
Policy for SDG Localization: the Italian experience

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Background paper



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BACKGROUND PAPER

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SDG Localization in the Covid19 era

In the Covid19 and post-Covid19 era, the capacity of local and national systems to face the intersection between vulnerability, inequalities, and unsustainability will define the future course of development (UNDP, 2020a). Indeed, the Covid19 pandemic is unleashing a systemic human development crisis, affecting health, economic and broad social dimensions of development and potentially eroding gains accumulated over decades (UNDP, 2020b)

In particular, the pandemic is laying bare and widening the structural inequalities that exist within and among countries, not only for the most vulnerable groups of people but also for vulnerable territories, threatening both social and territorial cohesion. Moreover, the pandemic is making evident the interconnections between the social, economic and environmental spheres, alerting us to the importance of achieving the SDGs as the overarching framework for local and national action and international cooperation in the wake of Covid19 (Sachs et al., 2020).

Therefore, the current state of emergency offers the opportunity to place transformative resilience, social cohesion and environmental consciousness firmly at the centre stage of decision-making processes. In this scenario, we must capitalize on the opportunities to 'Build Forward Better' by unequivocally standing for a normative vision of Sustainable Human Development (SHD) to promote peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet based on four pillars: Equity and cohesion for all; Participation and empowerment of citizens and communities; Sustainability of our ecological and socio-economic systems, Productivity and efficiency (Haq, 1995).

In this scenario, the local level proves to be fundamental not only for response and recovery strategies to Covid19, but also to plan for life after the pandemic (OECD, 2020a) pairing economic recovery with social inclusiveness and environmental sustainability. For these reasons, the localization of SDGs becomes even more relevant in the Covid19 and post-Covid19 era. It helps to frame priorities, to align levels of governance, to set targets and to monitor real progress towards sustainable development. All in all, it offers a useful approach to frame the consequences of the pandemic through a people-centred and place-based perspective to Sustainable Human Development (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014; OECD, 2020a).

Social economy and cohesion policies as drivers for SDG Localization

In this scenario, the centrality of initiatives of social and solidarity economy (SSE) and the relevance of policies for social and territorial cohesion (STC) have gained momentum as driving forces for more sustainable and inclusive recovery processes in the framework of SDG implementation. Indeed, they contribute to reconciling value-generation and innovation with inclusiveness and environmental protection, in order to achieve shared prosperity and human flourishing leaving no one behind.

SSE organizations and their initiatives have specific features which make them particularly suitable as drivers for SDG localization processes, especially within integrated local systems. Indeed, SSE organisations put social and environmental concerns at the heart of their business model, prioritising social impact over profit maximisation. They are driven by a mission of serving the common good, protecting the general interest and increasing individual and community welfare. All in all, SSE organizations are among the main actors which prove to be of critical importance in the process of keeping together the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) at the local level.

STC aims at ensuring the welfare and basic human capabilities for all members and social groups within a country, reducing the disparities among better-off and lagging territories that are hampering access to rights for all, opportunities for personal development and upward social mobility. This is particularly evident and relevant in the current pandemic times, as inequalities, different forms of exclusions, power imbalances and vulnerabilities are most immediately experienced by people in the local communities and territories where they live. All in all, social and territorial cohesion is both a desirable end and a fundamental means to Sustainable Human Development at the local level.

SSE and STC can be combined and interlinked to effectively enhance SDG localization as part of a territorial ecosystem, and particularly to counter the effects of exclusionary and unsustainable development outcomes that have been exacerbated by the pandemic. Taken together, they shape not only the provision of goods and services but also the achievement of territorial functionings in the four pillars of Sustainable Human Development (SHD): Equity and cohesion; Participation and empowerment; Sustainability; Productivity and efficiency. Moreover, they can enhance the transformative resilience of local systems and entail a real process of institutional change, which involves reshaping political incentives to continuously nurture collective action and agency for SDG localization. In other words, SSE and STC together act as catalysts of a circular virtuous process through which – grounding on the creation and re-creation of socio-economic value, as well as on the enhancement of people's agency and empowerment – they are capable of transforming territorial inputs (e.g., resources, capacities, relations) into final SHD outcomes.

Participatory governance mechanisms and strategic integrated planning can further enhance this virtuous process, by strengthening the connections and interlinkages between SSE initiatives and STC policies through information sharing, partnerships to harness new or underused (local and external) endowments and resources, and identification of joint solutions to local needs.

The Italian approach to social economy and cohesion policy

In this regard, Italy has a long-lasting experience both in fostering social economy as well as implementing cohesion policy in its own territories in order to foster Sustainable Human Development at the local level.

Indeed, Italy is nowadays globally recognized as one of the countries where SSE is more developed, thanks to i) an outstanding number and array of SSE organizations, ii) the gradual introduction of a solid legal and policy framework, iii) a strong connection with local communities reinforced by multi-stakeholder governance processes, and iv) a rich enabling ecosystem that plays a key role in strengthening and innovating SSE contribution to social, economic and human development. Such key distinctive features enhance the potential for the SSE sector in Italy to contribute to the localization of the SDGs by understanding the needs of the local community and interacting with the different actors of the territory to co-create a shared vision of Sustainable Human Development and concrete actions to implement it.

Also, Italy has a relevant tradition in designing and implementing cohesion strategies, policies and initiatives, due to the presence of strong social and regional disparities and an enduring North-South divide. Indeed, social and territorial cohesion are strongly embedded in the Italian Constitution, which explicitly embraces a Sustainable Human Development perspective to set an institutional architecture pursuing the collective mission of equality of opportunities for citizens in all areas of the country. The Italian long-lasting tradition towards STC is also coupled with the efforts of the European Union in reducing the significant imbalances that exist at all levels. Over the years, this has led to a distinctive Italian approach to social and territorial cohesion based on a) integration between interventions on local economic development processes, essential services and infrastructures, regeneration processes, and governance capacity-building; b) strong local leadership and responsibilities for both strategic programming and implementation played by LRGs; c) whole-of-society approach in both strategic programming and implementation to gather tangible and intangible resources, efforts and responsibilities within local communities; d) openness to public debate and scrutiny to enrich the knowledge base on both local problems and solutions and to ensure collective mobilization towards shared goals. This approach contributes to nurture and sustain societal alliances at the local and

community level among public, private and social actors, in order to foster an enabling environment for the promotion of collective well-being in all places, thus contributing to SDG localization.

All in all, Italy's national and local experiences on both SSE and STC are rather unique and can constitute a useful reference for other countries and places to find their own routes in introducing or consolidating relevant models and practices.

The identification of relevant case-studies and the design of Policy Guidelines for experience-sharing and peer-to-peer learning

In a world looking for (and needing) innovative and tailored approaches to design and implement appropriate recovery and transformative strategies for the post-Covid19 era at all levels, experience-sharing and peer-to-peer learning appear extremely important, especially for SDG localization. The diffusion of good practices is a key mechanism ensuring that good ideas can inspire as many relevant actors as possible and can create a multiplicative global effect on local communities. For this reason, this study identifies 6 case-studies that are exemplary of the Italian approach to SSE and STC as drivers for SDG localization, according to a set of 8 selection criteria: Capacity to catalyse SDG localization; Focus on specific vulnerable groups / communities / territories; Systemic change; Multi-actor processes and dynamics; Multi-level territorial processes and dynamics; Institutionalization; Social / transformative resilience; Potential replicability.

Therefore, the following case-studies can potentially inspire similar practices and showcase replicable models in other countries.

The Consortium "Sale della Terra" is a commendable model of consortium of cooperatives contributing to maximize territorial social impact, by adopting an overarching and systemic development approach and by leveraging more resources as compared with a single social cooperative. The ensemble of coordinated and coherent actions by a multitude of territorial organizations pursuing a strong and shared social mission generates a potential for systemic and innovative change in the local economic, social and welfare systems as a whole.

The social enterprise "Quid" adopts an alternative vision and strategy to the mainstream market and social logics, a model where what the traditional market leaves behind (i.e., discarded materials/commodities and by-products, as well as people belonging to a socially disadvantaged category or at risk of social exclusion) becomes the starting point for a new economic, social and environmental paradigm.

The Messina Community Foundation offers an interesting model of community foundation. In fact, in order to guarantee the sustainability of its human development policy, it invests in productive economies with a constant entrepreneurial mindset in order to catalyse and promote self-sustaining systems and, therefore, multiplying its sustainability effect and social and economic impact.

The Strategy “Milk Mountain” for the Emilian Apennines is exemplary of a model of designing and implementing a local development strategy for an inner and fragile area by leveraging the valorisation of typical products with high value-added and by integrating it with the upgrading and renewal of public services for citizens and communities.

The Local Action Group “Maiella Verde” is an illustrative example of the application of the LEADER / Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach in Italy, which aims at mobilising and involving rural communities to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. This approach relies on Local Action Groups as political and technical bodies that are able to tie the local partnership of actors with the managers and technical team in charge of designing and implementing a local strategy for rural development.

The SIBaTer project is a praiseworthy model of institutional upgrading for social and territorial cohesion in Italy. On the one hand, it acts to improve the administrative capacity of municipalities in regard to the competences assigned to them by the law. On the other hand, it fosters the creation of a favourable environment for the generation of community / youth entrepreneurship proposals aiming at the valorisation of abandoned lands and assets.

The in-depth analysis of each case-study is translated into 6 Policy Guidelines [[available here](#)], aimed at inspiring the adoption of similar models of SSE and STC by LRGs and local actors in emerging countries, counting also on the support by UN or development partner projects. These Policy Guidelines go far beyond a simple descriptive approach, in favour of an in-depth analytical investigation of the **key determinants for the effective implementation and replicability** of selected practices. The latter, indeed, showcase illustrative examples of ‘complex’ and integrated territorial dynamics fostering social cohesion and promoting inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic development, thus supporting the localization of the 2030 Agenda.

INTRODUCTION

In the Covid19 and post-Covid19 era, the capacity of local and national systems to face the intersection between vulnerability, inequalities, and unsustainability will define the future course of development (UNDP, 2020a). The current state of emergency offers the opportunity to place transformative resilience, social cohesion and environmental consciousness firmly at the centre stage of decision-making processes.

In this scenario, the centrality of initiatives of social and solidarity economy (SSE) and the relevance of policies for social and territorial cohesion (STC) have gained momentum as driving forces for more sustainable and inclusive recovery processes in the framework of SDG implementation. Indeed, they contribute to reconciling value-generation and innovation with inclusiveness and environmental protection, in order to achieve shared prosperity and human flourishing leaving no one behind.

The general objective of the paper is to frame and systematize the most relevant experiences, policies and initiatives in Italy on both SSE and STC. In particular, our analysis aims at providing concrete [policy insights and guidance](#) to local and regional governments and actors in partner countries – as well as to UN and UNDP Country Offices – to implement similar initiatives in their territories, in order to foster social cohesion and promote inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic development.

This paper is structured as follows. The first section introduces a brief overview of the challenges that have been exacerbated by Covid19 in a SDG localization perspective, based on the current international debate on post-Covid19 scenarios. The second section describes our conceptual and interpretative framework on the relations between SDG localization, STC policies and SSE experiences as part of a territorial ecosystem. The third section provides an overview/mapping of the Italian approaches and experiences in fostering STC and SSE, by presenting both the main policies and actors, as well as the distinctive features and core models, that make the Italian experience significantly valuable for its adaptation in other contexts. The fourth section describes the selection process based have led to identify 6 Italian experiences as illustrative case-studies, followed by their analysis to inform similar experiences in partner countries. Finally, the last section concludes with final remarks and implications for the subsequent elaboration of detailed Policy Guidelines.

1. SDG LOCALIZATION IN THE COVID19 ERA

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development represents a universal and overarching roadmap for humanity and a global policy framework to address sustainable development from a multidimensional perspective, i.e., social, economic and environmental dimensions, and to tackle the most pressing societal challenges at all levels. The implementation of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals identified by the Agenda is an imperative to guarantee a prosperous and sustainable life for all human beings, leaving no one behind (UN, 2015).

Nowadays, this imperative confronts with the devastating effects of the Covid19 pandemic all around the world, quickly leading to the worst human and economic crisis of our lifetimes (UN, 2020a). In particular, the pandemic has been exacerbating several problems of our economies and societies, which were already serious and evident even before (Anand et al., 2020; Fleurbaey, 2020; Mazzuccato, 2020; Sen, 2020; WEF, 2020). Increasing inequality within and across countries, multidimensional poverty affecting millions of people and the unsustainability of modern production and consumption patterns have coupled with the atrophying of the capacity of state institutions. In a few words, the systemic crisis spurred by the pandemic has been hitting a world already dealing with “unresolved tensions: between people and technology, between people and the planet and between the haves and the have-nots – all of which are shaping a new generation of inequalities” (UNDP, 2020b, p. 3). Moreover, the differential impact of Covid19 on class, generations, social groups, territories and countries is undeniable and will become ever more evident. Indeed, the consequences of the Covid19 pandemic have one common denominator: they widened structural inequalities not only for the most vulnerable groups of people but also for vulnerable territories, threatening both social and territorial cohesion. In countries with high inequalities by class, age, gender, ethnicity or residence status, the effects of the crisis can amplify these differences, at least in the short run (UNDP, 2020b). In other words, the pandemic is laying bare the profound inequalities that exist within and among countries and is exacerbating these inequalities (Venkatapuram, 2020; UN, 2020b).

All in all, the Covid19 pandemic is unleashing a systemic human development crisis, affecting health, economic and broad social dimensions of development and potentially eroding gains accumulated over decades without appropriate policies in place (UNDP, 2020b). Indeed, UNDP estimates that global human development could fall this year for the first time since 1990 due to the triple hit of the pandemic to health, education, and income. Nevertheless, after almost one year this impact has revealed to be widely heterogeneous among and within countries.

The pandemic presents both an enormous challenge and tremendous opportunities for reaching the Agenda 2030 and its Sustainable Development Goals. Several recent studies¹ have highlighted the direct impact of the Covid19 pandemic on the 17 SDGs (see, for instance, Figure 1). Nevertheless, the pandemic is also influencing and impacting the SDG implementation approach and mechanisms (UCLG, 2020). First, it is pushing most countries to institutionalize their commitment to the SDGs, by establishing both coordination mechanisms to ensure their implementation at the highest level of government, as well as participatory mechanisms to enshrine the whole-of-society approach and the principle of leaving no one behind. Second, it is enhancing the basic importance of multi-level collaboration to effectively address the challenges being faced, moving forward at the speed and on the scale required. In particular, it is making evident that strengthening both vertical and horizontal cooperation is necessary to unlock existing local potentialities and to address the pandemic in a manner that effectively accelerates SDG implementation. Third, it is highlighting the need to ensure that adequate funding reaches the communities most in need, without losing sight of the long-term objectives of promoting cohesion, resilience and sustainability at the national level.

¹ Preliminary information and data on the impact of Covid19 on each SDG is available in Sachs et al. (2020) and UN (2020b). For briefs and reports on the socio-economic Impact of the Covid19 Pandemic for several countries and regions see [UNDP website](#). Additional information can be extracted by the [UNDP Covid19 Data Futures Platform](#), which provides data and interactive tools that can support the analysis of strategic policy questions on Health First, Protect People, Economic Recovery, Macro Response and Social Cohesion, in order to build into a better world toward 2030. For data, analysis and recommendations on key policy responses to address the emerging health, economic and societal crisis see the [OECD platform](#).

Figure 1. Short-term impacts of Covid19 on the Sustainable Development Goals

SDG 1 No poverty	Highly negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased poverty due to job losses and economic lockdown Disproportionate impact on vulnerable groups (e.g., the poor) 	
SDG 2 Zero hunger	Highly negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food insecurity due to reduction in global food supplies and trade Hunger due to fall in incomes and reduced food availability during lockdown Higher food loss and waste due to transportation challenges and reduced labor availability Poorer nutrition due to interruption of school meals 	
SDG 3 Good health and well-being	Highly negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Higher disease incidence and mortality from Covid 19 Higher mortality from other causes because of overburdening of health systems Slight decline in mortality due to reduced economic and social activities (e.g., traffic accidents) Potential short-term health gains due to lower environmental pollution Negative impact of confinement and lockdown on mental health (e.g., anxiety and depression) 	
SDG 4 Quality education	Mixed or moderately negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> School and day-care closures Loss in the development of human capital Poorer nutrition due to interruption of school meals 	
SDG 5 Gender equality	Mixed or moderately negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible disproportionate economic impacts on women (e.g., job losses, poverty) Other social impacts on women from the lockdown (e.g., domestic violence) Higher mortality rates from the virus among men (because they suffer from more chronic respiratory diseases due to higher smoking rate) 	
SDG 6 Clean water and sanitation	Mixed or moderately negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to clean water among disadvantaged groups limits possibility of adhering to strict hygiene guidelines 	
SDG 7 Affordable and clean energy	Mixed or moderately negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slowdown in economic growth contributing to a reduction in energy prices (e.g., oil), which might increase access to energy but reduce incentives for renewables 	
SDG 8 Decent work and economic growth	Highly negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Economic crisis in virtually all parts of the world Trade disruption Mass unemployment Business closures / bankruptcies Sharp decline in tourism activities Massive public deficits 	
SDG 9 Industry, innovation and infrastructure	Mixed or moderately negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decline in industrial outputs Possible nationalization of some industries, and bankruptcies and closures of others Scientific collaboration to find treatments and vaccine Accelerated uptake of digital technologies, for e-health, e-education, e-governance, and e-payments 	
SDG 10 Reduced inequalities	Highly negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disproportionate negative health and economic impacts on vulnerable groups (including refugees and migrants), especially in countries with low safety nets Loss of jobs of lower-skilled, lower-wage labor 	
SDG 11 Sustainable cities and communities	Mixed or moderately negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rise in urban poverty and vulnerability Shut down of public transports Lower access to public / green spaces Movements of population that vary across countries Sharp short-term reduction in pollution levels 	
SDG 12 Responsible consumption and production	Impact still unclear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term reduction in natural resource use due to reduced economic activity and consumption Pressure to loosen up regulations on circular economy and postpone the adoption of new measures Increased plastic pollution (e.g., used to produce personal protective equipment) 	
SDG 13 Climate action	Impact still unclear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term reduction in global GHG emissions Pressure to reduce environmental safeguards Lack of clarity on environmental investments Slowdown in economic growth contributing to reduction in energy prices (e.g., oil), which might increase access to energy but reduce incentives for renewables 	
SDG 14 Life below water	Impact still unclear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term reduction in threats to marine biodiversity due to reduced global economic activity and consumption Pressure to reduce marine biodiversity and ecosystem safeguards 	
SDG 15 Life on land	Impact still unclear <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Short-term reduction in threats to terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity due to reduced global economic activity and consumption Pressure to reduce terrestrial and freshwater biodiversity and ecosystem safeguards, including biodiversity and ecosystem regulations conventions (for instance, on deforestation) 	
SDG 16 Peace, justice and strong institutions	Mixed or moderately negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased pressure on governments to mitigate the health and economic consequences of the pandemic Pressure to increase accessible health care in countries that have not yet achieved universal health coverage Increased public deficits and debt Disruption of legislative processes and public debates Suspension of freedom-of-information laws and transparency policies 	
SDG 17 Partnerships for the goals	Mixed or moderately negative impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Possible reduced responsiveness of international aid community to needs of the poorest countries Possible reduction in international remittances and cross-border financing Closing of borders Slowdown in international trade Debt crisis 	

Source: Sachs et al. (2020c, p. 4-5)

Overall, the pandemic is making evident the interconnections between the social, economic and environmental spheres,² alerting us to the importance of achieving the SDGs as the overarching framework for local and national action and international cooperation in the wake of Covid19 (Sachs et al., 2020). This involves carefully considering the inextricable relation between individual and collective agency (that is, the ability to participate in decision making and to make and pursue desired choices) and values (that is, the choices that are most desired), with special attention to social cohesion, environmental protection and peace (UNDP, 2020c).

