico	Pescara	64,4 min
Monteferrante	Sangro	F — Ultraperiferico	Pescara	68,2 min
Montelapiano	Sangro	F — Ultraperiferico	Pescara	70,5 min
Montenerodomo	Sangro	F — Ultraperiferico	Pescara	79,9 min
Pennadomo	Sangro	E — Periferico	Pescara	58,3 min

Pietraferrazzana	Sangro	E — Periferico	Pescara	57,2 min
Pizzoferrato	Sangro	F — Ultraperiferico	Pescara	73,8 min
Quadri	Sangro	E — Periferico	Pescara	63,1 min
Roio del Sangro	Sangro	F — Ultraperiferico	Pescara	71,1 min
Rosello	Sangro	F — Ultraperiferico	Pescara	69,1 min
Villa Santa Maria	Sangro	E — Periferico	Pescara	61,2 min
Carunchio	Alto vastese	E — Periferico	Campobasso	62,9 min
Castelguidone	Alto vastese	E — Periferico	Campobasso	55,6 min
Castiglione Messer Marino	Alto vastese	F — Ultraperiferico	Campobasso	81,3 min
Celenza sul Trigno	Alto vastese	E — Periferico	Campobasso	58,1 min
Fraine	Alto vastese	F — Ultraperiferico	Campobasso	80,5 min
Montazzoli	Alto vastese	F — Ultraperiferico	Pescara	72,5 min
Roccaspinalveti	Alto vastese	F — Ultraperiferico	Pescara	80,0 min
San Giovanni Lipioni	Alto vastese	E — Periferico	Campobasso	52,0 min
Schiavi di Abruzzo	Alto vastese	E — Periferico	Campobasso	60,7 min
Torrebruna	Alto vastese	E — Periferico	Campobasso	60,3 min

SEZIONE B - ALLEGATI NORMATIVI E PROGRAMMATICI

Schede delle politiche comparate: Scozia e Svizzera

B3

Le due schede documentano i riferimenti internazionali analizzati nel Capitolo 2, selezionati per la maturità degli strumenti a favore dei territori marginali e per la diversità dei modelli: comunitario-fondiario il primo, federale-perequativo il secondo. Le sintesi derivano dalla letteratura e dai materiali raccolti nei periodi di ricerca presso il Centre for Mountain Studies (University of the Highlands and Islands) di Perth e il Dipartimento di Architettura dell'ETH di Zurigo.

Scheda B3.1. Scozia: la via comunitaria alla terra e al patrimonio

Contesto. Highlands and Islands: bassissime densità, concentrazione storica della proprietà fondiaria, lunga tradizione di politiche dedicate.

Strumenti chiave. Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003: community right to buy, diritto delle comunità organizzate di acquisire terre e beni; estensioni con il Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (asset transfer dagli enti pubblici, esteso anche ai contesti urbani) e il Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016 (acquisizione per lo sviluppo sostenibile); Scottish Land Fund come fondo dedicato all'accompagnamento e al finanziamento delle acquisizioni comunitarie.

Esiti documentati. Crescita continua della *community land ownership*, con centinaia di beni costituiti da terre, edifici, infrastrutture locali, in proprietà di trust e società comunitarie, particolarmente nelle isole e nelle aree remote; consolidamento di un ecosistema di accompagnamento tecnico (Community Land Scotland, HIE).

Scheda B3.2 — Svizzera: la via federale alla coesione territoriale

Contesto. Territori alpini con spopolamento selettivo; assetto federale con forte autonomia e responsabilità dei livelli cantonale e comunale; lunga tradizione di politiche per le regioni di montagna.

Strumenti chiave. Nuova Politica Regionale (NPR, dal 2008): sostegno a progetti di sviluppo orientati al valore aggiunto regionale, con cofinanziamento federale-cantonale e logica pluriennale di programma; pianificazione territoriale che limita la dispersione insediativa.

Esiti documentati. Stabilizzazione selettiva dei territori montani integrati nei sistemi regionali; contenimento normativo della crescita delle residenze secondarie nei comuni turistici; capacità amministrativa locale sostenuta da perequazione e cooperazione intercomunale strutturale.

Tavola B3.3 — Matrice comparativa sintetica

Dimensione	Scozia	Svizzera	Italia (SNAI)
Leva principale	Diritti fondiari delle comunità	Programmi pluriennali federali-cantonali	Strategie d'area e servizi essenziali
Soggetto attuatore	Trust e società comunitarie con agenzie di accompagnamento	Cantoni e comuni in cooperazione strutturale	Comuni associati, con capacità disomogenee
Rapporto con il patrimonio	Acquisizione e gestione comunitaria di lungo periodo	Regolazione degli usi (seconde case) e sviluppo di valore regionale	Non tematizzato come oggetto sistematico: il vuoto che il Patto propone di colmare
Fondo dedicato	Scottish Land Fund (permanente)	Cofinanziamento NPR (programmatico)	Risorse per cicli di programmazione, senza fondo specifico per il patrimonio dismesso

SEZIONE C – ALLEGATI METODOLOGICI

Kit metodologico per il censimento del patrimonio pubblico abbandonato

C1

Il kit consegna in forma autonoma lo strumento centrale della ricerca, nella versione consolidata dopo la sperimentazione di Colledimacine. È composto da tre parti: le linee guida strategiche; la scheda di rilevazione; le istruzioni operative con i criteri di valutazione. È progettato per essere gestito dai tecnici comunali nell'ambito delle competenze ordinarie, senza software specialistici né incarichi esterni.

Parte prima. Linee guida operative per la mappatura e il riutilizzo del patrimonio abbandonato

Le linee guida operative qui presentate traducono il quadro strategico delineato nelle sezioni precedenti in un insieme di strumenti, procedure e criteri applicativi destinati a supportare le amministrazioni pubbliche nell'implementazione concreta del percorso di mappatura, riutilizzo e gestione del patrimonio abbandonato. Esse costituiscono un kit metodologico replicabile e adattabile alle specificità territoriali, volto a garantire coerenza, trasparenza e continuità lungo tutte le fasi del processo.

1. Mappatura del patrimonio abbandonato

1.1 Obiettivi

La mappatura rappresenta il primo passo del percorso e persegue finalità conoscitive e operative: identificare e localizzare gli immobili abbandonati; valutarne lo stato di conservazione; ricostruirne la storia d'uso e il valore culturale; individuare le potenzialità di riutilizzo e definire priorità di intervento. Tale fase consente di costruire una base informativa solida, indispensabile per orientare le scelte successive.

1.2 Approccio metodologico

La mappatura richiede un approccio integrato che combina:

- **ricerca documentale e archivistica**, utile a individuare immobili potenzialmente dismessi, ricostruirne la storia proprietaria e verificare vincoli o trasformazioni pianificate;
- **rilevazioni sul campo**, finalizzate ad accertare la condizione reale degli edifici, documentarne le caratteristiche fisiche e georeferenziarli con precisione, anche mediante tecnologie GIS e, ove necessario, droni per aree difficilmente accessibili;
- **coinvolgimento della comunità locale**, attraverso segnalazioni, workshop e interviste, per integrare la conoscenza tecnica con quella situata e favorire un senso di appartenenza al progetto;
- **costruzione di un database strutturato**, interoperabile e aggiornabile, contenente informazioni anagrafiche, catastali, fisiche, storiche, culturali, giuridiche e funzionali per ciascun sito censito.

1.3 Criteri di priorità

Quando le risorse non consentono un censimento esaustivo, è necessario definire criteri di selezione basati su:

- **grado di degrado**, distinguendo tra abbandono irreversibile, degrado avanzato ma recuperabile e dismissione recente;
- **valore storico e culturale**, privilegiando beni vincolati o con forte rilevanza identitaria;
- **posizione e accessibilità**, valutando le opportunità di riutilizzo in relazione al contesto territoriale;
- **proprietà e disponibilità**, favorendo immobili pubblici o privati con proprietari collaborativi, evitando situazioni giuridiche complesse.

2. Riutilizzo del patrimonio abbandonato

2.1 Obiettivi

La fase di riutilizzo mira a valorizzare il patrimonio culturale e architettonico, rivitalizzare le economie locali, contrastare lo spopolamento e promuovere modelli di sviluppo sostenibile fondati sulla tutela ambientale, sull'innovazione sociale e sulla partecipazione delle comunità.

2.2 Principi guida

Gli interventi devono essere orientati da alcuni principi fondamentali:

- **sostenibilità ambientale e sociale**, attraverso tecniche a basso impatto, efficienza energetica, inclusione sociale e prevenzione di processi di gentrificazione;
- **flessibilità e adattamento**, riconoscendo che gli edifici abbandonati difficilmente possono tornare alla funzione originaria e richiedono destinazioni d'uso compatibili e multifunzionali;
- **integrazione territoriale**, collegando il riuso alle reti di servizi, alle politiche locali e al contesto paesaggistico;
- **valorizzazione culturale**, preservando materiali, tecniche costruttive e identità locali.

2.3 Linee operative

Le linee operative per il riutilizzo includono:

- **restauro e conservazione per i beni tutelati o di riconosciuto valore storico-culturale**, con interventi rispettosi della materia storica, dell'autenticità e dei principi del restauro conservativo (minimo intervento, reversibilità, leggibilità storica);
- **riuso adattivo per il patrimonio privo di tutela**, orientato alla flessibilità funzionale e tecnologica, all'impiego di soluzioni reversibili e a secco (*design for disassembly*) e alla valorizzazione del valore d'uso e ambientale del costruito esistente;
- **individuazione di nuove funzioni compatibili**, quali spazi culturali e sociali, residenze temporanee o permanenti, attività agricole e produttive, strutture ricettive diffuse, servizi alla comunità;
- **partecipazione della comunità**, coinvolta nella progettazione, realizzazione e gestione per garantire radicamento sociale e continuità nel tempo;
- **partenariati pubblico–privato e terzo settore**, attraverso concessioni, comodati, cooperative di comunità, imprese sociali e fondazioni;
- **sostenibilità economica**, mediante analisi di fattibilità, diversificazione delle entrate e attuazione progressiva degli interventi;
- **utilizzo di incentivi fiscali e normativi**, per facilitare il recupero e la valorizzazione del patrimonio.

2.4 Strumenti e risorse

Le amministrazioni possono fare ricorso a:

- fondi pubblici europei, nazionali e regionali;
- finanziamenti privati, crowdfunding civico e impact investing;
- tecnologie innovative per la gestione sostenibile;
- reti di collaborazione con università, centri di ricerca e associazioni.

3. Monitoraggio e gestione nel lungo periodo

La sostenibilità degli interventi richiede un sistema di gestione continuativa che eviti il rischio di nuovo abbandono. È necessario predisporre:

- **piani di gestione pluriennali**, con obiettivi misurabili, ruoli chiari, risorse definite e strategie di manutenzione ordinaria e straordinaria;
- **meccanismi di partecipazione continua**, attraverso assemblee pubbliche, consultazioni e strumenti di ascolto attivo;
- **sistemi di monitoraggio e valutazione**, basati su indicatori quantitativi e qualitativi, analisi di impatto e feedback degli stakeholder;
- **processi di miglioramento continuo**, che consentano di adattare le attività, introdurre nuove funzioni, correggere criticità e rafforzare gli elementi più efficaci.

Parte seconda. La scheda di rilevazione (struttura e campi)

Sezione	Campi principali	Modalità di rilevazione
1. Identificazione	Codice univoco immobile; denominazione corrente e storica; tipologia (da tassonomia All. A3)	Desk + verifica in campo
2. Localizzazione e catasto	Indirizzo; coordinate (WGS84); foglio, particella, subalterno; superficie coperta e scoperta; volume stimato	Desk (catasto, cartografia) + GPS
3. Caratteristiche fisico-tipologiche	Epoca di costruzione; numero piani; tecnica costruttiva prevalente; stato degli impianti	Rilievo speditivo
4. Storia d'uso	Funzione originaria; funzioni successive; anno di cessazione dell'uso; usi occasionali in atto	Fonti comunali + testimonianze
5. Regime proprietario e giuridico	Proprietà (ente, quota); titoli d'uso in essere; contenziosi; disponibilità effettiva	Uffici comunali; registrare l'incertezza
6. Stato di conservazione	Giudizio sintetico 1-5 per: coperture, strutture, involucro, interni, impianti; giudizio complessivo; grado di dismissione	Rilievo speditivo con criteri Parte terza
7. Vincoli e tutele	Vincolo culturale (D.Lgs. 42/2004); vincolo paesaggistico; altri vincoli (idrogeologico, sismico-urbanistici)	Desk (verifiche presso Soprintendenza)
8. Valore storico-culturale e identitario	Valore riconosciuto / identitario per la comunità / assente; elementi notevoli	Rilievo + segnalazioni della comunità
9. Accessibilità e sicurezza	Accesso carrabile/pedonale; distanza dai servizi a rete; condizioni di sicurezza; necessità di messa in sicurezza urgente	Rilievo
10. Potenzialità di riuso	Funzioni compatibili (abaco All. D1); superficie utile riattivabile; approccio di intervento (graduazione); stima parametrica di massima	Valutazione tecnica
11. Priorità	Classe di priorità (alta/media/bassa) motivata sui criteri delle linee guida	Sintesi
12. Documentazione	Repertorio fotografico codificato (esterni, interni, dettagli); eventuali elaborati reperiti	Rilievo + archivi

SCHEDA DI MAPPATURA DEL PATRIMONIO ABBANDONATO/SOTTOUTILIZZATO

Lo scopo di questa scheda di mappatura è di raccogliere informazioni sul patrimonio abbandonato, con l'intento di creare una banca dati a livello locale e regionale, facilitando azioni di valorizzazione, recupero e di gestione.

1. INFORMAZIONI GENERALI

Codice identificativo: (*Assegnato al bene per facilitarne il tracciamento*)	
Nome del sito/struttura: (*Nome storico, se esistente, o nome attribuito*)	
Localizzazione: ○ **Comune:** ○ **Provincia:** ○ **Regione:** ○ **Coordinate geografiche (latitudine/longitudine):** (*Per mappatura GIS*)	
Dati catastali	
Tipo di patrimonio: (*Es. edificio residenziale, edificio industriale, ecclesiastico, spazio aperto*)	
Ambito edilizio	
Superficie	

2. CARATTERISTICHE DEL BENE

Descrizione fisica: (*Breve descrizione dell'edificio o sito, ad esempio dimensioni, tipologia costruttiva, materiali utilizzati*)	
Data di costruzione: (*Se conosciuta, o approssimazione*)	
Stato di conservazione: (*Descrivere il livello di degrado, possibili danni strutturali, mancata manutenzione*)	
Proprietario attuale: (*Comune, privato, ente pubblico, sconosciuto*)	
Stato giuridico del bene: (*In proprietà privata, pubblico, occupato, abbandonato*)	

3. STORIA E UTILIZZO DEL PATRIMONIO

Funzione storica: (*Che ruolo aveva il bene nel passato? Es. abitazione, luogo di lavoro, chiesa, scuola, etc.*)	
Ultimo utilizzo conosciuto: (*Quando è stato utilizzato l'ultima volta? Anno e tipo di utilizzo*)	

Motivi dell'abbandono: *(Fattori che hanno portato all'abbandono, es. crisi economica, spopolamento, cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi, catastrofi naturali, etc.)*	
Eventuali interventi di recupero precedenti: *(Sono stati fatti interventi di restauro o recupero? Se sì, descrivere brevemente)*	

4. ACCESSIBILITÀ E SICUREZZA

Accessibilità fisica al sito: *(Strade, sentieri, segnaletica, distanza dai centri abitati)*	
Condizioni di sicurezza: *(Il sito è sicuro per l'ingresso? Ci sono pericoli evidenti? Esempio: rischio di crolli, presenza di amianto, strutture pericolanti)*	
Possibilità di intervento: *(Vi sono limitazioni legali o pratiche per un eventuale intervento di recupero? Es. vincoli paesaggistici, mancanza di fondi, difficoltà logistiche, etc.)*	

5. POTENZIALITÀ DI VALORIZZAZIONE E INTERVENTO

Valore storico, culturale, architettonico o paesaggistico: *(Perché il sito è rilevante e merita attenzione? Es. valore storico locale, stile architettonico particolare, legame con eventi storici)*	
Possibilità di recupero e riutilizzo: *(Descrivere se esistono possibilità di recuperare e riutilizzare il sito, come per esempio l'uso residenziale, culturale, turistico, etc.)*	
Potenziali risorse per il recupero: *(Fonti di finanziamento, partenariati pubblici e privati, progetti già in corso, ecc.)*	

6. INTERVENTI E PRIORITÀ

Interventi suggeriti: *(Suggerire eventuali azioni per il recupero o la protezione del sito, come il consolidamento strutturale, interventi di conservazione, attività di sensibilizzazione, etc.)*	
Priorità di intervento: *(Bassa, media, alta)*	
Tempistiche suggerite: *(Indicazioni su tempi necessari per il recupero o la gestione del sito, se possibili)*	

7. SEZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Foto del sito	

Parte terza. Istruzioni operative e criteri

Fasi. (1) Preparazione desk: estrazione dell'elenco degli immobili di proprietà dall'inventario comunale e dal catasto; precompilazione delle sezioni 1-2 e 5. (2) Rilievo: sopralluogo speditivo (30-60 minuti per immobile) con compilazione delle sezioni 3-4 e 6-9 e campagna fotografica. (3) Restituzione: caricamento nel database e georeferenziazione. (4) Validazione: verifica con gli uffici e restituzione pubblica.

Scala dello stato di conservazione. 1 ottimo (uso immediato possibile); 2 buono (interventi leggeri); 3 mediocre (recupero consistente, strutture integre); 4 cattivo (degrado strutturale localizzato); 5 pessimo (dissesti diffusi, inagibilità). Il giudizio complessivo non è la media aritmetica: coperture e strutture pesano in modo prevalente.

Requisiti di sostenibilità amministrativa. Il kit è dimensionato per consentire ai comuni di effettuare il censimento del proprio patrimonio con risorse ordinarie; la sperimentazione di Colledimacine ne ha verificato tempi e praticabilità (cfr. Cap. 8).

SEZIONE C - ALLEGATI METODOLOGICI

Schede compilate durante la sperimentazione nel comune a Colledimacine

C2

1. Palazzo Barbolani

Lo scopo di questa scheda di mappatura è di raccogliere informazioni sul patrimonio abbandonato, con l'intento di creare una banca dati a livello locale e regionale, facilitando azioni di valorizzazione, recupero e di gestione.

SCHEDA DI MAPPATURA DEL PATRIMONIO ABBANDONATO/SOTTOUTILIZZATO NELLE AREE INTERNE

1. INFORMAZIONI GENERALI

Codice identificativo: *(Assegnato al bene per facilitarne il tracciamento)*	1
Nome del sito/struttura: *(Nome storico, se esistente, o nome attribuito)*	PALAZZO BARBOLANI
Localizzazione:	
○ **Comune:**	COLLEDIMACINE (CH)
○ **Provincia:**	CHIETI
○ **Regione:**	ABRUZZO
○ **Coordinate geografiche (latitudine/longitudine):** *(Per mappatura GIS)*	42°00'20"N 14°12'08"E
Dati catastali	FOGLIO 8 PARTICELLA N°116
Tipo di patrimonio: *(Es. edificio residenziale, edificio industriale, ecclesiastico, spazio aperto)*	EDIFICIO RESIDENZIALE (STORICO)
Ambito edilizio	
Superficie	1800 M²

2. CARATTERISTICHE DEL BENE

Descrizione fisica: *(Breve descrizione dell'edificio o sito, ad esempio dimensioni, tipologia costruttiva, materiali utilizzati)*	EDIFICIO IN PIETRA DELLA MAIELLA
Data di costruzione: *(Se conosciuta, o approssimazione)*	1860-1870 D.C.
Stato di conservazione: *(Descrivere il livello di degrado, possibili danni strutturali, mancata manutenzione)*	EDIFICIO RISTRUTTURATO SOLO NELLA PARTE ESTERNA, ALL'INTERNO VI SONO LOCALI CON VOLTE DISTRUTTE
Proprietario attuale: *(Comune, privato, ente pubblico, sconosciuto)*	COMUNE DI COLLEDIMACINE
Stato giuridico del bene: *(In proprietà privata, pubblico, occupato, abbandonato)*	PROPRIETA' PUBBLICA

3. STORIA E UTILIZZO DEL PATRIMONIO

Funzione storica: *(Che ruolo aveva il bene nel passato? Es. abitazione, luogo di lavoro, chiesa, scuola, etc.)*	RESIDENZA DEL CONTE RAFFAELE ULISSE BARBOLANI 30/01/1818 - 12/10/1900 MINISTRO PLENIPOTENZIARIO IN GIAPPONE
Ultimo utilizzo conosciuto: *(Quando è stato utilizzato l'ultima volta? Anno e tipo di utilizzo)*	FINE ANNI 1990 COME STRUTTURA RICETTIVA E RISTORATIVA

Motivi dell'abbandono: *(Fattori che hanno portato all'abbandono, es. crisi economica, spopolamento, cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi, catastrofi naturali, etc.)*	STRUTTURA PRECEDENTEMENTE DI PROPRIETA' DI UN PRIVATO E SUCCESSIVAMENTE PASSATA DI PROPRIETA' AD UN ISTITUTO DI CREDITO (BANCA)
Eventuali interventi di recupero precedenti: *(Sono stati fatti interventi di restauro o recupero? Se sì, descrivere brevemente)*	RISTRUTTURAZIONE PARZIALE (TETTO E FACCIATE) UNA VOLTA ACQUISTATO DAL COMUNE