In other words, the dramatically high human costs inflicted worldwide by the pandemic urge us to make fundamental changes to our economic and social systems at the global, national

² For instance, interlinkages between urban planning, poverty, housing, access to public services, inequalities, economic development and environmental protection, cultural diversity, and rights-based agendas, which have a direct or indirect impact on safeguarding many of the common goods of humanity (UCLG, 2020).

and local levels (Ferrannini et al., 2021). In this scenario, we must capitalize on the opportunities to 'Build Forward Better' by unequivocally standing for a normative vision of Sustainable Human Development (SHD) to promote peace, dignity and equality on a healthy planet. Indeed, a Sustainable Human Development perspective places the protection and enhancement of human capabilities and agency (Sen, 1999) as the central anchor guiding analysis and policy (UNDP, 2020b), with a systemic and long-term view focused on the four pillars of SHD (Haq, 1995):

Equity for all, in terms of political, economic, social and cultural opportunities, as well as distribution and cohesion;

Participation and empowerment of citizens and communities conceived as being an active individual and collective agent of one's own future;

Sustainability of our ecological and socio-economic systems, promoting intergenerational equity of opportunities and contrasting the deployment and deterioration of natural, human and cultural capital;

Productivity, pursuing an efficient use of local resources within production systems.

The real playground for action to accelerate solutions to all the world's biggest challenges (e.g., from public health and climate change to poverty and inequality) towards SHD are not just the global and national level, but also the local level (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014; UNDG, 2014; Graute, 2016; GTF, 2016; Oxfam and ARCO, 2016; Bentz et al., 2019; Granados and Noferini, 2019). The local dimension is fundamental for the effective implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (OECD, 2020b), as it plays a crucial role in the access to basic social services, the promotion of economic development, and the exercise of civic rights for citizens via active participation and empowerment. Therefore, although the SDG are universal, they cannot be effectively implemented without considering the specific characteristics of each territory and its actors (both public and private), with their own vision, values and identities, as well as the strict inter-linkages among the three dimensions of sustainability at the local level.

Nowadays, this argument is reinforced by the territorially differentiated impact of the pandemic, which requires taking into account (and manage) also its spatial dimension. Indeed, it is clear that the impact markedly differs across regions and municipalities within countries, not only in terms of health impact but also in terms of social and economic consequences. This calls for a place-based approach to policy responses on the health, economic, social and fiscal sector, as well as for a very strong inter-governmental coordination (OECD, 2020a; UCLG, 2020). Indeed, the Covid19 crisis is global, but the

response and recovery are mostly local, with local and regional governments (LRGs) being at the frontline of crisis management (OECD and CoR, 2020; UCLG, 2020; UNDP, 2020a). LRGs play an essential role in reimagining economic development, social protection, and public investment. They play a key role to implement nation-wide measures (that are often place-blind and uniform), but also provide laboratories for bottom-up and innovative recovery strategies (OECD, 2020a). For instance, LRGs have been devising crisis management responses related to social distancing, workplace and commuting, vulnerable groups, local service delivery, support to business and citizen engagement. Moreover, in the face of adversity, some local communities have been showing a strong sense of solidarity and great transformative resilience, making the concepts of ‘cooperation’ and ‘solidarity’ even more relevant for people’s real life and capabilities (Biggeri, 2020).

In the long-term, LRGs have today the opportunity to plan for life after Covid19 (OECD, 2020a) with a range of investments to pair economic recovery with social inclusiveness and environmental sustainability. This opportunity might contribute to boosting the resilience of local socio-economic systems, making them more able to face shocks while preserving societal wellbeing, leaving no one behind (intra-generational equity) and without compromising the heritage for future generations (inter-generational equity and sustainability) (Giovannini et al., 2020).

For these reasons, the localization of SDGs becomes even more relevant in the Covid19 and post-Covid19 era. It helps to frame priorities, to align levels of governance, to set targets and to monitor real progress towards sustainable development. All in all, it offers a useful approach to frame the consequences of the pandemic through a people-centred and place-based perspective to Sustainable Human Development (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014; OECD, 2020a).

2.SOCIAL ECONOMY AND COHESION POLICY AS DRIVERS FOR SDG LOCALIZATION

As introduced, the capacity of local and national systems to deal with complex issues at the intersection between vulnerability, inequalities, and unsustainability in the Covid19 and post-Covid19 era will define the future course of development (UNDP, 2020a). In this scenario, initiatives of social and solidarity economy (SSE) and policies for social and territorial cohesion (STC) have gained momentum, as driving forces for more sustainable and inclusive recovery processes, reconciling value-generation and innovation with inclusiveness and environmental protection in order to achieve shared prosperity and human flourishing. In other words, investing in the social economy and cohesion increases social benefits for all, by linking businesses and local actors to their community through civic participation,

engagement and responsibility, as well as orienting their actions around a common vision of sustainable development.

2.1 Social and Solidarity Economy as a driver for SDG localization

Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE) is defined by the ILO (2009, p.1) as “a concept designating enterprises and organizations, in particular cooperatives, mutual benefit societies, associations, foundations and social enterprises, which have the specific feature of producing goods, services and knowledge while pursuing both economic and social aims and fostering solidarity”.

In other words, SSE organisations put social and environmental concerns at the heart of their business model, prioritising social impact over profit maximisation. They are driven by a mission of serving the common good, protecting the general interest and increasing individual and community welfare.

During the pandemic, SSE organisations have assisted the recovery from the crisis by providing innovative solutions that are aimed at strengthening public services to complement government action and mitigating the impact on vulnerable populations (OECD, 2020c). In the short-term, they have been a trusted partner, operating at the forefront of the crisis to address urgent sanitary and social needs (OECD, 2020c) e.g., by adapting responses to the community context delivering food and medical services (UN, 2020b). In the long-term, SSE can help reshape the post-crisis economy and society by promoting more inclusive and sustainable business and economic models (OECD, 2020c; Yunus and Biggeri, 2020). Nevertheless, SSE organisations have also been highly affected by the crisis. Thus, in several countries, subnational governments have been providing financial support to ensure that SSE actors could continue to provide needed services to the community (OECD, 2020c).

In general, SSE organizations and their initiatives have specific features which make them particularly suitable as drivers for SDG localization processes (UNRISD, 2017; Lee, 2020), especially within integrated local systems, as compared to other organizations approaches. Among others:

- SSE organizations are usually locally anchored and maintain a strong connection with the locality in which they are embedded, both in terms of positive contribution to the locality (Borzaga and Tortia, 2009; Birkhölzer, 2009), as well as in terms of the resources they use in their activities (Evers and Schulze-Boeing, 2001; Hynes, 2009; Pasetto, 2010; Di Domenico et al., 2010; Eversole et al., 2013).

- Their proximity to problems makes them understand what works and what doesn't in the local context, and thus are particularly well-suited to respond quickly to issues that arise in their local areas (OECD, 2020c).
- Most SSE organizations, as per their business model, need to engage with different stakeholders. For example, SSE organizations active in providing social services usually have strong relations with the social service department of the local authority and other SSE organizations delivering complimentary services. Adopting a multi-stakeholder governance approach makes them inherently more capable of building relations with, and among, different stakeholders, as well as creating a shared view of development.
- SSE organizations contribute to Sustainable Human Development (Scarlato, 2012; Biggeri et al., 2017) and in reaching the SDGs (Littlewood & Holt, 2018) not only via the services and products they offer, but also through the production and consumption processes they enable. Since the focus of their activity is not on profit maximisation, SSE organizations tend to conceive the concepts of efficiency and effectiveness by taking into account the different dimensions of social impact rather than only the economic dimension. For this reason, both their inputs, activities and outputs (products and services) tend to have qualities in terms of accessibility, inclusiveness, environmental sustainability, etc. that generate higher benefits to the locality compared to the same services/products delivered by non-SSE organizations. Moreover, since they often adopt multi-stakeholder and participatory governance processes, these benefits are also more widely distributed across society. For these reasons, SSE organizations are usually more efficient and equitable collectors, organizers and distributors of resources to solve social or environmental problems at the local level than other organizations.

All in all, SSE organizations are among the actors which prove to be of critical importance in the process of keeping together the three dimensions of sustainability (economic, social and environmental) at the local level.

2.2 Social and Territorial Cohesion as a driver for SDG localization

Social and Territorial Cohesion aims at ensuring "better living conditions and quality of life with equal opportunities, oriented towards regional and local potentials, irrespective of where people live" (European Union, 2007, p. 1). In this perspective, no citizen should be disadvantaged in terms of access to public services, housing, or employment opportunities (among others) simply by living in one region rather than another. This is particularly evident and relevant in the current pandemic times, as inequalities, different forms of exclusions, power imbalances and vulnerabilities are most immediately experienced by people where they live, that is in local communities and territories.

In terms of territorial cohesion, this means reducing the disparities within a country between the level of development of various regions and the access to resources and services of their inhabitants, promoting convergence between the economies of better-off territories and those whose development is lagging behind. In terms of social cohesion, this means ensuring the welfare and basic human capabilities for all members and social groups within a given territory, by promoting access to rights for all, opportunities for personal development and upward social mobility, respect for the dignity of the others, as well as by nurturing trust, cooperation and inclusive participatory democracy.

Taken together, social and territorial cohesion can be conceived as an expression of territorial / place-based dynamics, potentially reinforcing (or vice-versa, hampering) each other as part of a continuum. For instance, the participation and empowerment of all local actors and social groups are key determinants of social cohesion within communities, and they can also spur innovative locally driven processes contributing to redressing territorial unbalances within a region or a country. Thus, integrated territorial processes enable (in short and amongst others) a stronger social capital, which in turn is a condition for better performing (or 'functioning') territories, and therefore a basis for more balanced development across territories. In other words, more cohesive societies are a condition and basis for more effective territorial processes, which in turn make territorial cohesion and balanced regional policies possible, leading to a 'place-based' socio-economic cohesion.

Local and Regional Governments (LRGs) can significantly contribute to SDG localization by designing and implementing social and territorial cohesion (STC) policies and initiatives (Rivera-Lirio and Muñoz-Torres, 2014; EU2020.de, 2020), thanks to the following specific features:

- STC, through its multi-level and multi-stakeholder implementation and investment approach, directly supports regions and municipalities to make progress towards the SDGs by strengthening people's skills, creating job opportunities, tackling income inequalities and social exclusion, improving access to basic services, supporting small and medium enterprises, as well as in addressing major global issues such as climate change and migration.
- STC is key to address sub-national disparities, and thus it is an indispensable element to leave no one behind and pursue the SDGs in an integrated territorial perspective.
- STC unleashes unique territorial and human potential related to place-based social capital, knowledge and assets, thus contributing to effective local economic development processes. Indeed, cooperative behaviours, pooled knowledge, joint and responsible resources management, and integrated value chains, among others, are enablers for value-added enhancement and innovation sustaining the expansion of individual and collective capabilities and well-being.

- Strengthening social cohesion enables the collective design of sustainable development policies. On the one side, STC creates a sense of belonging, it promotes trust, it nurtures inclusive participation in political and decision-making processes, it boosts civic engagement at the local level, and it facilitates joint initiatives involving different social groups within the society. On the other side, STC tackles distrust, hostility, marginalisation and alienation by individuals and groups, thereby reinforcing the social fabric needed to prevent, contain and deescalate conflict that may undermine the SDGs.
- STC makes the partnership principles underlying the SDGs fully operational by leveraging joint efforts by municipal, regional, national, supranational and other authorities, as well as by various social groups that cooperate to balance inclusiveness, sustainability, competitiveness and resilience through participative and innovative integrated territorial development.
- Local and regional governments operating in a context with stronger social cohesion have a competitive advantage in implementing the SDGs due to easier institutional coordination of policies, higher collective mobilisation and participation, stronger commitment and accountability.

All in all, social and territorial cohesion is both a desirable end and a fundamental means to Sustainable Human Development at the local level.

2.3 Our conceptual and interpretative framework on SSE and STC as drivers for SDG localization

SSE and STC can be combined and interlinked to effectively enhance SDG localization as part of a territorial ecosystem, and particularly to counter the effects of exclusionary and unsustainable development outcomes that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

In this regard, we propose a conceptual and interpretative framework that is built on previous frameworks advanced by the authors on both local development (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014; Biggeri et al., 2018a; Bianchi et al., 2021) and SSE (Biggeri et al., 2017; Biggeri et al., 2018b), and which links the different individual, collective and local community dynamics affecting human capabilities (Sen, 1999).

Our starting point is that people's capabilities and agency expansion processes are territorially embedded, because the 'working' performances expressed by a local community (i.e., its characteristics and functionings) where people live and interact are key resources and conversion factors that give them the opportunity to achieve their objectives and flourishing (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014). Therefore, such human flourishing is conceived both at the individual and collective level as a basis for the common good and

shared prosperity. This implies designing and implementing policies and initiatives able to leverage tangible and intangibles resources within local communities, nurturing collective action and social empowerment to foster SHD (Biggeri et al., 2018).

In our understanding, SSE and STC initiatives play precisely this role, by affecting not only the provision of goods and services but also the achievement of territorial functionings and processes of institutional change.

Thus, the framework presented here highlights the potential of both SSE and STC practices to contrast/prevent exclusionary patterns and social and territorial inequalities. It also remarks their contribution to more sustainable and inclusive growth, as well as to build societies that are more resilient to, and able to recover from, external shocks in the framework of SDG localization.

The basic relation between SSE-STC and SDG localization is summarized in Figure 2. As the figure shows, the complex and intertwined process can be simplified using a traditional result chain, i.e., inputs-outputs-outcomes-final outcomes both in individual and collective terms. Such chain is modified to better represent an SDG localization process at a territorial level enacted by different actors.

We start by highlighting the role and involvement of different actors in a multi-level governance perspective, thus including local, national and international actors. In particular, all local actors – such as Local and Regional Governments (LRGs), entrepreneurial associations, companies, SSE organizations, civil society organizations, academia and research centres – are fundamental in localizing the SDGs. They can all contribute to pursuing SHD by solving local problems both acting by themselves or by cooperating with and reinforcing each other.

Moving to the right, we highlight the coupling of resources (i.e., the inputs of the process) deployed from different levels, referring to different types of capital – human, social and cultural, natural, financial, physical – as in the Sustainable Livelihoods framework (DFID, 1999).

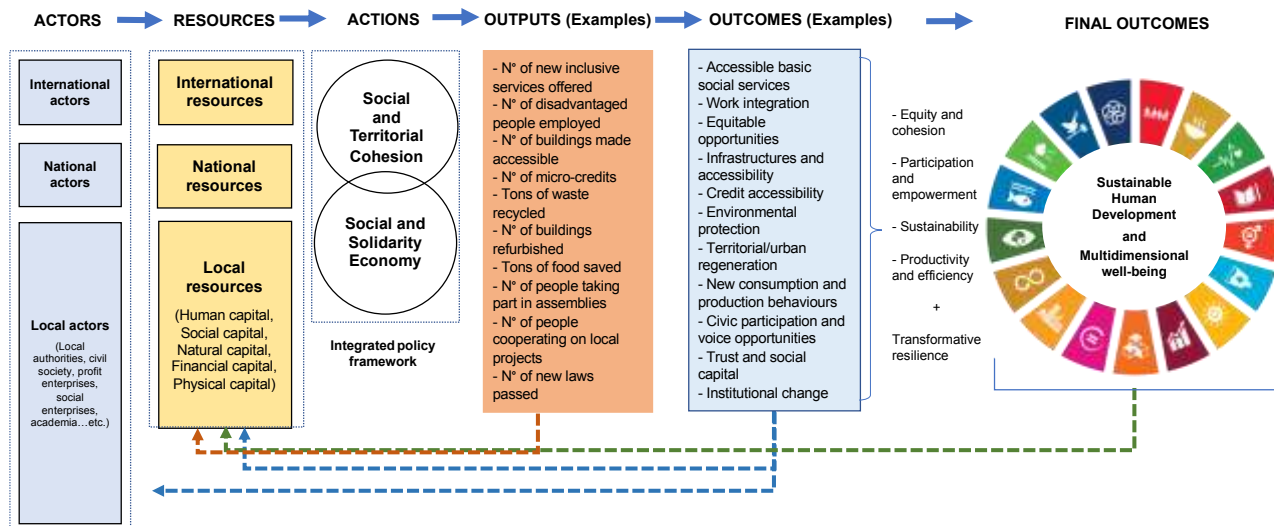
As the figure shows, territorial local actors use different types of resources to implement actions. For the sake of our study, such actions can fall into three main categories: actions in the domain of Social and Territorial Cohesion; actions in the domain of Social and Solidarity Economy; actions which are part of both domains. Such actions can be performed independently by each actor or collaboratively between different actors. The degree of collaboration might vary in each context. STC and SSE actions, or those that fall in both domains, can lead to different outputs, whose level is given by the number of resources involved, by the capacity of actors to transform resources into efficient and effective actions,

as well as by the influence of external factors that might help or hamper the transformation process.

Such outputs can lead to a variety of potential achieved outcomes, conceived as territorial functionings that can be grouped in the four pillars of Sustainable Human Development: Equity and cohesion; Participation and empowerment; Sustainability; Productivity and efficiency. Moreover, achieved outcomes can enhance the transformative agency of actors and the transformative resilience of local systems. The latter should be intended as the actors' and systems' ability to promote change in unexpected and negotiable ways by dealing with internal and external stressors and shocks as possible opportunities to structurally transform the system itself (Folke, 2006).

Over the medium- and long-term, positive outcomes will generate positive final outcomes in individual and collective terms, and thus for SDG localization, to foster the attainment of Sustainable Human Development and multidimensional well-being for all.