4. ACCESSIBILITÀ E SICUREZZA

Accessibilità fisica al sito: *(Strade, sentieri, segnaletica, distanza dai centri abitati)*	STRUTTURA BEN ACCESSIBILE, SITUATA NEL CENTRO DELLA PIAZZA PRINCIPALE
Condizioni di sicurezza: *(Il sito è sicuro per l'ingresso? Ci sono pericoli evidenti? Esempio: rischio di crolli, presenza di amianto, strutture pericolanti)*	STRUTTURA PERICOLANTE
Possibilità di intervento: *(Vi sono limitazioni legali o pratiche per un eventuale intervento di recupero? Es. vincoli paesaggistici, mancanza di fondi, difficoltà logistiche, etc.)*	FACCIATE VINCOLATE (SOPRINTENDENZA DEI BENI CULTURALI)

5. POTENZIALITÀ DI VALORIZZAZIONE E INTERVENTO

Valore storico, culturale, architettonico o paesaggistico: *(Perché il sito è rilevante e merita attenzione? Es. valore storico locale, stile architettonico particolare, legame con eventi storici)*	PALAZZO STORICO IN QUANTO APPARTENUTO AL CONTE RAFFAELE ULISSE BARBOLANI "MINISTRO PLENIPOTENZIARIO IN GIAPPONE"
Possibilità di recupero e riutilizzo: *(Descrivere se esistono possibilità di recuperare e riutilizzare il sito, come per esempio l'uso residenziale, culturale, turistico, etc.)*	USO TURISTICO
Potenziali risorse per il recupero: *(Fonti di finanziamento, partenariati pubblici e privati, progetti già in corso, ecc.)*	/

6. INTERVENTI E PRIORITÀ

Interventi suggeriti: *(Suggerire eventuali azioni per il recupero o la protezione del sito, come il consolidamento strutturale, interventi di conservazione, attività di sensibilizzazione, etc.)*	INTERVENTI DI CONSOLIDAMENTO STRUTTURALE
Priorità di intervento: *(Bassa, media, alta)*	ALTA
Tempistiche suggerite: *(Indicazioni su tempi necessari per il recupero o la gestione del sito, se possibili)*	3/5 ANNI

7. SEZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Foto del sito	

2. Centro polifunzionale

Lo scopo di questa scheda di mappatura è di raccogliere informazioni sul patrimonio abbandonato, con l'intento di creare una banca dati a livello locale e regionale, facilitando azioni di valorizzazione, recupero e di gestione.

SCHEDA DI MAPPATURA DEL PATRIMONIO ABBANDONATO/SOTTOUTILIZZATO NELLE AREE INTERNE

1. INFORMAZIONI GENERALI

Codice identificativo: *(Assegnato al bene per facilitarne il tracciamento)*	2
Nome del sito/struttura: *(Nome storico, se esistente, o nome attribuito)*	CENTRO POLIFUNZIONALE
Localizzazione:	
○ **Comune:**	COLLEDIMACINE (CH)
○ **Provincia:**	CHIETI
○ **Regione:**	ABRUZZO
○ **Coordinate geografiche (latitudine/longitudine):** *(Per mappatura GIS)*	42°00'01" N 14° 11' 54" E
Dati catastali	FOGLIO 7 PARTICELLA 6007
Tipo di patrimonio: *(Es. edificio residenziale, edificio industriale, ecclesiastico, spazio aperto)*	CENTRO POLIFUNZIONALE
Ambito edilizio	
Superficie	1300 m²

2. CARATTERISTICHE DEL BENE

Descrizione fisica: *(Breve descrizione dell'edificio o sito, ad esempio dimensioni, tipologia costruttiva, materiali utilizzati)*	CENTRO POLIFUNZIONALE CON TETTO IN LEGNO (TIPO CANADESE)
Data di costruzione: *(Se conosciuta, o approssimazione)*	INIZI ANNI 1990
Stato di conservazione: *(Descrivere il livello di degrado, possibili danni strutturali, mancata manutenzione)*	COPERTURA DEL TETTO DIVELTA INFILTRAZIONI D'ACQUA
Proprietario attuale: *(Comune, privato, ente pubblico, sconosciuto)*	COMUNE DI COLLEDIMACINE
Stato giuridico del bene: *(In proprietà privata, pubblico, occupato, abbandonato)*	PROPRIETA' PUBBLICA

3. STORIA E UTILIZZO DEL PATRIMONIO

Funzione storica: *(Che ruolo aveva il bene nel passato? Es. abitazione, luogo di lavoro, chiesa, scuola, etc.)*	CENTRO RICREATIVO CON ALL'INTERNO RISTORANTE, BAR, PISTE DA BOCCE E BOWLING, SALA CONVEGNI -
Ultimo utilizzo conosciuto: *(Quando è stato utilizzato l'ultima volta? Anno e tipo di utilizzo)*	2016
Motivi dell'abbandono: *(Fattori che hanno portato all'abbandono, es. crisi economica, spopolamento, cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi, catastrofi naturali, etc.)*	MANCANZA DI GESTORI OLTRE A CALAMITA' NATURALI (TROMBA D'ARIA)
Eventuali interventi di recupero precedenti: *(Sono stati fatti interventi di restauro o recupero? Se sì, descrivere brevemente)*	RIPRISTINO DELLA GUAINA DEL TETTO, SENZA PERO' RISOLVERE IL PROBLEMA -

4. ACCESSIBILITÀ E SICUREZZA

Accessibilità fisica al sito: *(Strade, sentieri, segnaletica, distanza dai centri abitati)*	SITO BEN ACCESSIBILE, STRADE.
Condizioni di sicurezza: *(Il sito è sicuro per l'ingresso? Ci sono pericoli evidenti? Esempio: rischio di crolli, presenza di amianto, strutture pericolanti)*	STRUTTURA PERICOLANTE
Possibilità di intervento: *(Vi sono limitazioni legali o pratiche per un eventuale intervento di recupero? Es. vincoli paesaggistici, mancanza di fondi, difficoltà logistiche, etc.)*	MANCANZA DI FONDI

5. POTENZIALITÀ DI VALORIZZAZIONE E INTERVENTO

Valore storico, culturale, architettonico o paesaggistico: *(Perché il sito è rilevante e merita attenzione? Es. valore storico locale, stile architettonico particolare, legame con eventi storici)*	/
Possibilità di recupero e riutilizzo: *(Descrivere se esistono possibilità di recuperare e riutilizzare il sito, come per esempio l'uso residenziale, culturale, turistico, etc.)*	USO RICETTIVO USO TURISTICO
Potenziali risorse per il recupero: *(Fonti di finanziamento, partenariati pubblici e privati, progetti già in corso, ecc.)*	/

6. INTERVENTI E PRIORITÀ

Interventi suggeriti: *(Suggerire eventuali azioni per il recupero o la protezione del sito, come il consolidamento strutturale, interventi di conservazione, attività di sensibilizzazione, etc.)*	RIFACIMENTO DEL TETTO E RIPRISTINO DEI LOCALI DANNEGGIATI DALLE INFILTRAZIONI -
Priorità di intervento: *(Bassa, media, alta)*	ALTA
Tempistiche suggerite: *(Indicazioni su tempi necessari per il recupero o la gestione del sito, se possibili)*	2 ANNI

7. SEZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Foto del sito	

3. Via Mascetta n. 16

Lo scopo di questa scheda di mappatura è di raccogliere informazioni sul patrimonio abbandonato, con l'intento di creare una banca dati a livello locale e regionale, facilitando azioni di valorizzazione, recupero e di gestione.

SCHEDA DI MAPPATURA DEL PATRIMONIO ABBANDONATO/SOTTOUTILIZZATO NELLE AREE INTERNE

1. INFORMAZIONI GENERALI

Codice identificativo: *(Assegnato al bene per facilitarne il tracciamento)*	3
Nome del sito/struttura: *(Nome storico, se esistente, o nome attribuito)*	IMMOBILE VIA MASCETTA 16
Localizzazione: ○ **Comune:** ○ **Provincia:** ○ **Regione:** ○ **Coordinate geografiche (latitudine/longitudine):** *(Per mappatura GIS)*	COLLEDIMACINE CHIETI ABRUZZO 42° 00' 13" N 14° 11' 02" E
Dati catastali	FOGLIO 8 PARTICELLA N° 656
Tipo di patrimonio: *(Es. edificio residenziale, edificio industriale, ecclesiastico, spazio aperto)*	EDIFICO RESIDENTIALE
Ambito edilizio	/
Superficie	90 m²

2. CARATTERISTICHE DEL BENE

Descrizione fisica: *(Breve descrizione dell'edificio o sito, ad esempio dimensioni, tipologia costruttiva, materiali utilizzati)*	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PRIVATA
Data di costruzione: *(Se conosciuta, o approssimazione)*	1960 CIRCA
Stato di conservazione: *(Descrivere il livello di degrado, possibili danni strutturali, mancata manutenzione)*	POSSIBILI DANNI STRUTTURALI
Proprietario attuale: *(Comune, privato, ente pubblico, sconosciuto)*	COMUNE DI COLLEDIMACINE
Stato giuridico del bene: *(In proprietà privata, pubblico, occupato, abbandonato)*	PROPRIETA' PUBBLICA

3. STORIA E UTILIZZO DEL PATRIMONIO

Funzione storica: *(Che ruolo aveva il bene nel passato? Es. abitazione, luogo di lavoro, chiesa, scuola, etc.)*	ABITAZIONE PRIVATA
Ultimo utilizzo conosciuto: *(Quando è stato utilizzato l'ultima volta? Anno e tipo di utilizzo)*	FINE ANNI 90
Motivi dell'abbandono: *(Fattori che hanno portato all'abbandono, es. crisi economica, spopolamento, cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi, catastrofi naturali, etc.)*	DECESSO PROPRIETARIA MANCANTA EREDI
Eventuali interventi di recupero precedenti: *(Sono stati fatti interventi di restauro o recupero? Se sì, descrivere brevemente)*	RECUPERO, RIFACIMENTO TOTALE

4. ACCESSIBILITÀ E SICUREZZA

Accessibilità fisica al sito: *(Strade, sentieri, segnaletica, distanza dai centri abitati)*	SITO BEN ACCESSIBILE, STRADE
Condizioni di sicurezza: *(Il sito è sicuro per l'ingresso? Ci sono pericoli evidenti? Esempio: rischio di crolli, presenza di amianto, strutture pericolanti)*	STRUTTURA PERICOLANTE
Possibilità di intervento: *(Vi sono limitazioni legali o pratiche per un eventuale intervento di recupero? Es. vincoli paesaggistici, mancanza di fondi, difficoltà logistiche, etc.)*	MANCANTA DI FONDI

5. POTENZIALITÀ DI VALORIZZAZIONE E INTERVENTO

Valore storico, culturale, architettonico o paesaggistico: *(Perché il sito è rilevante e merita attenzione? Es. valore storico locale, stile architettonico particolare, legame con eventi storici)*	/
Possibilità di recupero e riutilizzo: *(Descrivere se esistono possibilità di recuperare e riutilizzare il sito, come per esempio l'uso residenziale, culturale, turistico, etc.)*	USO TURISTICO USO CULTURALE
Potenziali risorse per il recupero: *(Fonti di finanziamento, partenariati pubblici e privati, progetti già in corso, ecc.)*	

6. INTERVENTI E PRIORITÀ

Interventi suggeriti: *(Suggerire eventuali azioni per il recupero o la protezione del sito, come il consolidamento strutturale, interventi di conservazione, attività di sensibilizzazione, etc.)*	RIFACIMENTO TOTALE DELL'IMMOBILE
Priorità di intervento: *(Bassa, media, alta)*	MEDIA
Tempistiche suggerite: *(Indicazioni su tempi necessari per il recupero o la gestione del sito, se possibili)*	2 ANNI

7. SEZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Foto del sito	

4. Alloggio popolare Via Mascetta n. 42

Lo scopo di questa scheda di mappatura è di raccogliere informazioni sul patrimonio abbandonato, con l'intento di creare una banca dati a livello locale e regionale, facilitando azioni di valorizzazione, recupero e di gestione.

SCHEDA DI MAPPATURA DEL PATRIMONIO ABBANDONATO/SOTTOUTILIZZATO NELLE AREE INTERNE

1. INFORMAZIONI GENERALI

Codice identificativo: *(Assegnato al bene per facilitarne il tracciamento)*	44
Nome del sito/struttura: *(Nome storico, se esistente, o nome attribuito)*	ALLOGGIO POPOLARE V. MASCETTA 42
Localizzazione:	
○ **Comune:**	COLLEDIMACINE
○ **Provincia:**	CHIETI
○ **Regione:**	ABRUZZO
○ **Coordinate geografiche (latitudine/longitudine):** *(Per mappatura GIS)*	41° 00' 05"N 14° 11' 58"E
Dati catastali	FOGLIO N° 8 PARTICELLA N° 1246
Tipo di patrimonio: *(Es. edificio residenziale, edificio industriale, ecclesiastico, spazio aperto)*	EDIFICIO RESIDENTIALE
Ambito edilizio	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Superficie	60 m²

2. CARATTERISTICHE DEL BENE

Descrizione fisica: *(Breve descrizione dell'edificio o sito, ad esempio dimensioni, tipologia costruttiva, materiali utilizzati)*	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Data di costruzione: *(Se conosciuta, o approssimazione)*	NEGLI ANNI 50
Stato di conservazione: *(Descrivere il livello di degrado, possibili danni strutturali, mancata manutenzione)*	MANCATA MANUTENTIONE
Proprietario attuale: *(Comune, privato, ente pubblico, sconosciuto)*	COMUNE DI COLLEDIMACINE
Stato giuridico del bene: *(In proprietà privata, pubblico, occupato, abbandonato)*	PROPRIETA' PUBBLICA

3. STORIA E UTILIZZO DEL PATRIMONIO

Funzione storica: *(Che ruolo aveva il bene nel passato? Es. abitazione, luogo di lavoro, chiesa, scuola, etc.)*	CASE POPOLARI
Ultimo utilizzo conosciuto: *(Quando è stato utilizzato l'ultima volta? Anno e tipo di utilizzo)*	FINO ANNI 90
Motivi dell'abbandono: *(Fattori che hanno portato all'abbandono, es. crisi economica, spopolamento, cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi, catastrofi naturali, etc.)*	ALLOGGIO IN ATTESA DI OCCUPAZIONE
Eventuali interventi di recupero precedenti: *(Sono stati fatti interventi di restauro o recupero? Se sì, descrivere brevemente)*	FINE ANNI 80 (TETTO, FACCIATA)

4. ACCESSIBILITÀ E SICUREZZA

Accessibilità fisica al sito: *(Strade, sentieri, segnaletica, distanza dai centri abitati)*	SITO BEN ACCESSIBILE. STRADE
Condizioni di sicurezza: *(Il sito è sicuro per l'ingresso? Ci sono pericoli evidenti? Esempio: rischio di crolli, presenza di amianto, strutture pericolanti)*	NO
Possibilità di intervento: *(Vi sono limitazioni legali o pratiche per un eventuale intervento di recupero? Es. vincoli paesaggistici, mancanza di fondi, difficoltà logistiche, etc.)*	MANCANZA DI FONDI

5. POTENZIALITÀ DI VALORIZZAZIONE E INTERVENTO

Valore storico, culturale, architettonico o paesaggistico: *(Perché il sito è rilevante e merita attenzione? Es. valore storico locale, stile architettonico particolare, legame con eventi storici)*	/
Possibilità di recupero e riutilizzo: *(Descrivere se esistono possibilità di recuperare e riutilizzare il sito, come per esempio l'uso residenziale, culturale, turistico, etc.)*	USO RESIDENTIALE
Potenziali risorse per il recupero: *(Fonti di finanziamento, partenariati pubblici e privati, progetti già in corso, ecc.)*	/

6. INTERVENTI E PRIORITÀ

Interventi suggeriti: *(Suggerire eventuali azioni per il recupero o la protezione del sito, come il consolidamento strutturale, interventi di conservazione, attività di sensibilizzazione, etc.)*	CONSOLIDAMENTO STRUTTURALE, AMMODERNAMENTO IMPIANTI E RISTRUTTURAZIONE DEGLI AMBIENTI.
Priorità di intervento: *(Bassa, media, alta)*	ALTA
Tempistiche suggerite: *(Indicazioni su tempi necessari per il recupero o la gestione del sito, se possibili)*	1 ANNO

7. SEZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Foto del sito	

5. Alloggio popolare Piazza Clemente di Leo snc, piano terra

Lo scopo di questa scheda di mappatura è di raccogliere informazioni sul patrimonio abbandonato, con l'intento di creare una banca dati a livello locale e regionale, facilitando azioni di valorizzazione, recupero e di gestione.

SCHEDA DI MAPPATURA DEL PATRIMONIO ABBANDONATO/SOTTOUTILIZZATO NELLE AREE INTERNE

1. INFORMAZIONI GENERALI

Codice identificativo: *(Assegnato al bene per facilitarne il tracciamento)*	(5)
Nome del sito/struttura: *(Nome storico, se esistente, o nome attribuito)*	ALLOGGIO POPOLARE P.ZZA CLEMENTE DI LEO SNC
Localizzazione:	
○ **Comune:**	COLLEDIMACINE
○ **Provincia:**	CHIETI
○ **Regione:**	ABRUZZO
○ **Coordinate geografiche (latitudine/longitudine):** *(Per mappatura GIS)*	41° 00' 13" N 14° 12' 00" E
Dati catastali	FOGLIO 8 PARTICELLA 763
Tipo di patrimonio: *(Es. edificio residenziale, edificio industriale, ecclesiastico, spazio aperto)*	EDIFICIO RESIDENTIALE
Ambito edilizio	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Superficie	60 m²

2. CARATTERISTICHE DEL BENE

Descrizione fisica: *(Breve descrizione dell'edificio o sito, ad esempio dimensioni, tipologia costruttiva, materiali utilizzati)*	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Data di costruzione: *(Se conosciuta, o approssimazione)*	NEGLI ANNI 50
Stato di conservazione: *(Descrivere il livello di degrado, possibili danni strutturali, mancata manutenzione)*	MANCATA MANUTENTIONE
Proprietario attuale: *(Comune, privato, ente pubblico, sconosciuto)*	COMUNE DI COLLEDIMACINE
Stato giuridico del bene: *(In proprietà privata, pubblico, occupato, abbandonato)*	PROPRIETA' PUBBLICA

3. STORIA E UTILIZZO DEL PATRIMONIO

Funzione storica: *(Che ruolo aveva il bene nel passato? Es. abitazione, luogo di lavoro, chiesa, scuola, etc.)*	CASE RURALARI
Ultimo utilizzo conosciuto: *(Quando è stato utilizzato l'ultima volta? Anno e tipo di utilizzo)*	FINE ANNI 90
Motivi dell'abbandono: *(Fattori che hanno portato all'abbandono, es. crisi economica, spopolamento, cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi, catastrofi naturali, etc.)*	ALLOGGIO IN ATTESA DI OCCUPAZIONE
Eventuali interventi di recupero precedenti: *(Sono stati fatti interventi di restauro o recupero? Se sì, descrivere brevemente)*	/

4. ACCESSIBILITÀ E SICUREZZA

Accessibilità fisica al sito: *(Strade, sentieri, segnaletica, distanza dai centri abitati)*	SITO BEN ACCESSIBILE. STRADE
Condizioni di sicurezza: *(Il sito è sicuro per l'ingresso? Ci sono pericoli evidenti? Esempio: rischio di crolli, presenza di amianto, strutture pericolanti)*	NO
Possibilità di intervento: *(Vi sono limitazioni legali o pratiche per un eventuale intervento di recupero? Es. vincoli paesaggistici, mancanza di fondi, difficoltà logistiche, etc.)*	MANCANZA DI FONDI

5. POTENZIALITÀ DI VALORIZZAZIONE E INTERVENTO

Valore storico, culturale, architettonico o paesaggistico: *(Perché il sito è rilevante e merita attenzione? Es. valore storico locale, stile architettonico particolare, legame con eventi storici)*	/
Possibilità di recupero e riutilizzo: *(Descrivere se esistono possibilità di recuperare e riutilizzare il sito, come per esempio l'uso residenziale, culturale, turistico, etc.)*	USO RESIDENTIALE
Potenziali risorse per il recupero: *(Fonti di finanziamento, partenariati pubblici e privati, progetti già in corso, ecc.)*	/

6. INTERVENTI E PRIORITÀ

Interventi suggeriti: *(Suggerire eventuali azioni per il recupero o la protezione del sito, come il consolidamento strutturale, interventi di conservazione, attività di sensibilizzazione, etc.)*	CONSOLIDAMENTO STRUTTURALE, AMMODERNAMENTO IMPIANTI E RISTRUTTURAZIONE DEGLI AMBIENTI.
Priorità di intervento: *(Bassa, media, alta)*	ALTA
Tempistiche suggerite: *(Indicazioni su tempi necessari per il recupero o la gestione del sito, se possibili)*	1 ANNO

7. SEZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Foto del sito	

6. Alloggio popolare Piazza Clemente di Leo snc, primo piano, lato montagna "Maiella"

Lo scopo di questa scheda di mappatura è di raccogliere informazioni sul patrimonio abbandonato, con l'intento di creare una banca dati a livello locale e regionale, facilitando azioni di valorizzazione, recupero e di gestione.