Figure 2. Interlinked contribution of SSE and STC to SDG localization



Note: In this framework, outputs have not only quantitative but also fundamental qualitative features, in terms of inclusiveness, equity, accessibility, etc., which make them able to transform into positive transformative outcomes within the local society. For instance, an increase in the N° of new services offered should imply also they are better targeted, more accessible and inclusive of the marginalised segments of the local population; the same applies to an increase in the N° of people taking part in assemblies, which imply paying attention to their composition, inclusiveness and power balance.

Source: Authors

As the feedback loops in Figure 2 show, delivered outputs, achieved outcomes and final outcomes may represent enhancing factors for SDG localization (respectively, orange, blue and green and arrows) by triggering the involvement of new actors and new resources in future processes, as well as the more effective use of local resources, capacities and relations. These feedback loops give us the possibility to conceive reaching certain levels of Sustainable Human Development and multidimensional well-being as a boost to a virtuous cycle that builds, over time, on the incremental outputs, outcomes and final outcomes achieved in the territory. In other words, pursuing individual and collective multidimensional well-being for all represents not only our key impact dimension, but also a 'productive' asset to reinforce more inclusive, cohesive and sustainable local development in territories. This argument allows us to fully recognize the potential of SSE and STC as catalysts of a circular virtuous process through which – grounding on the creation and re-creation of socio-economic value, as well as on the enhancement of people's agency and empowerment – they are capable of transforming territorial inputs (e.g., resources, capacities, relations) into final SHD outcomes.

The feedback loops suggest that the endowment of resources in different places – represented by the outputs, outcomes and final outcomes reached at a territorial level at a certain point in time – can determine very different SHD cycles and trajectories in the future. These differences might arise due to the different quantity of the resources, their mix (as some resources might have more capacity to be mixed with others), as well as the capacity of actors to harness, mix and regenerate them. Moreover, these endowments involve a combination of 'sedimentary' factors (e.g., cultural and traditional features deposited and nurtured over time) with 'living' factors (e.g., social or collective learning processes), whose relations of synergy, compensation or hindrance may lead to very different SHD outcomes, not only in space but also across time.

It is fundamental to remark that the different results that can be achieved not only depend on the endowments, but also on how these endowments are organized and transformed by local actors. Each actor has its own capability of understanding the local context, harness and combine resources and provide solutions to local needs. As already discussed, SSE organizations and LRGs are key leading actors concerning the processes of building, respectively, more inclusive and sustainable economies and more cohesive societies. However, no actor can, alone, be able to harness all resources or create all possible resource mix or provide all solutions for an effective transformation of the local system towards SHD. Therefore, when discussing how SSE and STC can best contribute to localize the SDGs, we cannot underestimate the role of participatory governance and other coordination mechanisms between actors (Clark et al., 2019).

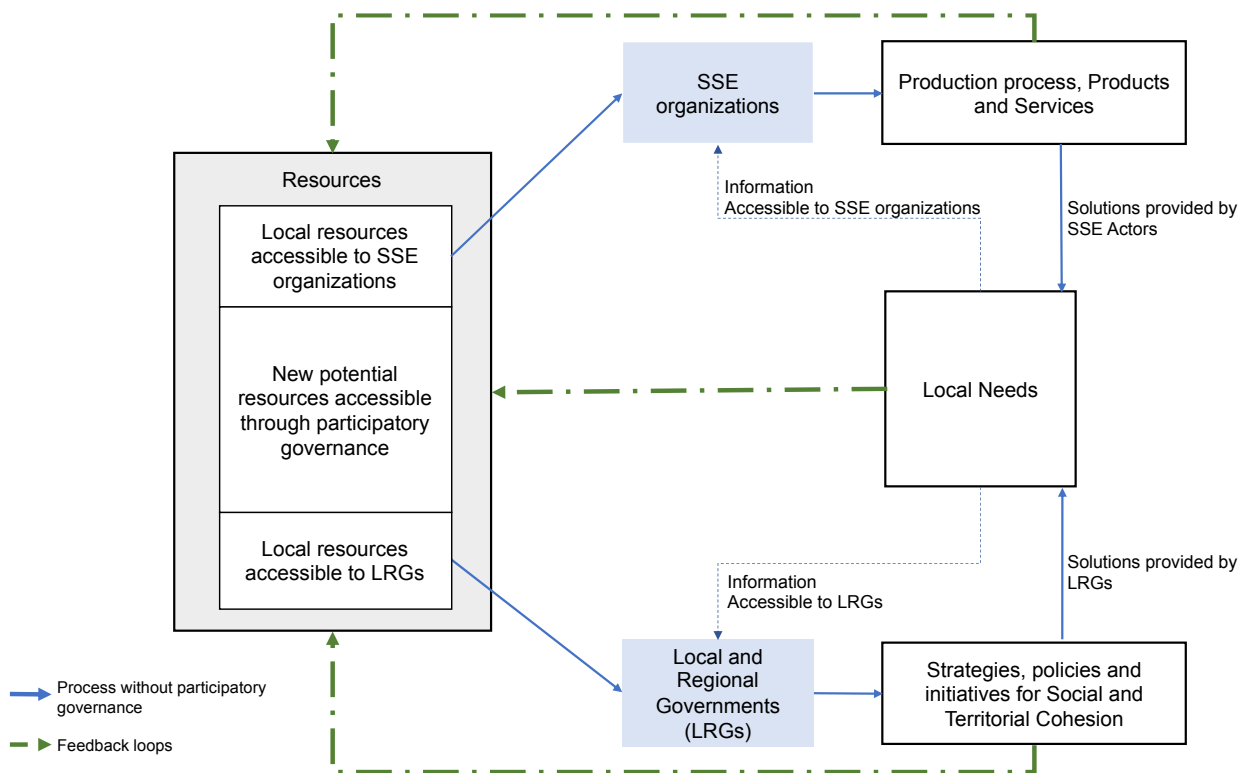
Figure 3 shows a simplified process in which SSE organizations transform local resources, such as human capital, infrastructure, funds etc., into processes, products and services

aimed at solving local problems and promoting social cohesion. A similar process³ holds for LRGs in transforming available resources (including in this case also revenues from local taxes and budget transfers from national authorities) into strategies, policies and initiatives for social and territorial cohesion. The final outcomes of the processes from both SSE organizations and LRGs provide new resources to the local system and, as evidenced by the feedback loops, these resources become available at the local level and can be used for future cycles (resources – policies/productions – solutions to local problems).

In the case depicted in Figure 3, SSE organizations and LRGs have their own process of assessing and interpreting local problems, using local resources in their activities and proposing solutions. Production processes, products and services of SSE organization, as well as strategies, policies and initiatives for social and territorial cohesion implemented by LRGs, generate feedback loops that flow back into the resources available to the territory and enter into subsequent processes. Also, the solution to local needs contributes to increasing the resources available in the territory.

³ It is worth noting that the same process can work also for other types of organizations, such as for-profit enterprises. Nonetheless, for the sake of our interpretative framework, Figures 3 and 4 deliberately focus on the most important actors for SSE and STC.

Figure 3. The contribution by SSE organizations and LRGs to solve local needs in absence of strategic integrated planning



Source: Authors

However, as mentioned above, the processes enacted by a single type of organization (be it a SSE organization or a LRG), whilst still capable of producing positive results at the local level, might not take full advantage of the transformative potential of local endowments for reaching the SDGs.

In this regard, participatory governance and strategic integrated planning can enhance a virtuous process to effectively localizing the SDGs and reducing inequalities by fully harnessing the potential of SSE and STC to optimize the deployment/use of local endowments and (local and external) resources.

Participatory governance entails promoting an open and inclusive institutional environment for active engagement by local stakeholders to question the status quo and collectively define a societal development vision. In this regard, the variety and diversity of views, interests and ideas act as stimuli to avoid strict path dependence and lock-in mechanisms while setting a new shared vision for the structural change of the local economy and society. This can feed into strategic integrated planning as a continuous process of co-design, co-

planning and co-implementation between local actors, institutionalized by a set of formalized mechanisms that make them structurally involved into local policy-making processes. In other words, participatory governance fosters shared commitment and responsibility, facilitating long-term partnerships to collectively pursue the societal vision. Moreover, it allows overcoming traditional silo-based and sectorial policy-making leading, instead, towards decision-making and operational arrangements based on a 'whole-of-government' and 'whole-of-society' approach, where synergies and coherence among actors and policy areas are consistently leveraged towards a unifying vision.

Building on these arguments, Figure 4 shows the same processes described in the previous Figure 3 but when participatory governance mechanism and strategic integrated planning are in place by grounding the transformation, renewal and resilience of places on synergies among policy axes and mutually reinforcing strategies and actions.

With participatory governance mechanisms, SSE organizations and LRGs can share information on local problems and partner to harness new or underused local resources (for example, by devising innovative social services to address citizens' needs relying on volunteers or by regenerating and using old public buildings for activities of SSE actors) and find joint solutions to local needs. For instance, SSE actors are therefore in the best position to both understand and respond to local problems and connecting their deep knowledge of local problems with the different administrative levels that govern the locality. Thus, in a few words, the stronger are the connections and information sharing between SSE and LRGs, the better it is possible to localize the SDGs (see, for instance, Box 1 on how LRGs can support SSE organizations).

BOX 1. How LRGs can create an enabling ecosystem for SSE organizations

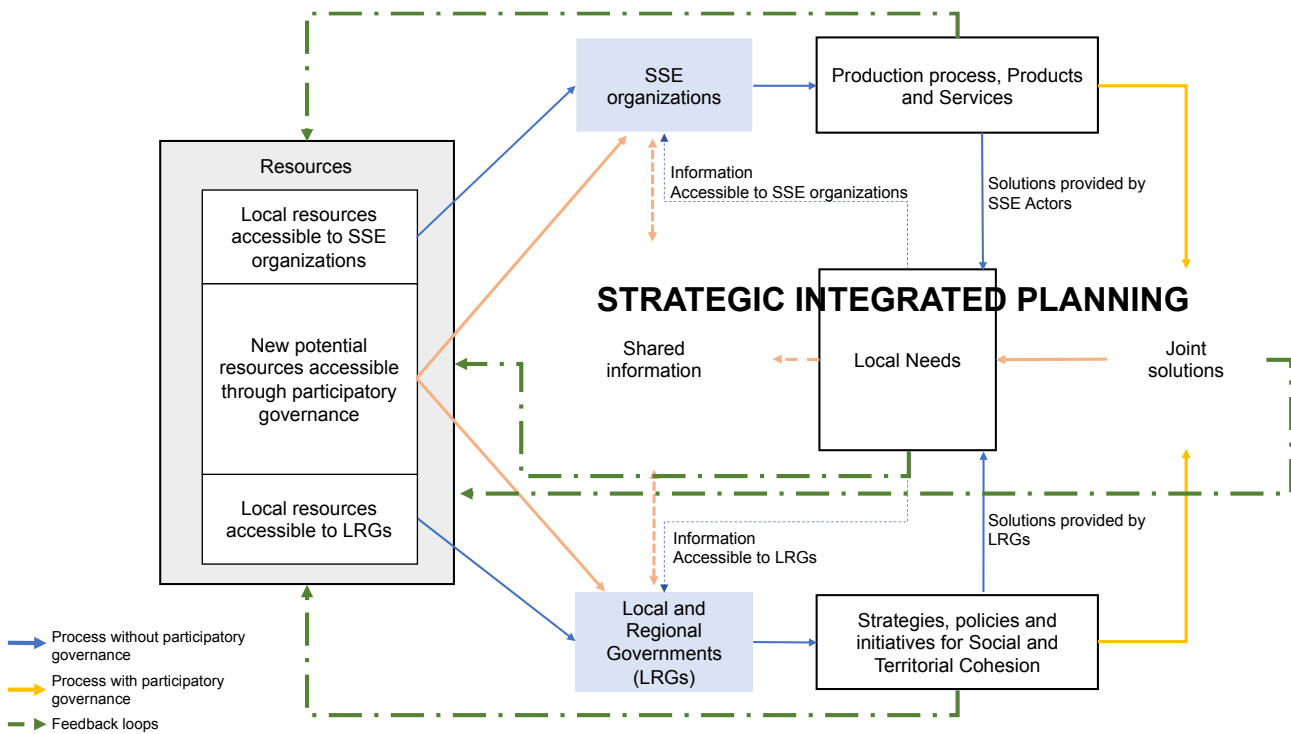
LRGs can support the start-up and development of SSE organizations, often in synergy with other actors such as Universities, financial institutions, for-profit companies etc, via:

- Providing them with different resources useful for their activities (funds, spaces, contracts etc.).
- Providing SSE organizations with data on social/environmental problems.
- Providing arenas for discussion and networking between different local actors including universities, other civil society organizations and for-profit companies.
- Providing coordination of actors and alignment around common objectives.
- Adopt local laws that are consistent with national and supra-national laws aimed at enabling the SSE such as, for example, the Inclusion of social clauses in tenders or projects.
- Reduce the bureaucracy connected to SSE activities.
- Co-construct services with SSE actors.
- Allow SSE organizations to innovate when delivering services for LRGs.
- Evaluate the impact of SSE organizations.
- Raise local awareness on the relevance of SSE and the wide-spread benefits for society of their products/services
- Promote education (at all levels) and VET courses on SSE.

The presence of participatory governance and strategic integrated planning in a territory does not automatically entail that all local needs are addressed jointly by all actors or that all actors are always prone to collaborate with each other. Moreover, the reliance on participatory governance and strategic integrated planning depends on the type of actors, as well as commonalities among their visions and objectives (Biggeri and Ferrannini, 2014; UNDP, 2016; Bianchi et al., 2021).

Under this point of view, the SDGs provide a unique opportunity to align the objectives and interests of different organizations and actors and thus provide a fertile ground for participatory governance and strategic integrated planning towards Sustainable Human Development at the local level.

Figure 4. The joint contribution by SSE organizations and LRGs to solve local needs through participatory governance and strategic integrated planning



Source: Authors

This entails also foreseeing specific mechanisms for the collective discussion on the societal priority challenges to be addressed and the SDGs to be achieved, as well as aligning visions and priorities, and efficiently implementing joint policies and actions to address local needs. Taken together, participatory governance and strategic integrated planning may more easily lead to a collective response and recovery based on shared responsibilities towards the common good and facilitated by structured coordination mechanisms towards a vision of SHD. In line with a place-based perspective, this implies that similar challenges, and similar strategic objectives, can be addressed by prioritising and sequencing different policy axes and by acting on different levers in different places, or in different times for the same place, according to contextual circumstances and collective political willingness (Bianchi et al., 2021).

Finally, such collective discussion and design of strategies and initiatives for SDG localization may entail a real process of institutional change. This involves reshaping political incentives to continuously nurturing collective action and agency and gradually removing the most binding institutional constraints to economic development, social progress and shared prosperity.

3.THE ITALIAN APPROACH TO SOCIAL ECONOMY AND COHESION POLICY

Italy has a long-lasting experience in implementing integrated local development initiatives concerning social economy and cohesion to foster Sustainable Human Development at the local level. For this reason, in this section we present an overview of the Italian approach and experience in both SSE and STC, by presenting both their core policies and actors, as well as a characterization of their distinctive features and core models that make them significantly valuable for replications in other contexts. This overview is based on the combination of extensive desk-based analysis of the academic literature, policy documentation and institutional reports, along with the conduction of semi-structured interviews with 18 key Italian informants in each field (see Appendix 1). While the former has provided the general background on the institutional setting and policy approach, the latter have provided in-depth insider information on the Italian distinctive features on SSE and STC, with particular reference to real-world insights on operational processes and mechanisms on the ground.

3.1 Social and Solidarity Economy in Italy

Italy has a long-lasting tradition in SSE. The first organizations date back to the Middle Ages, namely the catholic brotherhoods, the “Misericordie” in Florence, in 1244, and the “Monti di Pietà” set up by Franciscan friars in 1462, in Turin, which provided credit to people in need.

Overall, in 2017 the non-profit sector in Italy totals 350.492 organizations and employs 844.775 people (ISTAT (2019)). Even though not all these organizations can fall inside the definition of SSE, Italy is nowadays globally recognized as one of the countries where Social Economy is more developed (see Table 1 for the list of the main SSE organizations currently present in Italy).

Table 1. Main organizations of the SSE sector in Italy

LEGAL ENTITY	TOTAL NUMBER	TOTAL EMPLOYEES	TOTAL VOLUNTEERS
Association	292.174	154.908	5.020.810
Foundation	7.509	98.164	62.211
Cooperatives (non Social)	43.049	763.586	-
Social Cooperatives	15.600	428.713	43.781
Other no-profit organizations	28.149	130.921	401.957

Source: Authors' adaptation from Barco Serrano et al. (2019)

These numbers show that SSE organizations in Italy are not a residual phenomenon but rather, a driving force of social, economic and human development. SSE organizations in Italy have developed thanks to the interplay of different factors:

- the growing difficulty in providing answers to social needs through centralised monetary disbursements
- the growing differentiation of needs (at all levels: by age group, gender, geographical area, etc.) which has gradually made it more and more difficult to meet the needs of the standardised responses offered by the public administrations
- the externalisation of services from local authorities to social enterprises and other non-profit organizations
- increased interest by all economic actors on a more sustainable economic development

Italy is also renowned for the gradual introduction of a solid legal and enabling policy framework especially in the field of social enterprises (see Table 2).

Table 2. Legal evolution of social enterprises in Italy

YEAR	TYPE OF LEGAL ACT	DESCRIPTION – MAIN AIM
1988	Constitutional Court ruling 396.	Established unconstitutionality of Law 6972/1890 (Crispi Law) providing that welfare activities had to be organised exclusively by public entities.
1991	Law 381 (on social cooperatives).	Acknowledged a new cooperative form explicitly aimed at pursuing the general interest of the community (A-type provides social, health and educational services; B-type integrates vulnerable persons into work).
1991-2000	Law 266/1991 on Voluntary Organisations, Legislative Decree 460/1997 on ONLUS, Law 383/200 on Social Promotion Associations.	Progressive recognition of the potential of associations and foundations to run economic activities that are consistent with their institutional activities.
2005-2006	Law 118/2005 and Legislative Decree 155/2006 (on SEs).	Allowed the establishment of SEs under a plurality of legal forms (association, foundation, cooperative, shareholder company) and enlarged the set of activities of SEs. Introduced a total distribution constraint and asset lock.
2012-2013	Legislative Decree 179/2012 and Decree of the Ministry of Economic Development of 6 March 2013.	Established that mutual aid societies must register in the SE section at the Companies Register.
2016	Law 106/2016 (Reform of the Third Sector, SE and Universal Civil Service).	Re-launched the SE by introducing a new qualification. Established its non-profit purpose and placed the social enterprise within the third sector. Favours the development of social enterprises other than social cooperatives.
2017	Legislative Decree 112/2017 (revision of the previous legislation on SEs).	Repealed Legislative Decree 155/2006 and introduced a new discipline, which provides for partial distribution constraint, more inclusive governance, enlargement of the sectors of activity and exemption from corporate tax on retained profits.