SCHEDA DI MAPPATURA DEL PATRIMONIO ABBANDONATO/SOTTOUTILIZZATO NELLE AREE INTERNE

1. INFORMAZIONI GENERALI

Codice identificativo: *(Assegnato al bene per facilitarne il tracciamento)*	(5)
Nome del sito/struttura: *(Nome storico, se esistente, o nome attribuito)*	ALLOGGIO POPOLARE P.ZZA CLEMENTE DI LEO SNC
Localizzazione:	
○ **Comune:**	COLLEDIMACINE
○ **Provincia:**	CHIETI
○ **Regione:**	ABRUZZO
○ **Coordinate geografiche (latitudine/longitudine):** *(Per mappatura GIS)*	41° 00' 13" N 14° 12' 00" E
Dati catastali	FOGLIO 8 PARTICELLA 763
Tipo di patrimonio: *(Es. edificio residenziale, edificio industriale, ecclesiastico, spazio aperto)*	EDIFICIO RESIDENTIALE
Ambito edilizio	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Superficie	40 m²

2. CARATTERISTICHE DEL BENE

Descrizione fisica: *(Breve descrizione dell'edificio o sito, ad esempio dimensioni, tipologia costruttiva, materiali utilizzati)*	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Data di costruzione: *(Se conosciuta, o approssimazione)*	NEGLI ANNI 50
Stato di conservazione: *(Descrivere il livello di degrado, possibili danni strutturali, mancata manutenzione)*	MANCATA MANUTENTIONE
Proprietario attuale: *(Comune, privato, ente pubblico, sconosciuto)*	COMUNE DI COLLEDIMACINE
Stato giuridico del bene: *(In proprietà privata, pubblico, occupato, abbandonato)*	PROPRIETA' PUBBLICA

3. STORIA E UTILIZZO DEL PATRIMONIO

Funzione storica: *(Che ruolo aveva il bene nel passato? Es. abitazione, luogo di lavoro, chiesa, scuola, etc.)*	CASE POPOLARI
Ultimo utilizzo conosciuto: *(Quando è stato utilizzato l'ultima volta? Anno e tipo di utilizzo)*	FINE ANNI 90
Motivi dell'abbandono: *(Fattori che hanno portato all'abbandono, es. crisi economica, spopolamento, cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi, catastrofi naturali, etc.)*	ALLOGGIO IN ATTESA DI OCCUPAZIONE
Eventuali interventi di recupero precedenti: *(Sono stati fatti interventi di restauro o recupero? Se sì, descrivere brevemente)*	/

4. ACCESSIBILITÀ E SICUREZZA

Accessibilità fisica al sito: *(Strade, sentieri, segnaletica, distanza dai centri abitati)*	SITO BEN ACCESSIBILE. STRADE
Condizioni di sicurezza: *(Il sito è sicuro per l'ingresso? Ci sono pericoli evidenti? Esempio: rischio di crolli, presenza di amianto, strutture pericolanti)*	NO
Possibilità di intervento: *(Vi sono limitazioni legali o pratiche per un eventuale intervento di recupero? Es. vincoli paesaggistici, mancanza di fondi, difficoltà logistiche, etc.)*	MANCANZA DI FONDI

5. POTENZIALITÀ DI VALORIZZAZIONE E INTERVENTO

Valore storico, culturale, architettonico o paesaggistico: *(Perché il sito è rilevante e merita attenzione? Es. valore storico locale, stile architettonico particolare, legame con eventi storici)*	/
Possibilità di recupero e riutilizzo: *(Descrivere se esistono possibilità di recuperare e riutilizzare il sito, come per esempio l'uso residenziale, culturale, turistico, etc.)*	USO RESIDENTIALE
Potenziali risorse per il recupero: *(Fonti di finanziamento, partenariati pubblici e privati, progetti già in corso, ecc.)*	/

6. INTERVENTI E PRIORITÀ

Interventi suggeriti: *(Suggerire eventuali azioni per il recupero o la protezione del sito, come il consolidamento strutturale, interventi di conservazione, attività di sensibilizzazione, etc.)*	CONSOLIDAMENTO STRUTTURALE, AMMODERNAMENTO IMPIANTI E RISTRUTTURAZIONE DEGLI AMBIENTI.
Priorità di intervento: *(Bassa, media, alta)*	ALTA
Tempistiche suggerite: *(Indicazioni su tempi necessari per il recupero o la gestione del sito, se possibili)*	1 ANNO

7. SEZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Foto del sito	

7. Alloggio popolare Piazza Clemente di Leo snc, primo piano, lato "Torricella Peligna"

Lo scopo di questa scheda di mappatura è di raccogliere informazioni sul patrimonio abbandonato, con l'intento di creare una banca dati a livello locale e regionale, facilitando azioni di valorizzazione, recupero e di gestione.

SCHEDA DI MAPPATURA DEL PATRIMONIO ABBANDONATO/SOTTOUTILIZZATO NELLE AREE INTERNE

1. INFORMAZIONI GENERALI

Codice identificativo: *(Assegnato al bene per facilitarne il tracciamento)*	7
Nome del sito/struttura: *(Nome storico, se esistente, o nome attribuito)*	ALLOGGIO POPOLARE P.zza CLEMENTE DI LEO SNC
Localizzazione:	
○ **Comune:**	COLLEDIMACINE
○ **Provincia:**	CHIETI
○ **Regione:**	ABRUZZO
○ **Coordinate geografiche (latitudine/longitudine):** *(Per mappatura GIS)*	42° 00' 13" N 14° 01' 00 E
Dati catastali	FOGLIO 8 PARTICELLA N° 763
Tipo di patrimonio: *(Es. edificio residenziale, edificio industriale, ecclesiastico, spazio aperto)*	EDIFICIO RESIDENTIALE
Ambito edilizio	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Superficie	60 m2

2. CARATTERISTICHE DEL BENE

Descrizione fisica: *(Breve descrizione dell'edificio o sito, ad esempio dimensioni, tipologia costruttiva, materiali utilizzati)*	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Data di costruzione: *(Se conosciuta, o approssimazione)*	NEGLI ANNI 50
Stato di conservazione: *(Descrivere il livello di degrado, possibili danni strutturali, mancata manutenzione)*	MANCATA MANUTENTIONE
Proprietario attuale: *(Comune, privato, ente pubblico, sconosciuto)*	COMUNE DI COLLEDIMACINE
Stato giuridico del bene: *(In proprietà privata, pubblico, occupato, abbandonato)*	PROPRIETA' PUBBLICA

3. STORIA E UTILIZZO DEL PATRIMONIO

Funzione storica: *(Che ruolo aveva il bene nel passato? Es. abitazione, luogo di lavoro, chiesa, scuola, etc.)*	CASE POPOLARI
Ultimo utilizzo conosciuto: *(Quando è stato utilizzato l'ultima volta? Anno e tipo di utilizzo)*	FINE ANNI 90
Motivi dell'abbandono: *(Fattori che hanno portato all'abbandono, es. crisi economica, spopolamento, cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi, catastrofi naturali, etc.)*	ALLOGGIO IN ATTESA DI OCCUPAZIONE
Eventuali interventi di recupero precedenti: *(Sono stati fatti interventi di restauro o recupero? Se sì, descrivere brevemente)*	/

4. ACCESSIBILITÀ E SICUREZZA

Accessibilità fisica al sito: *(Strade, sentieri, segnaletica, distanza dai centri abitati)*	SITO BEN ACCESSIBILE. STRADE
Condizioni di sicurezza: *(Il sito è sicuro per l'ingresso? Ci sono pericoli evidenti? Esempio: rischio di crolli, presenza di amianto, strutture pericolanti)*	NO
Possibilità di intervento: *(Vi sono limitazioni legali o pratiche per un eventuale intervento di recupero? Es. vincoli paesaggistici, mancanza di fondi, difficoltà logistiche, etc.)*	MANCANZA DI FONDI

5. POTENZIALITÀ DI VALORIZZAZIONE E INTERVENTO

Valore storico, culturale, architettonico o paesaggistico: *(Perché il sito è rilevante e merita attenzione? Es. valore storico locale, stile architettonico particolare, legame con eventi storici)*	/
Possibilità di recupero e riutilizzo: *(Descrivere se esistono possibilità di recuperare e riutilizzare il sito, come per esempio l'uso residenziale, culturale, turistico, etc.)*	USO RESIDENTIALE
Potenziali risorse per il recupero: *(Fonti di finanziamento, partenariati pubblici e privati, progetti già in corso, ecc.)*	/

6. INTERVENTI E PRIORITÀ

Interventi suggeriti: *(Suggerire eventuali azioni per il recupero o la protezione del sito, come il consolidamento strutturale, interventi di conservazione, attività di sensibilizzazione, etc.)*	CONSOLIDAMENTO STRUTTURALE, AMMODERNAMENTO IMPIANTI E RISTRUTTURAZIONE DEGLI AMBIENTI.
Priorità di intervento: *(Bassa, media, alta)*	ALTA
Tempistiche suggerite: *(Indicazioni su tempi necessari per il recupero o la gestione del sito, se possibili)*	1 ANNO

7. SEZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Foto del sito	

8. Alloggio popolare Piazza Clemente di Leo n. 5, primo piano, lato "Poste Italiane"

Lo scopo di questa scheda di mappatura è di raccogliere informazioni sul patrimonio abbandonato, con l'intento di creare una banca dati a livello locale e regionale, facilitando azioni di valorizzazione, recupero e di gestione.

SCHEDA DI MAPPATURA DEL PATRIMONIO ABBANDONATO/SOTTOUTILIZZATO NELLE AREE INTERNE

1. INFORMAZIONI GENERALI

Codice identificativo: *(Assegnato al bene per facilitarne il tracciamento)*	8
Nome del sito/struttura: *(Nome storico, se esistente, o nome attribuito)*	ALLOGGIO POPOLARE P.ZZA CLEMENTE DI LEO N° 5
Localizzazione:	
o **Comune:**	COLLEDIMACINE
o **Provincia:**	CHIETI
o **Regione:**	ABRUZZO
o **Coordinate geografiche (latitudine/longitudine):** *(Per mappatura GIS)*	42° 00' 11 N 14° 12' 00 E
Dati catastali	FOGLIO 8 PARTICELLA 765
Tipo di patrimonio: *(Es. edificio residenziale, edificio industriale, ecclesiastico, spazio aperto)*	EDIFICIO RESIDENTIALE
Ambito edilizio	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Superficie	m^2 40

2. CARATTERISTICHE DEL BENE

Descrizione fisica: *(Breve descrizione dell'edificio o sito, ad esempio dimensioni, tipologia costruttiva, materiali utilizzati)*	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Data di costruzione: *(Se conosciuta, o approssimazione)*	NEGLI ANNI 50
Stato di conservazione: *(Descrivere il livello di degrado, possibili danni strutturali, mancata manutenzione)*	MANCATA MANUTENTIONE
Proprietario attuale: *(Comune, privato, ente pubblico, sconosciuto)*	COMUNE DI COLLEDIMACINE
Stato giuridico del bene: *(In proprietà privata, pubblico, occupato, abbandonato)*	PROPRIETA' PUBBLICA

3. STORIA E UTILIZZO DEL PATRIMONIO

Funzione storica: *(Che ruolo aveva il bene nel passato? Es. abitazione, luogo di lavoro, chiesa, scuola, etc.)*	CASE POPOLARI
Ultimo utilizzo conosciuto: *(Quando è stato utilizzato l'ultima volta? Anno e tipo di utilizzo)*	FINE 2010
Motivi dell'abbandono: *(Fattori che hanno portato all'abbandono, es. crisi economica, spopolamento, cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi, catastrofi naturali, etc.)*	ALLOGGIO IN ATTESA DI OCCUPAZIONE
Eventuali interventi di recupero precedenti: *(Sono stati fatti interventi di restauro o recupero? Se sì, descrivere brevemente)*	/

4. ACCESSIBILITÀ E SICUREZZA

Accessibilità fisica al sito: *(Strade, sentieri, segnaletica, distanza dai centri abitati)*	SITO BEN ACCESSIBILE. STRADE
Condizioni di sicurezza: *(Il sito è sicuro per l'ingresso? Ci sono pericoli evidenti? Esempio: rischio di crolli, presenza di amianto, strutture pericolanti)*	NO
Possibilità di intervento: *(Vi sono limitazioni legali o pratiche per un eventuale intervento di recupero? Es. vincoli paesaggistici, mancanza di fondi, difficoltà logistiche, etc.)*	MANCANZA DI FONDI

5. POTENZIALITÀ DI VALORIZZAZIONE E INTERVENTO

Valore storico, culturale, architettonico o paesaggistico: *(Perché il sito è rilevante e merita attenzione? Es. valore storico locale, stile architettonico particolare, legame con eventi storici)*	/
Possibilità di recupero e riutilizzo: *(Descrivere se esistono possibilità di recuperare e riutilizzare il sito, come per esempio l'uso residenziale, culturale, turistico, etc.)*	USO RESIDENTIALE
Potenziali risorse per il recupero: *(Fonti di finanziamento, partenariati pubblici e privati, progetti già in corso, ecc.)*	/

6. INTERVENTI E PRIORITÀ

Interventi suggeriti: *(Suggerire eventuali azioni per il recupero o la protezione del sito, come il consolidamento strutturale, interventi di conservazione, attività di sensibilizzazione, etc.)*	CONSOLIDAMENTO STRUTTURALE, AMMODERNAMENTO IMPIANTI E RISTRUTTURAZIONE DEGLI AMBIENTI.
Priorità di intervento: *(Bassa, media, alta)*	ALTA
Tempistiche suggerite: *(Indicazioni su tempi necessari per il recupero o la gestione del sito, se possibili)*	1 ANNO

7. SEZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Foto del sito	

9. Alloggio popolare Piazza Clemente di Leo n. 7, primo piano, secondo alloggio

Lo scopo di questa scheda di mappatura è di raccogliere informazioni sul patrimonio abbandonato, con l'intento di creare una banca dati a livello locale e regionale, facilitando azioni di valorizzazione, recupero e di gestione.

SCHEDA DI MAPPATURA DEL PATRIMONIO ABBANDONATO/SOTTOUTILIZZATO NELLE AREE INTERNE

1. INFORMAZIONI GENERALI

Codice identificativo: *(Assegnato al bene per facilitarne il tracciamento)*	9
Nome del sito/struttura: *(Nome storico, se esistente, o nome attribuito)*	ALLOGGIO POPOLARE P.ZZA CLEMENTE DI LEO N°7
Localizzazione:	
○ **Comune:**	COLLEDIMACINE
○ **Provincia:**	CHIETI
○ **Regione:**	ABRUZZO
○ **Coordinate geografiche (latitudine/longitudine):** *(Per mappatura GIS)*	42° 00' NN 14° 12' 00 E
Dati catastali	FOGLIO 8 PARTICELLA N°765
Tipo di patrimonio: *(Es. edificio residenziale, edificio industriale, ecclesiastico, spazio aperto)*	EDIFICIO RESIDENTIALE
Ambito edilizio	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Superficie	60 m²

2. CARATTERISTICHE DEL BENE

Descrizione fisica: *(Breve descrizione dell'edificio o sito, ad esempio dimensioni, tipologia costruttiva, materiali utilizzati)*	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Data di costruzione: *(Se conosciuta, o approssimazione)*	NEGLI ANNI 50
Stato di conservazione: *(Descrivere il livello di degrado, possibili danni strutturali, mancata manutenzione)*	MANCATA MANUTENTIONE
Proprietario attuale: *(Comune, privato, ente pubblico, sconosciuto)*	COMUNE DI COLLEDIMACINE
Stato giuridico del bene: *(In proprietà privata, pubblico, occupato, abbandonato)*	PROPRIETA' PUBBLICA

3. STORIA E UTILIZZO DEL PATRIMONIO

Funzione storica: *(Che ruolo aveva il bene nel passato? Es. abitazione, luogo di lavoro, chiesa, scuola, etc.)*	CASE POPOLARI
Ultimo utilizzo conosciuto: *(Quando è stato utilizzato l'ultima volta? Anno e tipo di utilizzo)*	2023
Motivi dell'abbandono: *(Fattori che hanno portato all'abbandono, es. crisi economica, spopolamento, cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi, catastrofi naturali, etc.)*	ALLOGGIO IN ATTESA DI OCCUPAZIONE
Eventuali interventi di recupero precedenti: *(Sono stati fatti interventi di restauro o recupero? Se sì, descrivere brevemente)*	/

4. ACCESSIBILITÀ E SICUREZZA

Accessibilità fisica al sito: *(Strade, sentieri, segnaletica, distanza dai centri abitati)*	SITO BEN ACCESSIBILE, STRADE
Condizioni di sicurezza: *(Il sito è sicuro per l'ingresso? Ci sono pericoli evidenti? Esempio: rischio di crolli, presenza di amianto, strutture pericolanti)*	NO
Possibilità di intervento: *(Vi sono limitazioni legali o pratiche per un eventuale intervento di recupero? Es. vincoli paesaggistici, mancanza di fondi, difficoltà logistiche, etc.)*	MANCANZA DI FONDI

5. POTENZIALITÀ DI VALORIZZAZIONE E INTERVENTO

Valore storico, culturale, architettonico o paesaggistico: *(Perché il sito è rilevante e merita attenzione? Es. valore storico locale, stile architettonico particolare, legame con eventi storici)*	/
Possibilità di recupero e riutilizzo: *(Descrivere se esistono possibilità di recuperare e riutilizzare il sito, come per esempio l'uso residenziale, culturale, turistico, etc.)*	USO RESIDENTIALE
Potenziali risorse per il recupero: *(Fonti di finanziamento, partenariati pubblici e privati, progetti già in corso, ecc.)*	/

6. INTERVENTI E PRIORITÀ

Interventi suggeriti: *(Suggerire eventuali azioni per il recupero o la protezione del sito, come il consolidamento strutturale, interventi di conservazione, attività di sensibilizzazione, etc.)*	CONSOLIDAMENTO STRUTTURALE, AMMODERNAMENTO IMPIANTI E RISTRUTTURAZIONE DEGLI AMBIENTI.
Priorità di intervento: *(Bassa, media, alta)*	ALTA
Tempistiche suggerite: *(Indicazioni su tempi necessari per il recupero o la gestione del sito, se possibili)*	1 ANNO

7. SEZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Foto del sito	

10. Alloggio popolare Piazza Clemente di Leo n. 7, primo piano, terzo alloggio

Lo scopo di questa scheda di mappatura è di raccogliere informazioni sul patrimonio abbandonato, con l'intento di creare una banca dati a livello locale e regionale, facilitando azioni di valorizzazione, recupero e di gestione.

SCHEDA DI MAPPATURA DEL PATRIMONIO ABBANDONATO/SOTTOUTILIZZATO NELLE AREE INTERNE

1. INFORMAZIONI GENERALI

Codice identificativo: *(Assegnato al bene per facilitarne il tracciamento)*	10
Nome del sito/struttura: *(Nome storico, se esistente, o nome attribuito)*	ALLOGGIO POPOLARE P.ZZA CLEMENTE DI LEO N°7
Localizzazione:	
○ **Comune:**	COLLEDIMACINE
○ **Provincia:**	CHIETI
○ **Regione:**	ABRUZZO
○ **Coordinate geografiche (latitudine/longitudine):** *(Per mappatura GIS)*	42°00' 11"N 14°12' 00"E
Dati catastali	FOGLIO 8 PARTICELLA N°765
Tipo di patrimonio: *(Es. edificio residenziale, edificio industriale, ecclesiastico, spazio aperto)*	EDIFICIO RESIDENTIALE
Ambito edilizio	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Superficie	40 M2

2. CARATTERISTICHE DEL BENE

Descrizione fisica: *(Breve descrizione dell'edificio o sito, ad esempio dimensioni, tipologia costruttiva, materiali utilizzati)*	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Data di costruzione: *(Se conosciuta, o approssimazione)*	NEGLI ANNI 50
Stato di conservazione: *(Descrivere il livello di degrado, possibili danni strutturali, mancata manutenzione)*	MANCATA MANUTENTIONE
Proprietario attuale: *(Comune, privato, ente pubblico, sconosciuto)*	COMUNE DI COLLEDIMACINE
Stato giuridico del bene: *(In proprietà privata, pubblico, occupato, abbandonato)*	PROPRIETA' PUBBLICA

3. STORIA E UTILIZZO DEL PATRIMONIO

Funzione storica: *(Che ruolo aveva il bene nel passato? Es. abitazione, luogo di lavoro, chiesa, scuola, etc.)*	CASE POPOLARI
Ultimo utilizzo conosciuto: *(Quando è stato utilizzato l'ultima volta? Anno e tipo di utilizzo)*	2023
Motivi dell'abbandono: *(Fattori che hanno portato all'abbandono, es. crisi economica, spopolamento, cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi, catastrofi naturali, etc.)*	ALLOGGIO IN ATTESA DI OCCUPAZIONE
Eventuali interventi di recupero precedenti: *(Sono stati fatti interventi di restauro o recupero? Se sì, descrivere brevemente)*	/

4. ACCESSIBILITÀ E SICUREZZA

Accessibilità fisica al sito: *(Strade, sentieri, segnaletica, distanza dai centri abitati)*	SITO BEN ACCESSIBILE. STRADE
Condizioni di sicurezza: *(Il sito è sicuro per l'ingresso? Ci sono pericoli evidenti? Esempio: rischio di crolli, presenza di amianto, strutture pericolanti)*	NO
Possibilità di intervento: *(Vi sono limitazioni legali o pratiche per un eventuale intervento di recupero? Es. vincoli paesaggistici, mancanza di fondi, difficoltà logistiche, etc.)*	MANCANZA DI FONDI