Source: Borzaga (2020, p.34)

All SSE experiences in Italy are relevant. However, here we focus on the historical evolution of the following prevailing models for their role in characterising the SSE ecosystem in Italy.

The relevance of cooperative enterprises

The cooperative movement in Italy is mainly based on two main traditions: the catholic one and the laic-socialist one. Italian cooperatives began in 1884 in Turin and, since then, they have developed extensively over time except the period 1922-1947, when their growth was slowed down by the Fascist regime opposing to any form of organization. The 1948 Italian Constitution (art. 45) specifically recognized the social function of cooperation and the need to promote cooperatives. In the 1950s many cooperatives were set up as construction and housing cooperatives engaged in the post-war reconstruction. During the 1970s cooperatives increased in number, became bigger and more professionalized and formed consortia and groups with other companies. In the 1980s many cooperatives started providing health, social and educational services, as well as being active in the field of work integration. A strong drive to the development of cooperatives was the formalization of social cooperatives in 1991 (Borzaga and Ianes, 2006). In 2015 there were 59.027 active cooperatives in Italy employing 1.151.349 people (7.1% of the total people employed by companies) and reporting an added value of €28.613 Mil (4% of the total added value of companies). The high presence of cooperatives in Italy contributed to foster an enabling ecosystem for SSE in the country. Cooperatives demonstrated the relevance and feasibility of production models that promote social justice. Moreover, thanks also to their close relation to public authorities and capacity to collaborate with local stakeholders they brought innovations in public service delivery, as well as in the field of work integration.

The role of Work Integration Social Enterprises (WISEs)

Within the SSE sector in Italy, it is worth noting the relevance of Work Integration Social Enterprises. Such social enterprises produce and sell goods and services by employing disadvantaged people. The first WISEs were regulated as B-type Social Cooperatives by the Italian law 381/1991 which also establishes the typologies of disadvantaged people that can be targeted.

The relevance of the WISEs experience in Italy is that some of them evolved from being organizations in which disadvantaged people could find employment (and therefore limiting their impact only to those employed) to becoming an important player into a wider system aimed at promoting active inclusion policies. In this respect, WISEs develop both capacity assessment and training skills in order to assess the work capabilities of disadvantaged

people, providing them with targeted training that answers to the needs of future employers and creating agreements with future employers in order to enhance their placement.

Many WISEs have thus developed specific skills and methodologies, focusing on particular sectors of the economy. For example, the Download Cooperative- Albergo Etico⁴ in the hospitality sector, QUID in fashion⁵, Giardineria Italiana⁶ in gardening, among others.

Moreover, WISEs are in many cases highly entrepreneurial and less reliant on public tenders than A-Type Social Cooperatives.

The development of Social Enterprises

As a concept, Social Enterprises in Italy trace back to the first social solidarity cooperatives in the 1980s, which were then regulated in 1991 as 'Social Cooperatives' (law 381/1991). Law 381/1991 identified two main types of Social Cooperatives. The A-type delivering health, educational and social services, the B-Type providing work integration for disadvantaged people. In 2006, Social Enterprises have been introduced as a legal category (law 155/2006) to give the possibility to organizations with different legal forms (cooperatives, limited liability companies, foundations, etc.) to be recognized as Social Enterprises if operating in certain fields and complying with certain requirements (Borzaga and Santuari, 2000). However, the 2006 law did not bring to a relevant increase in the number of social enterprises since it did not provide sensible advantages to the organizations qualifying as social enterprises. For this reason, the Third Sector Reform in 2016/2017 brought relevant changes to the law on Social Enterprises (SEs), providing them with some advantages, as well as enlarging their field of activities. Data shows that in 2017 there were 102.000⁷ Social Enterprises in Italy (social cooperatives, ex-lege social enterprises, associations and foundations with market activity) accounting for almost 900.000 paid workers and an annual turnover of over €42.700 Mil (Lori, 2019).

The reason for such flourishing of social enterprises, especially in the form of social cooperatives, is due to cultural, historical and economic processes which saw these organizations co-evolve along with the welfare state, as public authorities increasingly outsourced services to SEs (Testi et al., 2017). The relation between SEs and public

⁴ <https://www.albergoetico.it>

⁵ <https://shop.progettoquid.com>

⁶ <http://www.giardineriaitaliana.it>

⁷ The figure includes 15.770 social cooperatives, 600 ex-lege social enterprises, 86.091 associations and foundations engaged in market activity with at least one employee. It therefore overlaps with some of the figures present in Table 1.

authorities at the different administrative levels is important. As Borzaga et al. (2017) show, based on the data collected by ISTAT in 2011, SEs in Italy work mainly with public institutions. In fact, 65% of their aggregate revenue in 2011 came from working with public institutions while 28% from working with private actors (Borzaga, 2020).

An interesting model stemming out from the development of social enterprises is the Consortium of Social Enterprises. Consortium of social enterprises have the objective of supporting the development of the social enterprises that are members of the consortium by providing them with qualified services (such as marketing, project writing, participation to tenders etc.), as well as coordinating their actions on specific activities or to seize opportunities. Consortiums also give the possibility to include, under the same governance structure, different organizations. For example, consortiums can be also formed to implement specific local development projects implemented by different SEs and local actors (for example see case-study “Sale della Terra” in Section 4).

A rich SSE ecosystem capable of innovating

Due to the long and consistent presence of SSE organizations, the Italian ecosystem has become rich in actors that play a key role in strengthening and innovating it. For example, in 2001, representative bodies such as AGCI, Legacoop, Confcooperative formed the “Alliance of Italian Cooperatives”, grouping 43.000 Italian cooperatives. These associations promote the development of the cooperative model and perform advocacy actions towards policy-makers. Another example of the rich SSE ecosystem is the presence of the Forum del Terzo Settore (Forum of the Third Sector), an association that represents 89 national organizations which in turn represent 141.000 local organizations. It has the role of advocating for the Third Sector to the Italian Government and other institutions, coordinate the work of the different networks of associations and promote the Third Sector and its values. The Italian ecosystem has also seen the emergence of banks that have a specific focus on SSE organizations such as Banca Etica and Banca Prossima, as well as financial instruments created to develop social enterprises such as the social bonds provided by UBI Banca.

The ecosystem of SSE globally, and in Italy, has rapidly developed and diversified in the last 10 years compared to the previous decades. This acceleration was boosted by the increasing global challenges that the Italian society has been facing (aging, climate change, inequality etc.), which urged private actors to find solutions to global problems at local level. Moreover, specific initiatives launched by organizations such as the European Commission aimed at supporting such private actors by creating enabling conditions for their development. For

instance, the Social Business Initiative (SBI)⁸ launched in 2011 by the European Commission boosted research and projects across all Europe aimed at fostering the Social Economy and social innovation. Therefore, since 2011, there has been increased attention from national authorities and international organizations towards the SSE and on how the SSE sector can be innovated both in terms of practices and in the support it can receive. The SBI focused on Funding, Visibility and legal framework for SEs. Many actions stemmed out of the SBI and the debates that it fostered. Some of them contributed to inform the Italian legal framework, such as social impact evaluation for third sector organizations⁹ or the possibility for SSE organizations to be involved in public service co-planning¹⁰, while others are now part of the ecosystem, like social bonds¹¹. The Italian government has also recently launched initiatives such as the “Fondo Innovazione Sociale¹²” (Social Innovation Fund, see Box 2) aimed at experimenting Pay-By-Results models into the provision of public services by fostering cooperation between Public authorities, SSE organizations, Social Impact Evaluators and Financial institutions.

BOX 2. The Social Innovation Fund

The Social Innovation Fund was launched in December 2018 by the Italian Department of Civic Service, in order to promote the creation of innovative models, tackling emerging social needs. To pursue this goal, the Fund is expected to finance a set of piloting initiatives aimed at introducing impact investing schemes.

The piloting phase lasts three years. During this period, the financial resources allocated by the Fund are expected to support the test of social innovation projects that deal with social inclusion, culture, and the fight against school drop-out. The projects are run by Local Governments in partnership with social economy actors. Financial institutions are also involved from the beginning in order to build instruments that can finance the initiatives in the long run (e.g., Social Impact Bonds), along with evaluators that have to assess the achievement of the project's outcomes. By supporting bottom-up social innovation processes, the Department aims at validating new operational models that could ensure both a more effective response to citizens' needs and a more efficient allocation of public resources.

⁸ See https://ec.europa.eu/growth/sectors/social-economy/enterprises_en.

⁹ Art 4, 7, 9, 10 of the Law n106 - 6 June 2016.

¹⁰ Article 55 Dgls - 3 luglio 2017, n. 117, *Codice del Terzo settore*.

¹¹ Ubi Banca is one Italian banks which has been more active in promoting social bonds (see <https://www.ubibanca.com/it/investimenti/social-bond>).

¹² See <http://www.funzionepubblica.gov.it/innovazione-sociale>.

In parallel, the renovated interest at the policy level in Italy was also supported by increased interest on SSE organizations from the general population that conceived them as a possible instrument to solve local problems. Community Cooperatives (Cooperative di Comunità) are an example of the capacity of the SSE ecosystem to innovate its models. Community cooperatives have been increasingly set-up by citizens of marginal areas to self-organize the provision of services (Mori, 2015; Mori and Sforzi, 2018; Dumont, 2019). Other interesting examples are the Community Foundations, a model that gives the possibility to different actors, private and public, to share resources and implement activities to solve local problems (see the case study on “Fondazione Comunità di Messina” in Section 4). Even if already present in the Italian legal framework since 1998, Community Foundations have been increasingly promoted by existing bank foundations such as Fondazione Cariplo¹³ in the last years (Assifero, 2016).

Finally, during the Covid19 pandemic, the SSE sector in Italy tried to cope with the shock. SSE organizations active in commercial activities, such as cooperatives and social enterprises, faced problems similar to those of traditional for-profit companies, in addition to the ones related to the vulnerability of some of their beneficiaries. It is not yet clear how much the Covid19 pandemic will harm SSE organizations. Generally, SSE organizations continued to provide services to the most vulnerable, thus increasing the resilience of the territories in which they are placed. The Covid19 pandemic also boosted initiatives from citizens to provide help to people in need in their neighbourhood. Such initiatives were both self-organized by citizens, without being formalized into an organization, or organized by existing SSE organizations.

Today, especially during and after the pandemic, SSE systems can develop only if accompanied by a combination of policies creating enabling factors to facilitate their emergence and consolidation. Italy's national and territorial experiences, in this scenario, are rather unique and can constitute a useful reference for other countries and places to find their own routes in introducing or consolidating relevant models and practices in these areas.

¹³ See <https://www.fondazionecariplo.it/en/progetti/fondazioni-di-comunita/fondazioni-di-comunit.html>.

Key distinctive features of Italian approach to SSE

All in all, the following distinctive features of the Italian approach to Social and Solidarity Economy can be identified:

- High presence of cooperatives and social enterprises, which give the SSE sector in Italy a more entrepreneurial-oriented approach, as well as a competitive induced strive for innovation;
- Adoption of business models (e.g., Work Integration Social Enterprises), which involve frequent exchanges with different actors such as local authorities, profit and non-profit organizations. Such exchanges contribute to social cohesion, enhance social innovation and align different stakeholders towards common objectives. They also allow harnessing new and un-used resources;
- A strong connection with the local community reinforced by the multi-stakeholder governance processes enacted by most SSE organizations (such as Community cooperatives) with the main objective of promoting sustainable development and social cohesion at the local level;
- An advanced ecosystem, rich in its variety of actors (specialized banks and funds, support organizations, etc.), experiences and practices, able of growing, innovating and reproducing its enabling features for SSE development.

In line with our conceptual and interpretative framework, such key distinctive features enhance the potential for the SSE sector in Italy to contribute to the localization of the SDGs by understanding the needs of the local community and interacting with the different actors of the territory to co-create a shared vision of development and concrete actions to implement it.

3.2 Social and Territorial Cohesion in Italy

Italy has a relevant tradition in designing and implementing strategies, policies and initiatives for social and territorial cohesion, due to the presence of strong social and regional disparities and a long-lasting North-South divide.

Social and territorial cohesion are strongly embedded in the Italian Constitution, which clearly highlights:

- a) the recognition and protection of the inviolable rights of the person, both as an individual and in the social groups where human personality is expressed (Art. 2);

- b) the role of political, economic and social solidarity (Art. 2);
- c) the equal social dignity for all citizens, regardless of any personal feature and social condition (Art. 3);
- d) the duty to remove all economic or social obstacles that constrain the freedom and equality of citizens, thereby impeding the full development of the human person (Art. 3);
- e) the need for supplementary resources and special measures in favour of specific municipalities, provinces, metropolitan cities and regions to promote economic development along with social cohesion and solidarity, to eliminate economic and social imbalances (Art. 119).

In other words, the Constitution of the Italian Republic explicitly embraces a Sustainable Human Development perspective to set an institutional architecture driven by the collective mission of equality of opportunities for citizens in all areas of the country. This keeps social and territorial cohesion strictly tied to each other, especially as a combined expression of place-based dynamics, as recalled in our conceptual and analytical framework.

Over the years, this has led to a distinctive Italian approach to social and territorial cohesion to address internal disparities and foster an enabling environment for the promotion of collective well-being in all places. Besides up-and-downs due to the continuous political and technical turnover within national bodies, this approach has undoubtedly contributed to nurture and sustain societal alliances at the local and community level among public, private and social actors.

The Italian long-lasting tradition towards STC is also coupled with the efforts of the European Union in reducing the significant imbalances that exist both at the EU level (between Member states), at the national level (between regions with different level of growth, human development and social progress), at the regional level, (between urban and rural areas) and at the city level (in terms of inner-urban inequalities among city districts / neighbourhoods). Indeed, there is a growing consensus that the causes of populist trends in Europe nowadays derive from the inequalities and threats that the economic and political order has produced for large segments of the European population, i.e., the 'losers' of globalisation (Rodríguez-Pose, 2018). Inequalities have long been growing – and are today further exacerbated by the pandemic – on three fronts: economic inequalities, in terms of income, well-being and material deprivation; social inequalities, in terms of access to common goods and basic social services; inequalities of recognition (often ignored), in terms of the value, role and aspirations of the person (normative threats). Moreover, territorial disparities between small cities vs metropolis, suburbs of the cities vs city centres, rural areas vs urban areas call for a place-based and people-centred perspective in territorial cohesion policies in the EU. Therefore, in its current conception, the European Cohesion Policy has become a multidimensional development policy, with the mission to ensure the

harmonious development of national and local economies and societies through equal opportunities for all citizens.

Resources of the European Cohesion Policy are allocated on a geographical basis, giving priority to less developed areas (European Commission, 2014a), and distributed following a seven-year programming cycle. The European structural and investment funds (ESIF), jointly managed by the European Commission and the EU countries, are the main vehicles of territorial, economic, and social cohesion in the EU. The five funds are: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF), the Cohesion Fund (CF), the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF). The ESIF mainly focuses on five areas: research and innovation, digital technologies, supporting the low-carbon economy, sustainable management of natural resources and small businesses.

Through these funds, Italy receives significant support from the EU. It is the second-most supported country in the current budgetary period 2014-2020 as Italian southern and island regions are all considered less developed or transition regions (respectively GDP/head <75% and between >=75% and <90% of EU-27 average) in Europe. To plan and implement these resources, Italy has developed its own institutional architecture, strongly centred in the engagement and ownership of local stakeholders along with supervision and coordination role by the centre. This includes:

- the "Cohesion Policy Department" supports the President of the Council of Ministers for inter-institutional coordination between the European Union and State and regional administrations, on economic and financial programming and territorial allocation of Structural Funds and of Italy's Development and Cohesion Fund.
- the "Territorial Cohesion Agency" is an Italian public agency, directly supervised by the President of the Council of Ministers through the Cohesion Policy Department, in charge of the management of cohesion policies and programmes, providing support and accompanying their planning and implementation by central and regional administrations.
- Operational Programmes (OPs)¹⁴ set out the strategic priorities that each Member State lays down in its Partnership Agreement, itemised by sector and territory and outlining the specific objectives within priority axes, on a multi-annual basis.
- National Operational Programmes (NOPs) are managed at the national level and implemented across national territories, with a specific focus – for the 2014-2020 programming period in Italy – on the following major thematic areas: infrastructure, culture, legality, business, research, urban policies, governance, social inclusion, youth, employment, school, rural development, and fisheries.

¹⁴ The 2014-2020 EU programming cycle provides for the implementation of 75 Operational Programmes in Italy co-financed by the 4 European Structural and Investment Funds.

- Regional Operational Programmes (ROPs) are entrusted to local Administrations (Regions or Autonomous Provinces), are either mono-fund or multi-fund, depending on the types of funds made available to beneficiary Regions.

In line with the additionality principle of the European Cohesion Policy, EU funds are coupled with ordinary funds for public investment within the national budget, namely the Development and Cohesion Fund through which the Italian government implements the principle of social and territorial cohesion to achieve economic and social balance among the various areas of the country.¹⁵

Within this setting and embracing a wide place-based and people-centred perspective, two current most relevant strands of policy for STC in Italy can be identified: the recent design and experimentation of the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) and the longer-lasting implementation of the LEADER approach to rural development (nowadays CLLD – Community Led Local Development).

National Strategy for Inner Areas

In the 2014-2020 programming period, Italy started a new integrated policy called the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI). SNAI is a comprehensive and integrated strategy for tackling the problems of depopulation and low access to services in a large portion of the Italian territory. Inner Areas¹⁶ are rural territories characterized by an inadequate offer of/ access to essential services to assure a certain level of citizenship, distant (in terms of travel time) from large and medium-sized urban centres where the supply of adequate health, educational and transport services is concentrated (defined as Service Centres¹⁷). Moreover, physical distance couple with the rural digital divide, in terms of absence, low speeds or poor quality of broadband access. Nevertheless, Inner Areas deploy important environmental resources (water, high-quality agricultural products, forests, natural and human landscapes) and cultural assets (archaeological assets, historic settlements, abbeys, small museums, skills centres). They are also extremely diversified, as the result of their varied natural systems, and centuries' old human settlement processes (ERND, 2017).

For these reasons, Inner Areas are considered strategically relevant to foster more sustainable and inclusive national growth. SNAI intends to innovate local services and

¹⁵ Its resources are 80% directed to the South and 20% to the Centre-North.

¹⁶ In Italy these areas cover 60% of the national territory, include 52% of municipalities and are home to 23% of total population.

¹⁷ Service Centers have been defined as those municipalities that offer: an exhaustive range of secondary schools; at least a 1st level DEA (highly specialized) hospital; at least a 'Silver - type' railway station.

development investments within a multi-level framework, involving local communities through a participatory approach to local development.