5. POTENZIALITÀ DI VALORIZZAZIONE E INTERVENTO

Valore storico, culturale, architettonico o paesaggistico: *(Perché il sito è rilevante e merita attenzione? Es. valore storico locale, stile architettonico particolare, legame con eventi storici)*	/
Possibilità di recupero e riutilizzo: *(Descrivere se esistono possibilità di recuperare e riutilizzare il sito, come per esempio l'uso residenziale, culturale, turistico, etc.)*	USO ABITATIVO
Potenziali risorse per il recupero: *(Fonti di finanziamento, partenariati pubblici e privati, progetti già in corso, ecc.)*	/

6. INTERVENTI E PRIORITÀ

Interventi suggeriti: *(Suggerire eventuali azioni per il recupero o la protezione del sito, come il consolidamento strutturale, interventi di conservazione, attività di sensibilizzazione, etc.)*	CONSOLIDAMENTO STRUTTURALE, AMMODERNAMENTO IMPIANTI E RISTRUTTURAZIONE DEGLI AMBIENTI.
Priorità di intervento: *(Bassa, media, alta)*	ALTA
Tempistiche suggerite: *(Indicazioni su tempi necessari per il recupero o la gestione del sito, se possibili)*	1 ANNO

7. SEZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Foto del sito	

11. Alloggio popolare Piazza Clemente di Leo n. 6

Lo scopo di questa scheda di mappatura è di raccogliere informazioni sul patrimonio abbandonato, con l'intento di creare una banca dati a livello locale e regionale, facilitando azioni di valorizzazione, recupero e di gestione.

SCHEDA DI MAPPATURA DEL PATRIMONIO ABBANDONATO/SOTTOUTILIZZATO NELLE AREE INTERNE

1. INFORMAZIONI GENERALI

Codice identificativo: *(Assegnato al bene per facilitarne il tracciamento)*	11
Nome del sito/struttura: *(Nome storico, se esistente, o nome attribuito)*	ALLOGGIO POPOLARE P.zza CLEMENTE DI LEO N° 6
Localizzazione:	
○ **Comune:**	COLLEDIMACINE
○ **Provincia:**	CHIETI
○ **Regione:**	ABRUZZO
○ **Coordinate geografiche (latitudine/longitudine):** *(Per mappatura GIS)*	42°00'12"N 14°11'59"E
Dati catastali	40 m²
Tipo di patrimonio: *(Es. edificio residenziale, edificio industriale, ecclesiastico, spazio aperto)*	EDIFICIO RESIDENTIALE
Ambito edilizio	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Superficie	

2. CARATTERISTICHE DEL BENE

Descrizione fisica: *(Breve descrizione dell'edificio o sito, ad esempio dimensioni, tipologia costruttiva, materiali utilizzati)*	EDILIZIA RESIDENTIALE PUBBLICA
Data di costruzione: *(Se conosciuta, o approssimazione)*	NEGLI ANNI 50
Stato di conservazione: *(Descrivere il livello di degrado, possibili danni strutturali, mancata manutenzione)*	MANCATA MANUTENTIONE
Proprietario attuale: *(Comune, privato, ente pubblico, sconosciuto)*	COMUNE DI COLLEDIMACINE
Stato giuridico del bene: *(In proprietà privata, pubblico, occupato, abbandonato)*	PROPRIETA' PUBBLICA

3. STORIA E UTILIZZO DEL PATRIMONIO

Funzione storica: *(Che ruolo aveva il bene nel passato? Es. abitazione, luogo di lavoro, chiesa, scuola, etc.)*	CASE POPOLARI
Ultimo utilizzo conosciuto: *(Quando è stato utilizzato l'ultima volta? Anno e tipo di utilizzo)*	2020
Motivi dell'abbandono: *(Fattori che hanno portato all'abbandono, es. crisi economica, spopolamento, cambiamenti nei modelli produttivi, catastrofi naturali, etc.)*	ALLOGGIO IN ATTESA DI OCCUPAZIONE
Eventuali interventi di recupero precedenti: *(Sono stati fatti interventi di restauro o recupero? Se sì, descrivere brevemente)*	/

4. ACCESSIBILITÀ E SICUREZZA

Accessibilità fisica al sito: *(Strade, sentieri, segnaletica, distanza dai centri abitati)*	SITO BEN ACCESSIBILE. STRADE
Condizioni di sicurezza: *(Il sito è sicuro per l'ingresso? Ci sono pericoli evidenti? Esempio: rischio di crolli, presenza di amianto, strutture pericolanti)*	NO
Possibilità di intervento: *(Vi sono limitazioni legali o pratiche per un eventuale intervento di recupero? Es. vincoli paesaggistici, mancanza di fondi, difficoltà logistiche, etc.)*	MANCANZA DI FONDI

5. POTENZIALITÀ DI VALORIZZAZIONE E INTERVENTO

Valore storico, culturale, architettonico o paesaggistico: *(Perché il sito è rilevante e merita attenzione? Es. valore storico locale, stile architettonico particolare, legame con eventi storici)*	/
Possibilità di recupero e riutilizzo: *(Descrivere se esistono possibilità di recuperare e riutilizzare il sito, come per esempio l'uso residenziale, culturale, turistico, etc.)*	USO ABITATIVO
Potenziali risorse per il recupero: *(Fonti di finanziamento, partenariati pubblici e privati, progetti già in corso, ecc.)*	/

6. INTERVENTI E PRIORITÀ

Interventi suggeriti: *(Suggerire eventuali azioni per il recupero o la protezione del sito, come il consolidamento strutturale, interventi di conservazione, attività di sensibilizzazione, etc.)*	CONSOLIDAMENTO STRUTTURALE, AMMODERNAMENTO IMPIANTI E RISTRUTTURAZIONE DEGLI AMBIENTI.
Priorità di intervento: *(Bassa, media, alta)*	ALTA
Tempistiche suggerite: *(Indicazioni su tempi necessari per il recupero o la gestione del sito, se possibili)*	1 ANNO

7. SEZIONE FOTOGRAFICA

Foto del sito	

SEZIONE D – ALLEGATI PROGETTUALI

Abaco degli scenari tipo di riuso

D1

L'abaco fornisce alle amministrazioni un quadro di riferimento che traduce i diversi livelli di intervento (Capp. 5 e 8) in quattro scenari tipo, riferiti alle situazioni più ricorrenti del patrimonio dell'area, proponendo un repertorio di prime ipotesi da verificare caso per caso sulla base dei dati del censimento. Ogni scenario indica il tipo di patrimonio, le possibili funzioni, l'approccio tecnico, il modello di gestione e le condizioni necessarie per la sua attuazione.

Scenario S1. Edificio pubblico dismesso (ex scuola, ex municipio, ex ambulatorio)
Funzioni compatibili. Servizi di prossimità a gestione condivisa (salute di comunità, sportelli, spazi civici); spazi di lavoro remoto e coworking; residenza temporanea per lavoratori e studenti; combinazioni multifunzionali.
Approccio. Riuso adattivo pieno: ridistribuzione flessibile degli interni, adeguamento impiantistico ed energetico, soluzioni reversibili a secco, eventuali addizioni riconoscibili; nessuna istanza conservativa oltre il decoro.
Gestione e condizioni. Concessione a Enti del Terzo Settore o gestione associata tra comuni; condizioni abilitanti: soggetto gestore con capitale sociale progettuale, bacino d'utenza intercomunale, costi energetici sostenibili.

Scenario S2. Edificio storico in tessuto consolidato con valore identitario
Funzioni compatibili. Residenzialità stabile (anche in risposta al disagio abitativo); ospitalità leggera integrata nel paese; funzioni culturali e comunitarie al piano terra.
Approccio. Recupero rispettoso dei caratteri tipologici e materici ma aperto a trasformazioni funzionali e prestazionali sostanziali; conservazione degli elementi notevoli censiti (sez. 8 della scheda).
Gestione e condizioni. Comodati e concessioni di lungo periodo con vincolo di destinazione; patti con la proprietà privata frammentata ove necessario; condizioni: domanda abitativa verificata, servizi minimi raggiungibili, accompagnamento tecnico sovracomunale.

Scenario S3. Manufatto rurale o produttivo dismesso
Funzioni compatibili. Filiere locali (trasformazione agroalimentare, laboratori artigiani, spazi per la zootecnia estensiva); ricovero attrezzature e servizi all'agricoltura; presidi per la fruizione escursionistica (con riferimento ai capitali documentati nell'Atlante: riserve, cascate, grotte, siti archeologici).
Approccio. Riuso adattivo con criteri di economia circolare: strutture leggere interne, impianti minimi, reimpiego di materiali; predisposizione alla riusabilità futura.
Gestione e condizioni. Convenzioni con imprese e cooperative locali; condizioni: filiera attiva, quadro proprietario risolto.

Scenario S4. Abbandono irreversibile (ruderi, crolli, incompiuti irrecuperabili)
Funzioni compatibili. Messa in sicurezza; demolizione selettiva con recupero dei materiali (il costruito come giacimento); rimozione dei manufatti irrecuperabili e ripristino del suolo, favorendo la rinaturalizzazione e la restituzione di spazio ai processi ecologici, in coerenza con i principi della *Nature Restoration Law*.
Approccio. Interventi minimi orientati alla sicurezza, alla documentazione preventiva e al recupero dei materiali; nei casi di irreversibile perdita di valore d'uso e di recuperabilità, rimozione del costruito e ripristino delle condizioni naturali del sito.
Gestione e condizioni. Regia pubblica; condizioni: priorità di sicurezza dichiarata dal censimento, copertura dei costi di messa in sicurezza e demolizione, valutazione del potenziale di rinaturalizzazione dell'area.

Tavola D1.1. Matrice scenari / condizioni abilitanti

Condizione abilitante	S1	S2	S3	S4
Capitale sociale progettuale	essenziale	alta	alta	bassa
Domanda verificata (uso/abitativa/di filiera)	alta	essenziale	essenziale	—
Scala intercomunale	essenziale	media	media	media
Risoluzione del quadro proprietario	bassa (patrimonio comunale)	essenziale	alta	essenziale
Supporto pubblico come abilitatore	alta	alta	media	essenziale

SEZIONE D - ALLEGATI PROGETTUALI

Proposta operativa del Patto per il Patrimonio Dismesso

D2

Il testo-tipo formalizza la proposta conclusiva della tesi (Cap. 9) in uno schema di accordo direttamente adattabile dalle pubbliche amministrazioni, il riferimento giuridico è costituito degli accordi tra pubbliche amministrazioni (art. 15, L. 241/1990) e degli accordi di programma.