SNAI is financed by all the available ESI funds (ERDF, ESF, EAFRD, EMFF) and by the National Stability Law to support strategies for both local development and service innovation. The design of local strategies is supported by the Cohesion Policy Department, while their implementation and monitoring are supported by the Territorial Cohesion Agency.

The following distinctive principles and main elements of novelty of the SNAI methodological approach¹⁸ can be identified:

- Integrated programming method at territorial level, avoiding the traditional tender notice approach to assign resources while boosting a concertation process among all local actors. This approach has allowed to gradually move from the transparent identification of inner areas based on an Open Kit of indicators and data, to the selection of “project areas” where a programming process centred on the collective design of the draft, preliminary and then final strategy is promoted. However, such process has widely expanded the time frame making the programming phase much longer (and complicated) than expected.
- Leadership assigned to Unions / Associations of local governments at the municipal level as elected representatives of the local population, avoiding technical intermediaries in order to strengthen deliberative democracy at the local level. In other words, regardless of the presence of enabling (e.g., committed majors and officials with a positive attitude toward local development) or disabling (e.g., majors and officials living far from the local population and scarcely informed on their context) conditions, the SNAI approach has made them the central leading actor of the programming process. Moreover, municipalities are pushed to adopt appropriate and permanent forms of joint management of public services enabling the effective implementation of the territorial strategy.
- Open and transparent involvement of local actors to identify a vision and thematic areas, issues and proposals for the design of the territorial strategy to guide the structural change of the local society in the future. In other words, through repeated moments of public consultation and deliberation, local economic actors and the civil society at large are co-owners of the territorial strategy, despite the exposure to related difficulties and conflicts. Moreover, the approach intends to avoid that the territorial strategy is simply a sum of fragmented projects, which respond to private interests or compensatory mechanisms.

¹⁸ These features are fully aligned with the principles characterising UNDP approach to territorial development and partnerships with its ART Global Initiative, whose origin traces back to initiatives implemented by the Italian development cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1970s.

- Intertwined attention to both local economic development fields (i.e., land management and forests; local food products; renewable energy; natural and cultural heritage; and traditional crafts and SMEs) and essential services for citizens (i.e., primary and secondary school and vocational training, local mobility and transports, healthcare and medical services)¹⁹ to reinforce the connection between development and services towards equality of opportunities and shared prosperity.
- Whole-of-government approach and multi-fund action, by complementing the role of different national ministries (e.g., respectively on employment, economic development, infrastructure, education, health) in terms of guidelines and directives, as well as by complementing ESI funds with national resources.
- Continuous attention to open data and innovative indicators, which represents both the starting point of the SNAI in terms of identification and selection of each Inner Area and the basis for a M&E framework in the medium- and long-term.
- Open-ended/iterative methodology in terms of operational mechanisms, tools and rules to avoid procedural traps, through a continuous learning process based on an experimental and flexible approach both at the national and territorial level;
- Qualified technical assistance by the central body to support leading actors at the local level over the whole programming process thanks to a team of specialised experts providing an impartial and external view to disrupt potential lock-in and rent-seeking behaviours within local societies.

Making these principles operational, so far the SNAI has boosted territorial dynamics in terms of strategic programming processes in 72 project areas, involving 1060 municipalities (with an average of 15 municipalities per area) and a total population of around 2 million people (with an average of around 28000 inhabitants per area).²⁰

The design of the territorial strategy in the project areas has followed these steps:

- Drafting of ideas: The focal person for the area involves institutions, associations, citizens, entrepreneurs and other relevant actors to identify 'Draft Ideas for Discussion' on both essential services and local development, to be validated by the regional government and the national technical committee for Inner Areas.
- Preliminary Strategy: Here, the draft ideas begin to be translated into expected results, with actions, timeframes and possible sources of funding. Synergies and

¹⁹ Example of supported projects for local service innovation include: a community car-pooling initiative in Val Maira (Piedmont), which uses a web platform and is managed by a local community cooperative; remote classrooms in secondary schools in Beigua Sol (Liguria) and Piacenza-Parma Apennine (Emilia Romagna); equipping local pharmacies in Matese (Molise) with smart technologies to allow remote diagnostics by hospital personnel; smart devices to allow inhabitants to monitor landslides and strengthen civil protection in Madonie (Sicily) (ERND, 2017).

²⁰ These 72 project areas represent 13.4% of all Italian municipalities and 26% of the municipalities classified as Inner Areas; 3.3% of the national population and 15.2% of the resident population in the municipalities classified as Inner Areas; 17% of the entire national area and 28.4% of the total area of all Inner Areas.

collaborations between administrations, the local community and entrepreneurs are also described.

- Strategy: The contents of the previous document are definitively broken down into action sheets and specific actions, expected results and result indicators.
- Signing of the Framework Programme Agreement: The Framework Programme Agreement includes the final list of interventions and represents the concrete instrument for the implementation of the Strategy. It is signed by the focal person of the project area, by the regional government, by the national Ministries involved and by the Territorial Cohesion Agency.

As of December 2020, 70 project areas have closed the process of approving their final strategy, with an overall value of the approved strategies amounting to €1.142 Mil. The 70 approved strategies rely on approximately €261 Mil from dedicated state resources, a further €693 Mil from programs financed by the ESI Funds, and a further €189 Mil from other public and private resources.

The thematic areas of intervention of the approved strategies include mainly the following ones (ordered according to their financial weight): mobility; nature, culture and tourism; health and socio-educational services; agriculture and animal husbandry; businesses; energy; infrastructures and digital services; forest; safety of the territory; work and training; efficiency and transparency of the public administration.

Moreover, out of the 70 approved strategies, 41 Framework Program Agreements have been signed, representing the implementation tool through which regional governments, local bodies and central coordination administrations undertake the binding commitments for the achievement of the objectives defined by the strategy.

The implementation of the SNAI has been surely carried out much slower than foreseen. Nevertheless, the strong commitment of local stakeholders, and primarily of LRGs, the active engagement of citizens and the enhanced institutional collaboration are illustrative of the value-added of its approach for Italian territories, pushing for its scale-up.²¹

Indeed, immediately after the experimental phase was completed on the first 72 “project areas” (as for the 2014-2020 programming period), in December 2020 the Italian government announced the start of the implementation phase to ultimately consolidate the SNAI as a structural policy in the framework of the new 2021-2027 programming period and the Next Generation EU plan. This has been made evident in terms of financing, by devoting an additional €310 Mil of national resources to the SNAI in 2020, in order to i) guarantee a

²¹ An official evaluation of the SNAI has not been released yet. However, since the beginning, the SNAI has foreseen a structured evaluation process at the service of the Strategy as a whole and of the project areas.

reward to the pilot area which recorded the best and most consistent performances, and ii) allow the activation of at least 2 new project areas per region.

Finally, the experience of the SNAI is inspiring not only similar initiatives in other European and OECD countries, but also the next programming cycle 2021-2027 that is going to embrace the integrated programming method and related distinctive features of this strategy.

LEADER / CLLD in Italy

The [LEADER approach](#) to rural development has been implemented in Italy since 1991 in order to support rural actors in identifying and leveraging the long-term development potential of their area. LEADER is a bottom-up approach to design and implement rural development strategies by bringing together farmers, rural businesses, local organisations, public authorities and individuals from different sectors to constitute and operate as a local action group (LAG). The direct engagement and commitment of private actors within LAGs is the most distinctive feature of this approach. It goes far beyond consultation mechanisms of local actors by ensuring their full ownership (and responsibility) of rural development strategies and initiatives. Indeed, based on this multi-stakeholder partnership, LAGs prepare their own local development strategies focusing on local value chains, landscape and natural resources and sustainable tourism. These strategies contribute to Rural Development Programmes at the regional level, based on which they manage their own respective budgets, funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

In the 2014-2020 programming period, LEADER has been extended to “[Community-Led Local Development](#)” (CLLD), which represents the advanced approach to mobilise and involve rural communities and organisations to contribute to achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and fostering territorial cohesion. Moreover, the CLLD approach has extended the sources of funding from the European Regional Development Fund (as already in the LEADER approach) to rely also on the European Social Fund, the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund.²²

²² Since 2007, the LEADER / CLLD approach has been extended to support for the sustainable development of fisheries areas, by ensuring that the actions undertaken by the Fisheries Local Action Groups (FLAGs) build on the unique strengths and opportunities of each fisheries area; exploit new markets and products; and incorporate the knowledge, energy and resources of local actors from all sectors.

Within this approach, LAGs assume a key role as community leaders, including²³ representatives of local public and private socio-economic interests, such as entrepreneurs and their associations, local authorities, neighbourhood or rural associations, groups of citizens (such as minorities, senior citizens, women/ men, youth, entrepreneurs, etc.), community and voluntary organisations, etc. LEADER / CLLD relies on local action groups as political and technical bodies that can enhance a local partnership of actors in charge of designing and implementing a local strategy for rural development.

The design of the rural development strategy for the local area is based on the following elements:

- Definition of the area and population covered by the strategy (ranging from minimum 10,000 to maximum of 150,000 inhabitants), which should be coherent, targeted and offer sufficient critical mass for its effective implementation;
- Analysis of the development needs and potential of the area, including a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) analysis;
- Description of the objectives, as well as the integrated and innovative features of the strategy, including measurable targets for outputs or results;
- Preparation of action plan demonstrating how objectives are translated into concrete projects, management and monitoring arrangements;
- Preparation of financial plan.

Based on these premises, the main distinctive principles of LEADER / CLLD approach and their elements of novelty are the following (European Commission, 2014b):

- encouraging local communities to develop integrated bottom-up strategies in rural areas where there is a need to respond to territorial challenges and boost processes for structural change;
- ensuring public-private partnerships and community ownership by setting formal bodies in charge of designing and implementing rural development strategies;
- building community capacity and stimulating innovation (including social innovation) by local economic actors, in order to encourage the discovery and development of untapped potential within communities and territories;
- connecting and integrating the use of different Funds to deliver local development strategies;
- ensuring, through legal requirements, the conduction of evaluations of LEADER / CLLD rural development strategies at territorial, regional, national and European level, based on practical and hands-on [Guidelines](#) for evaluation stakeholders;

²³ At least 50% of the votes in selection decisions should be cast by partners which are not public authorities, and no single interest group should have more than 49% of the votes.

- assisting multi-level governance by providing a route for rural communities to fully take part in shaping the implementation of EU objectives in their territories.

The implementation of this methodology in the Italian context is surely contributing to making a place-based approach for social and territorial cohesion operational in several rural areas of the country. As of June 2020, at least one LAG was created and active in each Italian region (ranging from 1 in Valle d'Aosta to 23 in Puglia and Sicily), for a total of 200 LAGs. The average amount of financial resources per LAG ranged from €3.4 Mil in Bolzano Autonomous Province and Abruzzo Region to €12.6 Mil in Marche region, for a total budget of €1,211.9 Mil for the implementation of the CLLD approach in Italy in the 2014-2020 programming period (Rete Rurale Nazionale, 2020).

In the more effective Italian cases, the establishment of the LAG and the deployment of its role as both political and technical body has been strongly relying on a bottom-up and participatory dialogue among different relevant actors, which enable to design integrated and multi-sectoral strategies.²⁴

A key value-added is the proximity to the final beneficiaries / recipients of the initiatives included in the local strategies. This allows a better understanding of their needs, shaping the interventions' structure and mechanisms and simplifying procedures to identify feasible solutions in addressing those needs. Therefore, such approach has its very functional nature not only to ensure project effectiveness but also to nurture social energy and community-building towards collective well-being.

To conclude, it is worth providing few clarifications on the comparison between the SNAI approach and the LEADER / CLLD approach.

First, SNAI focuses specifically on municipalities located in Inner Areas (as classified by the national technical committee according to the Open Kit of indicators), while LEADER / CLLD focuses on municipalities in rural areas regardless of the distance criteria from Service Centre.

Second, SNAI assigns full leadership and responsibility of the strategic programming process to Local and Regional Governments (and specifically to municipalities' unions/associations in the project area), while LEADER / CLLD relies on structured/formalised local partnership between public and private actors at the local level to act both as political and technical body.

²⁴ The role played by the [National Rural Network](#) has widely facilitated experience-sharing and peer-to-peer learning among rural communities and local action groups.

Nevertheless, the area covered by their respective strategy may overlap (or even fully coincide), thus requiring the two approaches (in terms of respective leadership, strategy and tools) to be coherently integrated, strengthening relationships of trust and mutual recognition of roles, reconciling the political vision of the LRGs and the technical planning of the LAGs, and leveraging multiple synergies. Broader and more innovative impacts in the territories can be achieved by integrating Inner Areas strategies and LEADER local development plans, as the former focuses also on local service innovation, while the latter mostly on local economic development.

A similar situation requires avoiding redundancies and conflicts between strategies and interventions acting on the same territory and community. Indeed, synergies can be further enabled when LAGs directly participate in the design and implementation of the local Inner Areas strategy, as happened in several Italian regions. In this case, the mutual advantage is that LAGs are potentially able to better calibrate and target the needs of private actors (especially farmers and SMEs) operating in the main local value chains and economic sectors, while the SNAI approach extends its scope to social services and infrastructures (in mobility and digital terms) to benefit the whole local community.

Distinctive features of the Italian approach to STC

To conclude, the Italian approach to social and territorial cohesion deploy key value-adding features that make it effective in boosting the sustainability of local value chains and the upgrading of SMEs in strategic economic sectors, the accessibility to essential services (e.g., health, education and training) and infrastructures (e.g., mobility and digital connectivity) for citizens, as well as territorial and urban regeneration processes, and participatory governance mechanisms, thus contributing to SDG localization.

Table 3 summarizes these key features and how they have been made operational in concrete terms to drive structural change at the territorial level shaping the evolution of the policy and institutional landscape.

Table 3. Key features and their application of the Italian approach to STC

	FEATURE	APPLICATION
SCOPE	Integration between interventions on local economic development processes, essential services and infrastructures for citizens, regeneration processes, and governance capacity-building to reinforce the connection between development and services towards equality of opportunities and shared prosperity.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Operational Programmes (NOPs) in these thematic fields are managed at the national level and implemented across national territories to use the ESI funds and implement the European Cohesion Policy. • Territorial strategies for Inner Areas must – by definition – devote integrated attention to local development and citizens' services. • The CLLD approach pushes LAGs and regional governments to combine multiple funds – on agriculture, fishery, social issues – in their rural development strategies.
OWNERSHIP	Strong local leadership and responsibilities for both strategic programming and implementation played by LRGs (from regional governments to metropolitan and municipal authorities).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LRGs are responsible for planning and managing the use of ESI funds through Regional Operational Programmes. • LRGs and their associations act as leaders and responsible – through signed binding agreements – for the design and implementation of the Inner Areas strategy in their territory. • LRGs are co-founders and members of the LAG to guide the rural development process.
MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE	Supervision, technical assistance and financing role by national institutions, along with alignment with European policies, approaches and funds.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Cohesion Policy Department is responsible for inter-institutional coordination between the European Union and State and regional administrations. • The national technical Committee of the SNAI supports the design of territorial strategies through external expertise and assistance. • The Territorial Cohesion Agency and national Ministries involved signing a binding Framework Programme Agreement to implement each territorial Inner Areas strategy. • The National Rural Network and the European Network for Rural Development facilitate experience-sharing and peer-to-

		peer learning among rural communities and local action groups.
SOCIETAL ENGAGEMENT	Whole-of-society approach in both strategic programming and implementation to gather together tangible and intangible resources (including knowledge and expertise), efforts and responsibilities within local communities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local actors operating in the public, private, civil society and academic / research sectors are strongly involved and engaged in the design and implementation of territorial strategies, both within SNAI and LEADER / CLLD, with the assignment of specific roles, functions and duties.
CITIZENS' PARTICIPATION	Openness to public debate and scrutiny (including potential conflicts) to enrich the knowledge base on both local problems and solutions and to ensure collective mobilization towards shared goals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Extensive participatory processes are mandatory within the SNAI and LEADER / CLLD approaches. Citizens' participation is extended from consultation to public deliberation, evaluation and collective mobilization.

Source: Authors

Despite the relevance of these general features, it is important to remark that territorial inequalities in economic, social and recognition terms are still persistent and evident within the Italian society. Moreover, the implementation of the Italian approach to social and territorial cohesion is widely differentiated at the territorial level. In other words, we cannot identify a unique monolithic model, but rather a place-based operationalization of this approach with a high level of variety in different contexts and times.

4. SELECTION OF CASE-STUDIES

Experience-sharing and peer-to-peer learning are extremely important for SDG localization and for promoting SSE and STC. The diffusion of good practices is one of the key mechanisms that ensures that good ideas can inspire as many relevant actors as possible and can create a multiplicative global effect on local communities.

For this reason, our study has considered and analysed the relevant model-experiences of SSE and STC in the Italian scenario, in order to identify and select 6 case-studies that can potentially inspire similar practices and showcase replicable in other countries.

First of all, a list of 8 selection criteria was set by the research team and validated with UNDP ART focal persons, as described in Table 4. The list does not follow a ranking order. These criteria are grounded on the conceptual and interpretative framework introduced in section 2 and are meant to identify case-studies that are potentially able to provide concrete policy insights and guidance, in order to foster social cohesion and promote inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic development, thus supporting the localization of the 2030 Agenda.

Table 4. Selection criteria for the case-studies

CRITERION	DESCRIPTION
Capacity to catalyse SDG localization	SDG localization is the reference framework of this study. Thus, the selected case studies show a clear capacity to contribute to SDG localization (i.e., one or more Goals and targets) through the implementation of effective and innovative solutions.
Focus on specific vulnerable groups / communities / territories	<p>Disadvantaged/vulnerable groups, communities or territories are those groups of persons/territories that are more exposed at risk of poverty, social exclusion, violence, discrimination.</p> <p>The capacity of an intervention to improve the wellbeing of those groups through innovative and effective solutions, guaranteeing equal opportunity to access to resources, services and support programmes was highly considered when selecting the experiences for the case studies.</p>
Systemic change	The case studies show that their implementation has brought a significant and transformative change bringing social and institutional innovation in a local development system.
Multi-actor processes and dynamics	<p>A multi-actor dynamic is boosted when different types of actors are involved in a process of co-creation (e.g., local governments, civil society, private enterprises, third sector organizations etc.). The collaboration among different actors is an important feature for long-lasting interventions, since it allows taking into consideration different perspectives, needs and interests in tackling specific issues. Moreover, the co-creation among different actors usually increases the ownership and the embeddedness of a process, creating a favourable environment that will make this process last in time.</p> <p>In the selection of the experiences, preference was accorded to those initiatives that show a significant level of citizenry and local communities' engagement in its design, development and/or implementation.</p>
Multi-level territorial processes and dynamics	A multi-level territorial process involves several territories at different levels (e.g., communities, neighbourhood, Municipality, Province, Region, State, etc.) creating new connections and innovative collaborations to solve common problems.
Institutionalization	This criterion refers to the capacity of making a certain practice/experience embedded in its system as a structured and long-

	<p>lasting intervention, not just as a single experience limited in time.</p> <p>Institutionalized experiences were preferred in the case studies selection, since they usually can bring a more relevant structural change in the economy and society.</p>
Social/transformative resilience	<p>Social resilience is the ability of a social system to recover after a shock, finding a new equilibrium. We can talk about transformative resilience when the occurred shock is transformed by the community into an opportunity to find new solutions, reaching a new and improved equilibrium for the community.</p> <p>It is important to underline that the phenomenon has to be considered as a collective rather than as an individual phenomenon, thus it has to be analysed at the community level.</p>
Potential replicability	<p>The potential replicability is the possibility to replicate the same model in another context. The selected case studies show performances, results and success which are not strictly dependent on their context of origin, but whose experiences can achieve positive results also when applied in other contexts.</p>

Source: Authors

As an additional concern, the case studies were selected also in order to be as much representative as possible of the Italian context, taking into consideration different geographic areas (North, Centre and South of Italy), different contexts (urban/rural areas); and different levels of implementation (community / neighbourhood / local / regional / national implementation).

The identification of potential case-studies was based primarily on the triangulation of i) the expertise of the research team in both fields, ii) desk-review of policy documentation, and particularly iii) relevant suggestions collected during the interviews conducted with 18 prominent experts of both SSE and STC in the Italian scenario (see Appendix 1). Each pre-selected experience was then preliminary analysed on the basis of available documents, in order to assess their compliance with the selection criteria.

The results of this selection process and the continuous interaction between the research team and UNDP ART focal persons led to the final selection of 6 case-studies presented in Table 5. Despite the case-studies are primarily divided in our two fields of interest (3 cases for SSE and 3 cases for STC), in most cases both components are intertwined and integrated as the in-depth presentation of each case study will show.

Table 5. Summary of selected case-studies

Main sector	Model	Case-study	Location	Level of implementation
Social and Solidarity Economy	CONSORTIUM OF COOPERATIVES	Consortium "Sale della Terra"	Benevento, Campania Region (South)	Group of local municipalities
	WORK INTEGRATION SOCIAL ENTERPRISE	Social enterprise "Quid"	Verona, Veneto Region (North)	Municipality and broader surrounding outskirts
	COMMUNITY FOUNDATION	Community foundation "Fondazione di Comunità di Messina"	Messina, Sicily Region (South)	Municipality and surrounding outskirts
Social and Territorial Cohesion	LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR INNER AND FRAGILE AREAS	Strategy "Milk Mountain" – Emilian Apennines	Emilian Apennines, Emilia Romagna Region (North)	Association of municipalities in inner area
	LOCAL ACTION GROUP FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT	Local Action Group "Maiella Verde"	Chieti province, Abruzzo Region (South)	Association of municipalities in rural area
	INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY REGENERATION	SiBaTer Project	Municipalities and Regions in Southern Italy	Municipalities and Regions


Source: Authors

A preliminary description of selected case studies is provided hereinafter. In particular, for each experience we present i) a first table summarising its main features; ii) a brief overview of its story and a general description; and iii) a table illustrating how and to what extent it responds to the set of selection criteria.

4.1 Social and Solidarity Economy case-study: Consortium “Sale della Terra”

Consortium of social cooperatives have the objective of supporting the development of its members (the social cooperatives) by providing them with, generally, support services, such as administrative services, advice, training, facilitation of access to credit, etc.; political representation for the purpose of promoting solidarity and cooperation; and an entrepreneurial function mainly by acting as a general contractor in public service tenders as the Consortium has a greater contractual weight than single cooperatives. Consortium also give the possibility to include, under the same governance structure, different organizations, such as social cooperatives, social enterprises, cooperatives, companies, in order to implement specific local development projects and strategies. Consortium of social cooperatives allow to maximize territorial social impact as they can leverage more resources in order to carry out a more overarching and systemic development policy and vision that goes beyond and encompasses the direct social outcomes of a single social cooperative. The ensemble of coordinated and coherent actions of a multitude of territorial organization pursuing a strong and shared social mission generates a potential for a systemic and innovative change in the local economic, social and welfare systems as a whole, while, at the same time, providing context-specific activities and services tailored to territorial needs.

	Consortium “Sale della Terra”
LINK	https://consorziosaledellaterra.it/
MODEL	Consortium of social cooperatives
OBJECTIVES	Sustainable local development, local regeneration of small municipalities at risk of depopulation and abandonment, social cohesion, job inclusion of vulnerable people at risk of marginalization (people with disabilities, detained people or people sentenced to alternative measures to prison, refugees, native unemployed people), sustainable recovery of uncultivated and abandoned land.

LOCALIZED SDGs	
MAIN ACTIONS	Social farms, cohesive, inclusive and sustainable agriculture, management of reception facilities for refugees, socialization activities for people experiencing social exclusion, welfare services, inclusive craftsmanship, sustainable tourism, community markets, educational projects for children, management of 'inclusive' pastry shop, wine bar and hotel, online ethical e-commerce platform, etc.
START YEAR	2016
LOCATION	Benevento, Campania Region (South of Italy)

Source: Authors

The Consortium "Sale della Terra" was formed in 2016 in Benevento, a small town in the Campania Region, in Southern Italy. The latter is a lower-income region experiencing a poverty rate two times higher than the national level (ISTAT, 2018). Throughout several entrepreneurial and social initiatives such as social farms, inclusive and sustainable agriculture, inclusive craftsmanship, sustainable tourism, community markets, pastry shops, as well as a variety of welfare services, the Consortium broadly addresses social exclusion of anyone 'left behind' or at risk of marginalization by providing them with job opportunities and placing them at the centre of a local regeneration and development strategy. The Consortium finds its origins from a single local social cooperative which was founded in 1996 to implement the mission and vocation of the so-called 'Democratic Psychiatry'. The latter is an Italian society that triggered an historical national psychiatric reform contrasting the social and economic exclusion of people suffering from mental issues and forced to internment in mental institutions, now illegal in the Italian legislation²⁵.

²⁵ Namely, the Italian law n°180/ 1978 forcing the closure of mental institutions in Italy. The latter is also called Basaglia Law as it implements the psychiatric reform initiated by Dr. Franco Basaglia, founder of the Democratic Psychiatric Society, which aimed at restoring dignity and civil rights to people suffering from mental issues and forced to invasive medical treatment.

In line with the reform, the cooperative, founded by a group of labour union members, social operators and psychologists, aimed at restoring dignity to the patients of the local public Mental Health Department and providing them with job opportunities for their social and economic reinsertion. Hence, the social cooperative began by offering cleaning services (public services subcontracted by the local municipality) and employing people suffering from mental issues, namely the patients of the Mental Health Department (some of which became members of the cooperatives along with some of their relatives) but soon started to engage with other experience and third sector actors. Together with the latter, efforts to provide job opportunities and socialization opportunities also for people with disabilities were put in place. For this purpose, in 2001, a Centre for Disabilities was set up (also through a public tendering process) aiming at the socialization and emancipation of people with disabilities. The Centre then soon began to host also people subject to alternative measures to prison and, consequently, a second operational branch originated from the first social cooperative, which eventually, in 2005, became another social cooperative on its own. The latter started offering welfare services, sustainable agricultural and craftsmanship activities and products also recovering ancient crafts and traditions employing prisoners, former prisoners or people subject to alternative measures to prison. Later, an abandoned plot of land was made available by a local voluntary group linked to a catholic order. The plot of land was turned by the two cooperatives into a social farm where both prisoners, former prisoners or people subject to alternative measures to prison, as well as people with disabilities, began socializing and carrying out urban agricultural activities, then also managing a small kiosk. The success of this social farm sparked the attention of the local pastoral organization which asked the cooperatives to become the managers of all its local charitable activities. This encounter between the third sector world working for economic and social inclusion (the social cooperatives and the local voluntary group) and the pastoral world opened a vast pool of opportunities for the former to carry out numerous and different activities ranging from canteens, dormitories, reception services for migrants and needy families in order to respond to any type of social need. Therefore, another social cooperative was subsequently founded to manage these new activities. Moreover, another local actor joined forces, namely a cooperative created in 2013 by young graduates who were returning from abroad to carry out social agricultural activities which they defined as 'cohesive agriculture'.

In 2016, these four cooperatives which were already carrying out social inclusion activities, first in silos and soon after joining forces, realized they were sharing a common history and a shared development model. This awareness triggered their decision to create a consortium having, on the one hand, the objective of giving continuity to these activities pursuing the social and economic inclusion of people at risk of marginalization or belonging to disadvantaged social categories. On the other, the consortium was founded to pursue the local development and local regeneration of the territory. In fact, Benevento and surrounding municipalities are experiencing a strong de-population and ageing trend: 60 out of 78 municipalities belonging to the Benevento province count less than 5000

inhabitants. Therefore, despite the natural richness of these territories, also home to renowned wine productions and other local products, local emigration and ageing phenomena cause relevant local economic and social challenges. Hence, the chosen name of the Consortium “Sale della Terra” (“salt of the earth”) refers to the Consortium objective to create enabling conditions for a local development strategy stemming from social inclusion, metaphorically providing ‘salt’, hence ‘flavour’ to the local territories and their development. For this purpose, the Consortium has become an active promoter of a local regeneration strategy of small municipalities at risk of depopulation and abandonment. The latter has been joined by several surrounding municipalities forming a network called “The Welcoming Small Municipalities” (namely “Piccoli Comuni del Welcome” - PCW) actively promoting and setting up community cooperatives employing both locals and refugees, people with disabilities, detained persons or people sentenced to alternative measures to prison.

The Consortium actively engages different local actors and stakeholders, while leveraging and activating also multi-level territorial resources, such as ministerial-level entities, a national network of municipalities, prefectures and judicial offices, to name a few. In particular, the Consortium collaborates and partners with local public administration entities and institutions, clerical institutions, third sector organisations, universities and training centres. Today, the Consortium has grown up to 16 cooperatives, mainly social cooperatives, employing 260 people and encompassing a wide range of social entrepreneurial activities, an e-commerce platform, locally branded quality products and social initiatives. Moreover, the Consortium growth also entailed its geographical expansion: nowadays its member cooperatives operate in four different neighbouring regions in the South of Italy, hence sharing similar social and economic features, including lower income levels compared to the average national level.

The table below summarizes the main key features of the Consortium “Sale della Terra” responding to our selection criteria.









CRITERIA	CONSORTIUM SALE DELLA TERRA
Capacity to catalyse SDG localization	The Consortium annual social report explicitly recognizes its social mission and vocation, namely, to broadly promote sustainable, inclusive and cohesive local development. As such, it explicitly and concretely pursues and catalyses SDGs 1,2,3,5,8,9,10,11,12,16 and 17 through local, sustainable and innovative solutions.
Focus on specific vulnerable groups / communities / territories	The Consortium explicitly and primarily pursues social inclusion by engaging and employing vulnerable people at risk of marginalization such as migrants and refugees, people with disabilities, people suffering from mental illness, native unemployed people, detained persons or people sentenced to alternative measures to prison, families in need, homeless people and more. The Consortium places social inclusion at the very centre of its local development vision.
Systemic change	The local development strategy pursued by the Consortium based on social and economic inclusion of vulnerable groups and people at risk of marginalization not only proves to be feasible, but also manages to expand its logic to a growing number of territorial stakeholders and actors. In fact, the success of its “Welcoming Small Municipalities” network joined by surrounding municipalities shows that the strategy has the potential for a systemic and innovative change in the local economic, social and welfare systems as a whole. Also, the Consortium was able, together with other territorial stakeholders as well as the families of people with disabilities, to advocate for the advancement and implementation of the Health Budget reform on the part of the local public service provider. Moreover, the number of social cooperatives joining the Consortium has grown over the years, magnifying its range of impact. The latter also is to be intended in geographical terms as these cooperatives are based in other Italian regions and each address specific local needs and offer tailored services. This is emblematic of the suitability of the Consortium of social cooperatives model which allows to pursue systemic and coherent local development policies while providing context-specific activities and services tailored to specific territorial needs.
Multi-actor processes and dynamics	<p>The Consortium actively collaborates and partners with different types of actors ranging from the private sector, the public sector and the third sector. In fact, the Consortium stakeholders range from state and local public administration entities and institutions, pastoral organizations, third sector organisations, private enterprises and financial institutions.</p> <p>The collaboration among different actors is an important feature for long-lasting interventions, since it allows to take into consideration different perspectives, needs and interests in tackling specific issues. Moreover, the co-creation among different actors usually increases the ownership and the embeddedness of a process, creating a favourable environment that allows its sustainability.</p>

Multi-level territorial processes and dynamics	The Consortium actively collaborates and partners with different level entities varying from different municipalities, the Campania Region, State Agencies, Ministries and National Authorities. Involving and leveraging territorial processes at different levels indeed fosters new connections and innovative collaborations to solve common problems.
Institutionalization	The local development strategy pursued by this case study has gone beyond a citizen movement, a philanthropic practice or a voluntary practice. Instead, it has taken the legal form of a Consortium of social cooperatives, which is a legal form recognized by ex art.8 of the Italian Law number 381/91. This legal status allows the experience to be embedded and recognized within an institutional and juridical system potentially ensuring its sustainability and long-lasting impact. Moreover, it allows the Consortium to formally partner and engage with both private and public entities in carrying out its entrepreneurial activity and delivering social and welfare services. In addition, the President of the Consortium has been actively advocating for the law proposal concerning the innovative welfare instrument pursued through the health budgets, allowing for the institutionalization of co-managed community welfare practices.
Social/transformational resilience	The creation of a consortium of social cooperatives entails a cooperative economy model instead of a competitive one. Moreover, these social cooperatives offer training and concrete job opportunities for the locals, both migrants and natives, fostering trust and social cohesion. Ultimately, the activities of these social cooperatives collectively foster a sustainable, inclusive local development strategy boosting the local economy, safeguarding the environment, regenerating unused and abandoned land and premises and recovering ancient craftsmanship traditions, among other impacts. In turn, these positive effects concur to leverage local resources, reduce the territory's fragilities and, conversely, boost social and transformative resilience.
Potential replicability	The experience of the Consortium and its model shows a great degree of potential to be replicated in other contexts. The organizational model of a Consortium of social cooperatives allows for a flexible and adaptable response to localized territorial needs, hence showcases a high potential for successful application in different contexts. In other words, it is a versatile and suitable model that provides an organizational umbrella to local organizations pursuing a common human development vision. Moreover, the cooperative model and the Consortium of social cooperatives are indeed quite widespread worldwide, suitable to rural context as well as urban areas. Hence, potentially being an endogenous model for other contexts, the latter might find it easier to replicate it.

Source: Authors

4.2 Social and Solidarity Economy case-study: Quid Social Enterprise

Work-Integration Social Enterprise (WISE) are social enterprises producing and selling goods and services by employing people belonging to disadvantaged social categories. For this reason, WISEs embody one of the best organizational models to actively pursue an inclusive social economy. People belonging to disadvantaged social categories not only are provided with a job opportunity, but also can find within the Social Enterprise a personal vocation in becoming, in turn, at the service of others in need. The Social Enterprise Quid, in Veneto Region (Italy), offers an alternative vision and strategy to the mainstream market and social logic. In fact, it showcases a model where what the traditional market leaves behind becomes the starting point for a new economic, social and environmental paradigm, in that: (i) discarded materials/commodities and by-products resulting from market values chains become inputs for a new product life-cycle, hence providing low cost or cost-free supply for another production chain; and (ii) people belonging to a socially disadvantaged category or at risk of social exclusion and 'left behind' from the labour market are offered a job training program and stable job contracts. This entails restoring their social dignity, providing them a stable salary and, therefore the necessary means to achieve basic functioning and, ultimately, to expand their capabilities.

	Social enterprise Quid
LINK	https://www.quidorg.it/
MODEL	Work-Integration Social Enterprise (WISE)/B-type Social cooperative
OBJECTIVES	Inclusive development, social inclusion, female empowerment, job inclusion of people at risk of marginalization, circular economy, environmental sustainability
LOCALIZED SDGs	      
MAIN ACTIONS	Independent, ethical and sustainable fashion brand entailing the reuse of excess stock from Italian fashion companies and textile industries and employing people at risk of marginalization (especially women with difficult backgrounds); job placement programs and training, tailoring laboratory in Montorio prison (Verona, Italy)

START YEAR	2013
LOCATION	Verona, Italy

Source: Authors

The social enterprise Quid was founded in Verona (Northern Italy) in 2013 by Anna Fiscale, a 25-year-old young woman with a background in Economics and International Relations and with experience in international cooperation in India and Haiti. “Progetto Quid” is an Italian fashion brand employing people, mainly women, from vulnerable social groups and backgrounds in the production of clothes and accessories. Quid’s products are made from high-quality surplus textiles donated by some of Italy’s top fashion firms and textile industries. At the beginning, the social enterprise revenue amounted to €90000, production was externalized to 3 local cooperatives and sold in temporary stores. Nowadays, Quid employs 138 people and sells through a network of over a hundred multi-brand stores, 2 outlets, 9 Quid stores, as well as on-line on its e-commerce platform. Quid also manages three tailoring laboratories, two of which in the Montorio prison (Verona, Italy) both in the male and female prison departments.

Since 2013, Quid offers job placement and training to people belonging to vulnerable categories within its various business departments, ranging from production and quality control, retail, logistics, administration and business management. In particular, Quid offers job placement programs for both people benefitting and not benefitting from specific national job placement welfare programs. In 2019, Quid employed 42 new people with a 70% retention rate.

Quid also aims at transforming the fashion business into a sustainable value chain by minimizing its environmental impact. In fact, it actively integrates practices of circular economy into its business model through the reuse of excess stock or discarded textile from high-end Italian fashion companies and high-quality textile industries. This allows Quid to extend the textile life-cycle and to reduce its carbon footprint. Since 2013, Quid managed to reuse more than 800km of fabrics which were either donated or purchased. In 2019, Quid revenues amounted to €3.119000.

During the Covid19 pandemic, Quid proved to be quick and flexible to respond to newly emerging needs and to guarantee its employees’ salaries. In fact, Quid promptly converted its production into the first prototypes of washable and re-usable face masks, the so-called “Cover-up”. Quid collaborated with the National Health Institute (Istituto Superiore di Sanità) in order to obtain the mask certification in line with the current Italian health protocols. Also, during the pandemic, Quid accepted mask orders exceeding its production capacity and, in

turn, decentralized the production to other cooperatives in the area to which it provided support and training and an opportunity to economically survive the pandemic.

The table below summarizes the main key features of the Quid social enterprises responding to our selection criteria.