Premesse
Considerato che il patrimonio edilizio abbandonato e sottoutilizzato delle aree interne costituisce, a un tempo, un costo pubblico latente e una risorsa per le strategie di rigenerazione; che l'abbandono è esito di processi sistemici affrontabili con strumenti mirati; che nessuna politica è possibile senza una base conoscitiva standardizzata e aggiornata; che i comuni interessati non dispongono singolarmente delle capacità necessarie; vista l'esperienza di censimento condotta nell'area Basso Sangro-Trigno; le Parti convengono quanto segue.

Art. 1 – Finalità
Il Patto istituisce un sistema permanente e multilivello di conoscenza, priorità e attivazione del patrimonio pubblico dismesso, con l'obiettivo di trasformarlo da criticità diffusa in leva di rigenerazione territoriale.

Art. 2 - Impegni dei Comuni e delle Unioni
Le parti si impegnano ad adottare il kit metodologico e a completare il censimento del patrimonio pubblico entro dodici mesi dall'adesione e aggiornarlo annualmente; deliberare i criteri di priorità; garantire la restituzione pubblica; conferire i dati al livello regionale. Le Unioni assicurano il supporto tecnico ai comuni sotto i mille abitanti.

Art. 3 - Impegni della Regione
Istituire e gestire l'osservatorio regionale; costituire un fondo pluriennale dedicato all'attivazione degli immobili prioritari, con criterio di riparto legato alla qualità del censimento e agli esiti; fornire accompagnamento tecnico; adottare standard regionali coordinati con il tracciato dati.

Art. 4 - Impegni del livello nazionale
Promuovere la definizione di una cornice normativa del patrimonio dismesso, inclusi standard tecnici differenziati per il riuso del patrimonio privo di tutela; assicurare il raccordo con SNAI/PSNAI e con gli strumenti vigenti; riconoscere il censimento standardizzato quale requisito premiale nell'accesso alle risorse nazionali.

Art. 5 - Criteri di priorità
Le risorse del Patto sono destinate secondo criteri espliciti e pubblici: rischio per la pubblica incolumità; grado di dismissione (privilegiando la dismissione recente); domanda verificata; rapporto costo/superficie riattivabile; valore identitario; equilibrio territoriale tra sub-ambiti.

Art. 6 – Partecipazione
Ogni comune aderente attiva un canale permanente di segnalazione e almeno un momento annuale di restituzione pubblica; le comunità possono proporre progetti di gestione ai sensi del D.Lgs. 117/2017 e s.m.i..

Art. 7 – Monitoraggio
Il monitoraggio è affidato all'osservatorio sulla base del set di indicatori, gli esiti sono pubblicati annualmente.

Art. 8 - Durata e revisione
Durata: un ciclo di programmazione (7 anni), con revisione triennale. L'adesione di nuovi comuni è sempre possibile alle medesime condizioni.

Cronoprogramma di attivazione

Fase	Contenuti
Fase 1 (mesi 1-12)	Sottoscrizione; formazione dei tecnici; censimenti comunali con supporto delle Unioni; attivazione dell'osservatorio.
Fase 2 (mesi 12-24)	Consolidamento della banca dati d'area; deliberazione delle priorità; selezione e avvio dei progetti pilota (uno per sub-ambito).
Fase 3 (dal mese 24)	Attuazione a regime; aggiornamento annuale; valutazione triennale degli esiti e revisione dei criteri.

SEZIONE D - ALLEGATI PROGETTUALI

Modello di osservatorio regionale e set di indicatori

D3

L'osservatorio è lo strumento permanente che salda la scala micro del censimento comunale con la scala regionale della programmazione, integrando la proposta di osservatorio dell'abitare avanzata da Carbonara, Mastrolonardo e Lualdi (2025) con la base informativa prodotta dal Patto.

Struttura operativa. I Comuni curano la rilevazione e l'aggiornamento annuale dei dati. Le Unioni svolgono il controllo di qualità, forniscono supporto tecnico e aggregano le informazioni a livello sovracomunale. La Regione consolida i dati, li integra con le fonti ufficiali (IstatData, catasto e banche dati regionali), pubblica gli open data e redige un rapporto annuale. Il sistema prevede un flusso bidirezionale: oltre alla trasmissione dei dati ai livelli superiori, ogni livello restituisce elaborazioni e analisi a supporto delle attività dei livelli inferiori.

Tavola D3.1. Set di indicatori

Indicatore	Definizione	Fonte	Cadenza
Patrimonio censito	N. immobili e mq censiti / totale patrimonio pubblico dell'ente	censimenti	annuale
Indice di dismissione	Quota del patrimonio pubblico in stato di abbandono (per grado)	censimenti	annuale
Unità riattivate	N. immobili riportati a uso stabile nell'anno, per funzione	censimenti + progetti	annuale
Costo per unità riattivata	Spesa pubblica complessiva / unità effettivamente riattivate (indicatore di esito)	progetti + bilanci	annuale
Tasso di non occupazione abitativa	Abitazioni non occupate / totale (dal Censimento permanente)	IstatData	censuaria
Dinamica demografica	Variazione media annua e saldo migratorio per comune	ISTAT	annuale
Vitalità territoriale	Indice composito: servizi presenti, tempi di accesso al polo, imprese attive	fonti miste	biennale
Disagio abitativo sottotraccia	Domande abitative insoddisfatte / patrimonio disponibile riattivabile	osservatorio	biennale
Partecipazione	Segnalazioni della comunità ricevute e processate; restituzioni pubbliche svolte	comuni	annuale
Durabilità degli usi	Quota di immobili riattivati ancora in uso a 3 e 5 anni	osservatorio	triennale

SEZIONE E - ALLEGATI DOCUMENTALI

Rassegna dei casi studio nazionali di riuso del patrimonio abbandonato

E1

La rassegna documenta otto esperienze italiane rappresentative delle quattro famiglie di riuso analizzate nel Capitolo 5, con finalità comparativa: per ciascun caso sono indicati il patrimonio interessato, i promotori, il modello di intervento e gli elementi critici, in funzione della matrice delle condizioni abilitanti.

Riuso a base sociale

Succiso (Ventasso, RE), Cooperativa di comunità Valle dei Cavalieri. Frazione appenninica rimasta senza servizi; la cooperativa nata dagli abitanti ha riattivato ex edifici pubblici e commerciali integrando bar-emporio, ristorazione, agriturismo, servizi. Caso fondativo del modello italiano di cooperativa di comunità. Condizioni chiave: capitale sociale progettuale, multifunzionalità; criticità: dipendenza dal nucleo promotore.

Melpignano (LE); Cooperativa di comunità. Cooperativa promossa con il comune, nota per il fotovoltaico diffuso sui tetti e per servizi di comunità; mostra il ruolo dell'ente locale come abilitatore.
Condizioni chiave: alleanza pubblico-comunità; criticità: replicabilità legata alla qualità amministrativa.

Riuso a base turistica

Santo Stefano di Sessanio (AQ), Sextantio, albergo diffuso. Recupero filologico a fini ricettivi di fascia alta. Riferimento internazionale del modello e, insieme, caso-limite discusso nella tesi: concentrazione proprietaria esterna e rischio di scenografia senza abitanti.
Condizioni chiave: patrimonio integro, investitore dedicato; criticità: esclusione della residenzialità.

Castel del Giudice (IS), Borgotufi e filiere. Comune dell'alto Molise contermine all'area di studio: albergo diffuso ricavato dagli edifici rurali (Borgotufi), ex scuola convertita in RSA, meleto biologico di comunità su terreni abbandonati. Esempio di strategia integrata promossa da un micro-comune.
Condizioni chiave: regia pubblica continuativa, partenariati con residenti ed emigrati; criticità: dipendenza dalla leadership locale.

Riuso a base culturale e creativa

Favara (AG), Farm Cultural Park. Riattivazione culturale privata di un comparto storico degradato (i "sette cortili") divenuta attrattore internazionale; documenta capacità rigenerativa e, insieme, i rischi di gentrificazione culturale discussi nel Capitolo 5.
Condizioni chiave: promotori con capitale culturale e reti; criticità: ricadute sull'abitare ordinario.

Grottole (MT), Wonder Grottole. Riuso di case del centro storico con progetti di comunità digitale, residenzialità temporanea e formazione, con visibilità internazionale. Mostra il potenziale delle reti globali per micro-borghi. Condizioni chiave: localismo aperto; criticità: consolidamento oltre il ciclo dei progetti.

Riuso a base produttiva

Rovereto (TN), Progetto Manifattura. Ex complesso manifatturiero tabacchicolo dismesso, recuperato come polo dedicato alla produzione contemporanea, all'innovazione e alle imprese nei settori della green economy e delle tecnologie sostenibili. Il progetto rappresenta un modello di riuso produttivo in cui un grande patrimonio industriale storico viene trasformato in una piattaforma per nuove filiere economiche, mantenendo il valore spaziale e identitario del luogo. Il caso evidenzia il ruolo della regia pubblica e della capacità di costruire un ecosistema produttivo attorno a un patrimonio recuperato.
Condizioni chiave: patrimonio industriale di grande dimensione e riconoscibilità; investimento pubblico strutturante; presenza di nuove filiere economiche compatibili. Criticità: complessità gestionale; costi di recupero e adeguamento; dipendenza dalla capacità di attrarre imprese e competenze.

Taranta Peligna (CH), patrimonio proto-industriale laniero come infrastruttura per nuove economie locali. Caso interno all'area di studio: il sistema delle manifatture laniere lungo l'Aventino costituisce un patrimonio produttivo dismesso caratterizzato da edifici, infrastrutture idrauliche e memoria del lavoro. Il caso rappresenta il giacimento-tipo che la metodologia intende intercettare: strutture nate per una produzione storica che possono essere riattivate attraverso nuove filiere produttive, artigianali o ibride, integrando memoria industriale e nuove economie territoriali.
Condizioni chiave: riconoscibilità del patrimonio; presenza di competenze locali; capacità di costruire partenariati e nuove filiere.

Matrice trasversale

Condizione abilitante	Sociale	Turistico	Culturale	Produttivo
Capitale sociale progettuale	essenziale	media	essenziale	media
Multifunzionalità dell'offerta	essenziale	alta	media	bassa
Localismo aperto	alta	alta	essenziale	alta
Supporto pubblico abilitatore	alta	media	media	media
Rischi documentati	dipendenza dai promotori	turistificazione, scenografia	gentrificazione culturale	shock di filiera

At the opening of the Bibliography and online sources *Tree and Boat Mast*, Seefeldquai, Zurich, Switzerland.
Photograph of M. Kenna, 2013

At the opening of the Glossary. *Railway Lines in Snow*, Quarto Santa Chiara, Palena, Abruzzo, Italy.
Photograph of M. Kenna, 2016

At the opening of the List of Figures *Bruce Tree*, Torridon, Western Highlands, Scotland.
Photograph of M. Kenna, 2015

At the opening of the Appendix *Tree and Ladder*, Capestrano, Abruzzo, Italy.
Photograph of M. Kenna, 2015