CRITERIA	SOCIAL ENTERPRISE Quid
Capacity to catalyse SDG localization	Quid social enterprise, by definition, explicitly pursues its social mission and vocation by promoting job inclusion and a sustainable, environmental-friendly business model. As such, it explicitly and concretely pursues and catalyses SDGs 5, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13 and 17 through sustainable and socially inclusive solutions.
Focus on specific vulnerable groups / communities / territories	Quid purposely employs and offers job placement programs and training to people belonging to disadvantaged social categories, mainly women from vulnerable social groups and backgrounds, but, more broadly, also any other people living in a condition of fragility.
Systemic change	Quid managed to set up a sustainable, territorial and multi-actor infrastructure of collaboration and partnership. In fact, this collaborative infrastructure is encompassed by the social enterprise inclusive and circular business model where high-end fashion industries are its suppliers, waste is turned into high-quality products, people at the margins of society and of the job market are supported, trained and employed, local partner social cooperatives receive more work orders and business training, financial institutions invest for Quid social impact. In fact, in 2018, Quid experimented with its first social impact investment instrument by Impact Investment Fund Opes. Moreover, Quid also aims at 'contaminating' with its sustainability practice the industry partners and suppliers with a vision of overturning the fashion and textile industry in an inclusive, ethical and sustainable industry. Hence, this innovative, inclusive and sustainable practice and business model has the full potential to bring about systemic change and to positively influence the territorial functionings both at a small and a larger scale.
Multi-actor processes and dynamics	The collaboration among different actors is an important feature for long-lasting interventions, since it allows to take into consideration different perspectives, needs and interests in tackling specific issues. Indeed, Quid actively collaborates and partners with different types of actors partnering with both the private and public sectors, as well as third sector organizations. In fact, the social enterprise partners with actors ranging from for-profit high-end fashion companies and

	industries, national health institutes, public universities, financial institutions and philanthropic foundations, as well as local social cooperatives.
Multi-level territorial processes and dynamics	Quid has attracted both local and international Foundations which support its social impact projects. Moreover, Quid has expanded its range of impact by piloting an international pilot project (Crisalis) funded by the European Commission Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund - AMIF. Involving and leveraging national and international processes and players indeed fosters new connections and innovative collaborations to solve common problems.
Institutionalization	The innovative and socially inclusive development strategy and social practice pursued by this case study have gone beyond a citizen movement, a philanthropic practice or a voluntary practice. Instead, Quid operates, as for its legal form, as a social cooperative and qualifies as a social enterprise. In fact, in the Italian juridical framework, the legal status of social enterprise is recognized by the legislative decree n° 112/2017 and to which all social cooperatives are entitled to by art.1. This legal status allows the experience to be embedded and recognized within an institutional and juridical system ensuring potential for its sustainability and long-lasting impact.
Social/transformational resilience	Quid's capacity of social and transformative resilience has been visibly shown in particular by its quick and flexible response to the current Covid19 pandemic. The social enterprise, in fact, was able to respond to the newly emerging needs and to guarantee its employees' salaries by converting its production into the first prototypes of washable and re-usable face masks. In addition, during the pandemic, Quid accepted mask orders exceeding its production capacity and, in turn, decentralized the production to other cooperatives in the area to which it provided support and training and an opportunity to economically survive the pandemic. Hence, Quid, during the pandemic, rediscovered itself with a new role, that of a territorial network coordinator. Instead of adopting a competing market logic, Quid strengthens the entrepreneurial capacity of other territorial social cooperatives, sharing its know-how, its suppliers, partnerships and its samples and prototypes. This in turn creates more employment opportunities and market opportunities in the territory.
Potential replicability	Quid experience and its circular and inclusive business model show a great degree of potential to be replicated in other contexts. Both the circular business model based on the reuse of industries' stock excess as well as the job placement practice of people belonging to vulnerable social categories are, indeed, replicable in other contexts. Quid showcases that human fragility and unutilized resources can be subverted into strengths and strategic opportunities which are, at the same time, human, social, economic/market and environmental opportunities. This alternative logic and approach can indeed be applied in various and different


	sectors and fields where there are material waste and leftovers, as well as socially and economically marginalized and undervalued people.
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Source: Authors

4.3 Social and Solidarity Economy case-study: Messina Community Foundation

Community Foundations are non-profit organizations that catalyse local and territorial resources to support practices and projects improving the life of the community on a stable and continuous basis. The Messina Community Foundation, in Sicily Island (Italy), showcases a particular model of Community Foundation. To guarantee the sustainability of its human development policy, the Messina Community Foundation strategically and purposely invests in productive economies with a constant entrepreneurial mindset to catalyse and promote self-sustaining systems and, therefore, multiplying its sustainability effect and social and economic impact. Moreover, the Messina Community Foundation actively draws in its strategies and models different actors, systems and resources belonging to a wide range of sectors. In fact, by acknowledging the multidimensionality of wellbeing and territorial development, this model of Community Foundation mirrors this complexity and reproduces it when providing articulated and cross-sectoral responses to the community's need.

	Messina Community Foundation
LINK	http://www.fdcmessina.org/
MODEL	Community Foundation
OBJECTIVES	Social and solidarity economy, social cohesion, social inclusion, local development, sustainable development and renewable energies, protection and enhancement of the environmental, historical and artistic heritage, scientific research

LOCALIZED SDGs*	 <p>*For the purpose of this research only the SDGs directly impacted by the main activities of the Messina Community Foundation are here identified. If, however, all different activities, strategies and projects carried out by the Foundation are considered, its holistic approach targets indeed all SDGs.</p>
MAIN ACTIONS	<p>Independent and autonomous community institution which catalyses local and territorial resources to support concrete and locally relevant programs and interventions pursuing social and environmental objectives, hence responding to the needs expressed by the local community.</p>
START YEAR	<p>2010</p>
LOCATION	<p>Messina, Italy</p>

Source: Authors

The Messina Community Foundation was born in 2010 in Messina starting from a group of social economy actors and some of the main social, educational, institutional and scientific research networks of its territory, as well as important national and international actors and networks. In particular, Messina, and the broader Sicilian region (Southern Italy) record lower income levels compared to the national average, as well as a presence of rooted mafia criminal organizations and widespread corruption. In fact, the Foundation traces its origins even before, precisely in the '90s, after the so-called "Sicilian Spring" or "Palermo Spring"²⁶. Against this backdrop, the Foundation was born to give continuity to those strong and redeeming political and institutional movements calling for freedom from the mafia criminal organizations and mindset which was governing the territory. More broadly, the Foundation was born as a coordinating body of an already existing group of social economy actors aiming at developing structured practices subverting the predominant economic paradigm in favour of a socially cohesive and communitarian logic contrasting phenomena of social inequalities

²⁶ The Palermo's spring (1985-1990) is a historical, cultural and political period of the city of Palermo characterized by the flourishing of political, social and cultural initiatives, and from the birth of associations and citizen committees, aimed at promoting a culture of legality in contrast with the mafia criminal culture and activities. In particular, a civic non-violent movement erupted after the mafia terrorist attacks (May 23rd and July 19th, 1992) which killed judges Falcone and Borsellino.

and climate change. Hence, the objective of the Messina Community Foundation is to deliver a permanent policy for Sustainable Human Development in the territories in which it operates.

The Foundation carries out community welfare and environmental protection models that are structurally intertwined with forms of civil and productive economy that feed on and generate social capital and opportunities for the most vulnerable social groups, following Amartya Sen's capability approach. On the one hand, the Messina Community Foundation promotes inclusive businesses and socio-economic systems capable of generating opportunities for everyone, with respect to work, home, sociality, knowledge, democratic participation; on the other hand, it operates through personalized projects supporting the most excluded people to seize those opportunities. The social and economic mechanisms proposed by the Foundation are conceived in the relational logic of mutual benefit. The exclusive feature of this particular model of Community Foundation is that its approach goes beyond the classic function of collecting and disbursing local resources to the community's benefit. Rather, once it manages to collect resources, the Foundation opts for strategic investments supporting local programs, projects and entrepreneurial activities providing them with the opportunities, means and funding to become self-sustainable and of generating, in turn, social and environmental impact.

With "Light is freedom" ("Luce è libertà") as its first important program, the Foundation experimented with a community welfare program in collaboration with the Italian Justice Ministry to the benefit of former patients of a judicial psychiatric hospital. Through this project, the Ministry assigned to each patient to be re-inserted in society by the Foundation a lump-sum amount equal to the 1-year state cost of keeping the patient in the judicial psychiatric hospital. Such "personal empowerment budgets" have been then mutualized by the beneficiaries in a dedicated Fund created within the Foundation.

Successively, and also thanks to the funding support by an external institutional funder which doubled these initial assets, the Foundation opted for a mission-oriented investment strategy allowing for this fund to generate and sustain additional resources. In fact, the Messina Community Foundation, consistent with its economic vision, chose to invest around €6 Mil between 2010 and 2013 to create a renewable energy park. In particular, a widespread photovoltaic park was created in the vast area of the Strait of Messina. Through an open Call, the Foundation selected the partners / beneficiaries of this initiative, families, organizations and institutions. Drawing from its own funds, the Foundation built 184 photovoltaic systems on the plants/buildings made available by the selected subjects. In the logic of mutual benefit, the partners are the beneficiaries of all the energy produced, while

the “energy account”²⁷ is returned as a donation to the Messina Community Foundation which can thus self-finance a permanent program of actions and policies for the human development of the territories, including the social re-insertion of the patients coming from the judicial psychiatric hospital. In this way the initial flows coming from the “personal empowerment budgets” have been converted into an asset (the solar park) generating long-term flows. Furthermore, the partners / beneficiaries of the solar park constitute the first nucleus of a Solidarity Purchasing Group (Gruppo d’Acquisto Solidale) that chooses ethical and sustainable products. The fund’s investment in the energy park thus fully becomes a mechanism to implement the Foundation’s purposes and to support an ethical demand for a social economy. Overall, the energy park produces about 2 megawatts of energy per year, for a cash equivalent of an economic contribution to beneficiaries of approximately €250,000. The production of this clean energy saves 600 tons of fossil fuel and avoids the emission of 1,800 tons of CO₂ every year. This is equivalent to planting 2,500 trees per year. Furthermore, it allows the Foundation to receive an average of €400/450000 each year, for 20 years, which constitutes a basis with which the Foundation can draw other resources to finance its territorial policies.

The Messina Community Foundation soon began expanding its different areas of intervention and its various support strategies for local development. For example, the Foundation activates and supports the start-up and development of virtuous companies attracting capital, creative and technical-scientific talents and setting in motion processes of territorial economic development. The Foundation’s support, in 2015, to the historic Messina Brewery (Birrificio Messina), closed for bankruptcy, is exemplary of its strategy to re-insert workers expelled from the labour market through the creation of start-ups/social cooperatives. The Foundation helped the Brewery’s former workers to build an industrial plan and business plan and launch a social communication campaign that had the task of connecting the beer production to its city by promoting the idea of a common good rather than with a market competition logic. In fact, the campaign slogan was “The City I love chooses its own beer”, also including the Foundation’s logo. Nowadays the brewery is economically sustainable and exports also abroad. Moreover, it is a virtuous example of a sustainable plant that uses renewable energy with low environmental impact. In addition, the Foundation is now working with the brewery in order to set up a social cooperative managing a bio-plastic industry starting from the brewery’s industrial waste.

Another illustrative example of how the Foundation carries out its systemic approach is how it contributed to addressing the problem of the housing emergency in Messina, where, following the 1908 earthquake, over 2000 families live in slums still today. In 2017, the Foundation set up an experimental program together with universities and research centres

²⁷ The so-called “Conto Energia – Energy Account” is a European operating incentive program for the production of electricity from solar sources using photovoltaic systems consisting of a State financial contribution per kWh of energy produced for a certain period (up to 20 years).

from all over the world, including the Boston MIT, that led to the dismantling of a slum and its transformation into common goods, and more specifically a park and a green building implementing the most advanced technologies of green-architecture, sustainable engineering and an architectural design closely related to the landscape. It also experimented with wage-assisted self-construction practices for the construction of the building, allowing urban regeneration processes to be intertwined with policies of poverty reduction and income support. At the same time, the Foundation, through its development agency and a dedicated ethical finance system, promoted a social regeneration process that offered more alternative housing solutions for the slum inhabitants. One solution consists in the purchase of houses on the private market by the Municipality, which then assigns them (for rent) to the beneficiaries through a participatory process. Another solution consists in the assignment of a “personal empowerment budget”: a lump-sum amount assigned to the beneficiary as a contribution for the purchase of its own house on the private market, often integrated with a loan. In this solution the beneficiary becomes therefore homeowner.

Furthermore, the Foundation has also linked these mechanisms and processes of experimental and technological research and economic and social emancipation with a legal social pact. This entails that the people buying a house thanks to the benefits of the project must not have previous mafia convictions. If they incur in a mafia conviction in the ten years following the purchase of the house, the latter becomes municipal property.

As a final example, the Messina Community Foundation has set up a social finance system supporting its activities: a microcredit institution, an Asset Management Company that launched an impact investing fund for social enterprises and a guarantee fund called Sicilian Microcredit. The fund is a financial instrument aimed at those who cannot access traditional credit due to a lack of collateral or insufficient credit history. The beneficiaries are micro, small and medium-sized enterprises operating in the Sicily Region. Open to further donations by anyone who wishes to contribute, the Fund amounts today to €1 Mil.

The table below summarizes the main key features of the Messina Community Foundation responding to our selection criteria.


CRITERIA	MESSINA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION
Capacity to catalyse SDG localization	<p>The Messina Community Foundation explicitly recognizes its social mission and vocation in its statute, namely, the pursuit of social solidarity purposes and, in particular, to promote people's rights, freedoms and opportunities, especially for people belonging to vulnerable social categories, and to promote social cohesion, social and solidarity economy. The Foundation acts by promoting community welfare models intertwined with sustainable development approaches aimed at the inclusion in society of those most in need, as well as to enhance and protect the environmental, historical and artistic heritage, and to promote scientific research in the interest of the community. As such, it explicitly and concretely pursues and catalyses all SDGs through territorial and innovative solutions.</p>
Focus on specific vulnerable groups / communities / territories	<p>The Messina Community Foundation explicitly recognizes in its statute the overriding attention it devotes to people belonging to vulnerable social categories and people at risk of social and economic exclusion. The Foundation actively promotes an economic model where vulnerable people are placed at its centre.</p>
Systemic change	<p>The local development strategy pursued by the Messina Community Foundation explicitly aims at overturning dominant paradigms of egoism and self-interest in favour of actively promoting socially innovative and mutually advantageous economic and social approaches and practices. With this objective, the Foundation is carrying out new community welfare models which intertwine with forms of civic and productive economy generating social capital and opportunities for people belonging to vulnerable social groups. The Foundation brings systemic change by generating, co-generating, re-generating and organizing territorial resources in innovative ways, enhancing the opportunities of the territory and providing new intervention models.</p>
Multi-actor processes and dynamics	<p>As a non-profit organization working for the community welfare, the Foundation actively collaborates and partners with different types of actors ranging from the private sector, the public sector, the third sector and pastoral organizations. In fact, the founders, co-founders, partners and statutory partners of the Foundation belong to all these different sectors. The Foundation stakeholders range from state and local public administration entities and institutions, clerical institutions, third sector organisations, cultural organizations, other financial institutions and foundations, universities and training centres, international networks.</p> <p>The collaboration among different actors is an important feature for long-lasting interventions, since it allows to take into consideration different perspectives, needs and interests in tackling specific issues. Moreover, the co-creation among</p>

	different actors usually increases the ownership and the embeddedness of a process, creating a favourable environment that will allow its sustainability.
Multi-level territorial processes and dynamics	The Community Foundation interacts with multi-level stakeholders ranging from the local level, the municipality, up to the Italian ministerial level. Moreover, the Foundation carries out numerous technical and scientific collaborations with international universities and research centres. Its founding members also contributed to the creation of REVES, a European network of local and regional authorities and social economy organisations working to develop the social economy sector. It is also member of the European network of social and ethical finance institutions (FEBEA) and the F20, a network of more than 60 foundations and philanthropic organizations from different parts of the world, calling for joint, transnational action towards sustainable development.
Institutionalization	The local development strategy pursued by this case study has gone beyond a citizen movement, a philanthropic practice or a voluntary practice. Instead, it has taken the form of a Community Foundation, a non-profit organization which catalyses local and territorial resources to support practices and projects improving the life of the community on a stable and continuous basis.
Social/transformational resilience	The Community Foundation's role in fostering and enhancing local social and economic opportunities by favouring social cohesion and social inclusion contributes to support the community in acquiring social and transformative resilience. Moreover, internally engaging with and drawing from various sectors and resources (e.g., technology and scientific research, health, renewable energies, productive economies, urban regeneration, education, environmental protection, artistic and cultural heritage, participative democracy and legality and many more) allows the Foundation to provide multi-dimensional responses to complex social and environmental issues. It also allows the Foundation to have a deeper understanding of its territory and to quickly intercept changes happening in its territorial context and, hence, to be flexible enough to promptly intervene with adaptable responses.
Potential replicability	The experience of the Messina Community Foundation and its model show a great degree of potential to be replicated in other contexts even though its origin and scope of intervention is deeply embedded in its own territory. In fact, the Community Foundation model is quite recent in the Italian context and was imported by the United States where, since the beginning of the 20 th century, it has been playing an important role and growing in number. Moreover, as for its multi-stakeholder and pluralistic nature, the community foundation offers a flexible and adaptable model for different territories and their governance.

Source: Authors

4.4 Social and Territorial Cohesion case-study: The “Milk Mountain” strategy for the Emilian Apennines

The National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) is a comprehensive and integrated strategy for tackling the problems of depopulation and low access to services in a large portion of the Italian territory. SNAI intends to improve services and investments in selected development factors within a multi-level framework, involving particular local communities promoting a participatory approach to local development. The “Milk Mountain” strategy for the Emilian Apennines is one of the most illustrative examples, among the 72 project areas, of the implementation of the innovative approach.

 AREE INTERNE APPENNINO EMILIANO	“Milk Mountain” strategy for the Emilian Apennines
LINK	https://areeinterne.unioneappennino.re.it/snai-la-montagna-del-latte/
MODEL	Local development strategy for inner and fragile areas
OBJECTIVE	To revitalize the area in both economic and social terms by leveraging the valorisation of typical products with high value-added and by integrating it with the upgrading and renewal of public services for citizens and communities.
LOCALIZED SDGs	

MAIN ACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Structuring of the design process and governance model of the strategy. • Conduction of a wide participatory process that involved local actors and citizens. • Identification of main local assets and opportunities. • Drawing of preliminary ideas and drafting of the strategy. • Selection of the projects and final elaboration of the strategy. • Approval of the strategy and of the Framework Programme Agreement. • Implementation of the first set of projects on agri-food value chain, territorial health services and mobility services.
START YEAR	2016
LOCATION	Emilian Apennines, Emilia-Romagna, Italy

Source: Authors

The local development strategy “The Milk Mountain: healthy lifestyles and enterprising communities in the Emilian Apennines” was approved in November 2018 after a two-year design process, which was triggered by the convergence of the following factors:

- Strong political leadership and commitment to counteract the phenomena of depopulation and abandonment of mountain municipalities by their citizens;
- Close relations among key players in the production, social and cooperative system at the local level;
- Active presence of Consorzio Stabile CAIRE, which has been working in the mountainous area of the Emilian Apennines by supporting and advising the planning activities of local authorities with particular attention to the issues of strategic planning and territorial innovation;
- Selection of the territory as the first pilot “project area” in Emilia-Romagna Region to implement the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI), which was perceived by the territory as an opportunity to revitalize the area in both economic and social terms.

Although Emilia Romagna is considered among the most advanced Italian regions, some territorial areas show significant vulnerabilities and deprivations. Indeed, the mountainous territory of the Emilian Apennines is marked by an extremely fragmented articulation of settlements; a dense network of small towns and villages that are still inhabited and have a

community identity, but which are increasingly struggling to support the basic network of local services, starting with commercial and public services.

The reference area for the strategy is located in the Province of Reggio Emilia and includes seven municipalities: Castelnovo ne' Monti, Carpineti, Casina, Toano, Vetto, Villa Minozzo and Ventasso. The municipalities cover an area of 795.6 square kilometres with a population of just under 34.000 inhabitants. All these municipalities are part of the associative experience of the Mountain Union of the Municipalities of the Reggio Emilia Apennines.

In this inner and fragile area, the opportunity to carefully and collectively design and implement a local development strategy was relevant for two reasons: first, the integration between policies for economic development and public services, with a strong focus on local communities; second, the opportunity to enhance multi-level governance relations with regional and national authorities and rely on multiple funds to ensure the implementation of the strategy.

Based on these premises, since the beginning of the design process a strong and pervasive vision for the strategy was centred on the valorisation of the local typical product deploying the highest value-added and multiplier effects on the local community: the Mountain Parmigiano Reggiano.

Around this core, the following strategic objectives were identified: to increase the value-added of local products for their strategic positioning within national and international markets; to consolidate and extend the production base and support young people through the creation (start-up) and consolidation of new businesses; to improve opportunities for qualified local employment for young people; to organize a new territorial model for the provision of health services; to organize prevention activities for the fragile population against conditions of hardship and disease; to improve the quality of education and its structural linkages with the production system; to make the whole mountain area more accessible and attractive to boost social and economic opportunities; and, building on these elements, to ensure stable conditions of good governance for the whole community through strengthened institutional cohesion and capacity building.

These strategic objectives are then made operational through 19 projects that encompass the thematic areas of health, transport, agri-food, sustainable tourism, education. These projects are managed by different implementing public or private bodies that are responsible for the implementation of the projects and the economic resources allocated.

It is important to remark that an extensive participatory process of public consultation and deliberation was ensured for the drafting and definition of the strategy, involving around 350 stakeholders thanks to the great ability of communicating the process to the entire local population despite the dispersion among municipalities, villages and hamlets. Among

others, the active involvement of cooperative dairies and community actors (such as Community Co-operatives) since the initial phase should be highlighted, as they allowed to focus on the generation of share value-added and prosperity considering first and foremost local opportunities and needs with the aim of improving the living conditions of the whole community, not only of the cooperative's members.

All in all, the "Milk Mountain" strategy represents a major investment programme, which pool social, human and financial resources from different sources, including national institutions, regional authorities, local private stakeholder and community actors, having reached a total of around €30 Mil for its implementation.

The table below summarizes the main key features of the "Milk Mountain" strategy responding to our selection criteria.



CRITERIA	"MILK MOUNTAIN" STRATEGY
Capacity to catalyse SDG localization	The plural dimension of sustainable development is intrinsically part of SNAI. The "Milk Mountain" strategy for the Emilian Apennines aims to promote inclusive and sustainable local development in the area by pursuing and catalysing in particular SDGs 1,3,4,8,9,11,12.
Focus on specific vulnerable groups / communities / territories	The SNAI aims at supporting inner areas in designing and implementing tailored place-based strategies to face problems related to depopulation, limited economic opportunities and lack of basic services. The Emilian Apennines Strategy addresses mountain territories with different problems, trying to solve them with targeted initiatives to innovate public services and activate social and collaborative economy initiatives. The issues dealt with by the strategy particularly concern the elderly and young people.
Systemic change	The activities and projects foreseen within the "Milk Mountain" strategy are designed to bring about substantial changes in the area with regard to the valorisation of typical local value chains; the development of sustainable tourism; the renewal of public and social services; the activation and enhancement of community initiatives. These intertwined components and the collaboration among different actors, including local communities, represent fundamental features to boost systemic and structural change within the local economy and society.
Multi-actor processes and dynamics	The "Milk mountain" strategy actively involves different types of actors ranging in all sectors. For instance, the strategy stakeholders include public administrations and local public entities, national parks, third sector organizations, Local Action

	Group, and Community Cooperatives. The active participation of local communities in the different phases is a key point for the strategy.
Multi-level territorial processes and dynamics	The SNAI is a national strategy financed with European and Italian funds, which sees the involvement both of the Regional governments as for the selection of the Inner Areas, as well as Unions of Municipalities and individual Municipalities at the local level as main leaders for the elaboration and implementation of their respective local development strategy. The elaboration phase foresees the active participation of a national technical team of experts, while the implementation is based also on binding agreements with the national agency and ministries.
Institutionalization	The strong will of the local communities, which have always been particularly active despite the difficulties, to resist and to continue to inhabit their territories in the Emilian Apennines has gained strength thanks to the SNAI. Being selected as the pilot area for the SNAI in Emilia-Romagna and having seen the official approval of the Strategy has allowed and will further allow local communities to commit themselves to improve their multidimensional well-being and promote sustainable local development in the area. The leading role played by local authorities (Union of Municipalities and Municipalities in the first place) since the initial phase of strategy development further demonstrates the level of institutionalization.
Social/transformational resilience	The Strategy identifies and seeks to reduce the main fragilities of territories, making them more capable of absorbing external shocks and improving from them. Areas that already start from fragile situations, such as several inner areas, must overcome the difficulties by developing new methods and activating new development processes. The Strategy seeks to channel local energies to improve the situation, not to return to the initial status. The elaboration of the "Milk Mountain" strategy made it possible to consolidate a network of actors who pooled their knowledge and ideas to identify the main problems and opportunities and to design the tailored strategies and actions. This represents a fundamental asset to favour social cohesion and local development, supporting the local community in acquiring social and transformational resilience.
Potential replicability	The experience of the "Milk Mountain" strategy, and of the SNAI in general, shows great potential for implementation in other contexts. The issues addressed by SNAI, primarily the lack of services and the depopulation of rural internal areas, are common in many emerging countries. The joint involvement in the Strategy of small municipalities, the pivotal focus on typical products and local value chains, and the role played by community actors make the SNAI an even more interesting case in terms of replicability.

Source: Authors

4.5 Social and Territorial Cohesion case-study: Local Action Group “Maiella Verde”

LEADER / Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) is a bottom-up approach to design and implement rural development strategies by bringing together farmers, rural businesses, local organisations, public authorities and individuals from different sectors to constitute and operate as a local action group (LAG). LEADER / CLLD relies on LAGs as political and technical bodies that are able to tie the local partnership of actors with the managers and technical team in charge of designing and implementing a local strategy for rural development. The Local Action Group (LAG) “Maiella Verde” – one of the 200 LAGs currently operating in Italy – is a limited liability consortium owned by a large public-private partnership, which has been operating since 1992 in a mountainous and hilly area in Abruzzo Region.

	Local Action Group “Maiella Verde”
LINK	https://maiellaverde.it/
MODEL	Local Action Group for rural development
OBJECTIVES	Upgrading of local value chains; Enhancement of local products; Valorisation of natural and cultural resources; Competitiveness of territorial micro-environments in rural areas; Promotion of local food and wine identity; Promotion of sustainable tourism
LOCALIZED SDGs	

MAIN ACTIONS	Design, coordination and management of rural development strategies; Territorial animation; Support and technical assistance to SMEs operating in local value chains; Preparing and publishing calls for project submissions; Reporting and auditing; Monitoring and evaluation
START YEAR	1992
LOCATION	Chieti Province, Abruzzo Region, Italy

Source: Authors

“Maiella Verde” covers the area of 84 municipalities in the Chieti province divided into three sub-areas: the Ortonese Chietino, Sangro Aventino and Vastese. The area has a population of 147.640 inhabitants and covers around 2.000 km². The area suffers long-lasting socio-economic problems such as depopulation, the crisis of farming (due to ageing of farmers and loss of value of raw materials), the crisis of local production due to competition in the global market, low youth and female employment, among others. The LAG “Maiella Verde” currently consists of 157 members representatives of local public and private socio-economic interests.

The LAG is characterised by the active involvement of local actors and their participation in the decision-making process for the identification of intervention priorities and the implementation of rural development strategies in their territory.

Through strong cooperation with local companies and operators, the LAG aims at promoting local wine and food identity, as well as sustainable tourism, through the creation of a virtuous network of public and private actors. The Local Development Plan aims at improving the quality of the territorial offer by increasing the qualification and value-added of typical local products, landscape and rural environment, and by improving the accessibility and attractiveness of territorial systems. In particular, this approach relies on the development of short supply chains, supporting single actors in developing small productions and farm shops and promoting systemic initiatives to make local typical foods (and their territory) well known to the public through events, publications, taste sessions and other initiatives. Here there are some examples of activities and projects recently promoted by “Maiella Verde”.

- “Galleria del Gusto” (Taste Gallery): About 100 local producers joined this network and adopted a voluntary production regulation. This accreditation system allowed participation in all different initiatives of food and wine marketing in the territory

promoted by the Taste Gallery, and receipt of periodic feedback on organoleptic quality of products.

- “Guide del Gusto” (Taste guides network): This network accredits local experts able to guide groups of visitors in tastings and visits for wine and food products.
- “Terre Ospitali” (Hospitable lands): This national network involves 12 Italian LAGs and the Slow Food Association (an NGO working on food biodiversity preservation) and supports communities based on a high value of hospitality, manifested in the adoption of virtuous and eco-sustainable production and economic models for the enhancement of the territory and its culture.
- “10 Saperi da Salvare” (10 flavours to be saved): This project promotes a community revitalisation strategy centred on the valorisation of local food and wine identities. The project supports the creation of ‘Food Communities’, conceived as small groups of local actors (not only producers, but also representatives of local authorities, citizens, associations, etc.) who come together because they share the willingness to enhance a specific typical product. Each community elaborated a strategy comprising actions to a) improve knowledge and skills related to their product; b) improve quality and branding; and c) strengthen promotion. The project supports strategic investments in farming, processing, packaging, shops, websites and e-commerce according to the strategies developed.

The LAG’s most recent initiative makes even stronger this collective and collaborative approach by enhancing cooperation projects between actors gathered in a formula called “Project Communities” (CP), which arise from the above mentioned “Food Communities”.

The Project Communities are groups of local actors representing a significant share of a specific territorial area / local / service, who elaborate and guide a common valorisation strategy through the preparation and implementation of an integrated project based on a collaborative approach. At present, 22 Project Communities are active involving more than 500 local partners in the LAG’s area. Project Communities may have different aims: Tourist Reception, with the aim of improving the accessibility and quality of reception in a specific micro territorial area; Tourist Product, with the aim of developing a specific tourist product based on local resources; Typical Product, with the aim of enhancing a specific typical product; Territorial Regeneration, with the aim of improving the use of one or more local resources to start new economic and social activities for the benefit of the population of the Municipality concerned.

Each CP submits a project proposal and, if approved by the LAG, it can count on the financial support of €20,000. The LAG “Maiella Verde” acts as the financing body (i.e., CPs do not receive funding, but it is the LAG itself that bears the project costs), while the Project Communities are the implementing body of the enhancement initiatives. The final aim is to transfer knowledge and competences from the LAG to the members of the CPs, to make them independent in finding other funds. This method of financing promoted by the LAG

allows even small informal communities to participate, avoiding the problems linked to calls for proposals. The public notice foresees two phases: 1) the group of promoters presents the concept idea, 2) once the concept idea is approved, the promoters have 3 months to structure the project, with the technical support of the LAG.

The (re)activation and (re)generation of local communities is the first result achieved by this initiative and it can lead to the creation of registered associations and the structuring of territorial networks.

The table below summarizes the main key features of the Local Action Group “Maiella Verde” responding to our selection criteria.

CRITERIA	Local Action Group “Maiella Verde”
Capacity to catalyse SDG localization	The LAG “Maiella Verde” and the LEADER / CLLD approach aim at promoting inclusive and sustainable local development in the rural area. Sustainability is a central theme, in environmental, economic and social terms. As such, “Maiella Verde” pursues and catalyses SDGs 1,2,8,9,11,12, 15.
Focus on specific vulnerable groups / communities / territories	“Maiella Verde” aims at supporting local communities in rural and marginal areas with problems related to lack of basic services and economic opportunities, leading to depopulation and deployment of natural, human and cultural resources.
Systemic change	The long experience of “Maiella Verde”, being active in the area since 1992, has led to important results in terms of systemic change. For instance, the theme of food and wine identity was not particularly relevant at the very beginning of the LAG’s activities in 1992, but it has since gained importance and become central to territorial development strategies. The long period of activity made it possible to carry out a collective and collaborative approach (as resulted in the “Project Communities” initiatives), nurturing social cohesion and enhancing sustainable development.

Multi-actor processes and dynamics	The LAG includes a large number of different types of actors both in its consortium and project activities, from public local entities and institutions, private sector, third sector organization to community and collaborative economy initiatives. The active participation of these actors guarantees the presence and activation of multi-actor dynamics.
Multi-level territorial processes and dynamics	The LEADER / CLLD approach is a European initiative aimed at fostering local sustainable development in rural areas. The LAG "Maiella Verde" is the local expression of the LEADER / CLLD approach, and the methodologies and activities used are linked to those promoted at the European level. Moreover, the LAG directly relates with the Chieti Province and the Abruzzo Region for the implementation of the Rural Development Plan at the regional level. Finally, the LAG includes within its consortium all the Municipalities and associations of municipalities in the target area.
Institutionalization	The LAG, structured as a limited liability consortium, plays a liaison role with the institutional actors involved at the local level, thus representing a formal political and technical body in charge of designing and implementing a local strategy for rural development.
Social/transformative resilience	The LAG, and more in general the LEADER / CLLD approach, aims at fostering and enhancing social and economic opportunities in the areas of interventions by favouring social cohesion and local development, supporting the local community in acquiring social and transformative resilience. "Maiella Verde" created a vast network of actors in the area who pooled their knowledge, ideas and efforts to tackle the main challenges faced by the rural communities in the area. By providing technical support, resources and know-how to local communities, the LAG enables them to act and plan autonomously.
Potential replicability	The role played by LAGs in rural areas across Europe could be crucial in similar areas in several emerging countries. Indeed, the issues addressed, such as, for example, the lack of services and economic opportunities, are also experienced in rural areas in many other countries. The initiative "Project Communities" by LAG "Maiella Verde" – namely the organisation of communities which take action on issues such as the production of traditional products and sustainable development – is particularly relevant and it may be adapted to many emerging countries.

Source: Authors

4.6 Social and Territorial Cohesion case-study: SIBaTer Project

The Italian approach to social and territorial cohesion devotes central attention to develop the country's administrative and institutional capacity, in order to contribute to Italy's overall objective of achieving smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Investment in institutional capacity and more efficient public services implies structural reforms, better regulation improved administrative procedures and good governance at national, regional and local levels.

The SIBaTer Project "Institutional support for the implementation of the Banca delle Terre" is illustrative of this model of intervention. Specific features make the initiative exemplary of a model of institutional upgrading for social and territorial cohesion in Italy: the direct involvement of the National Association of Italian Municipalities as lead actor; the engagement of Local and Regional Governments closest to the communities; the target on municipalities in the Southern Regions, considered by the EU as less developed or in transition; the desire for active involvement by local communities and especially by young people as very final beneficiaries of the project.

	SIBaTer Project "Institutional support for the implementation of the Banca delle Terre"
LINK	https://www.sibater.it/
MODEL	Institutional support to community regeneration
OBJECTIVE	To provide technical assistance to municipalities with the aim of regenerating abandoned assets (e.g., abandoned lands and buildings) through community and youth involvement.
LOCALIZED SDGs	

MAIN ACTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of technical assistance tools for target municipalities. • Census of abandoned and uncultivated lands owned by municipalities and private actors. • Elaboration of valorisation plans by public and private actors. • Support to the administrative process for assignment of abandoned assets. • Support to community engagement and youth entrepreneurship.
START YEAR	2018
LOCATION	Southern Italy Regions: Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sardegna, Sicilia

Source: Authors

The SIBaTer project has been developed within the framework of the strategies for the revitalisation of Southern Italy, and in particular in relation to the "Banca delle Terre" (Land Bank) tool created to regenerate abandoned assets through community and youth engagement for the sustainable development of the territories. With Law no. 123\2017 [art. 3 "Bank of abandoned and uncultivated lands and measures for the enhancement of unused assets in the Southern Regions"], the Italian Government established the "Banca delle Terre" (Lands Bank). The "Banca delle Terre" refers to abandoned or uncultivated land, built-up areas (for industrial, artisan, commercial, tourist and receptive use) and related units that have been in a state of abandonment for a long time (at least 10 years) and which are owned by public actors or private individuals.

Despite the presence of a specific law, Italian municipalities had rarely made it operational and taken this opportunity for the regeneration and revitalisation of their own territories. For this reason, the Italian Territorial Cohesion Agency decided to involve the National Association of Italian Municipalities (ANCI) to convey the importance of this law to municipalities in Southern regions and to provide them with technical and operational support. Therefore, the SIBaTer Project supports the implementation of the "Banca delle Terre" both directly and indirectly. On the one hand, SIBaTer carries out activities to improve the administrative capacity of municipalities in regard to the competences assigned to them by the law. On the other hand, SIBaTer fosters the creation of a favourable environment for

the generation of community / youth entrepreneurship proposals aiming at the valorisation of abandoned lands and public heritage.

The initiative is funded by the National Operational Programme (NOP) focused on "Governance". The SIbaTer Project is managed by the Cohesion and Southern Policies Area of ANCI (National Association of Italian Municipalities), with the technical support of IFEL Foundation. Their value-added lies in being representative and technical bodies close to the municipalities, thus able to provide precise knowledge of the problems and difficulties that municipalities themselves face in terms of budget and administration.

The SIbaTer project targets both Metropolitan Cities and 38 provincial capitals of Southern Italy, with their relative hinterland, as well as small municipalities in rural, mountain or inner areas, especially through their inter-municipal unions/aggregations. So far, 348 municipalities have completed the process of joining SIbaTer Project with the adoption of a Municipal Council resolution or through the adhesion by a supra-municipal body such as Union of Municipalities, Metropolitan Cities, and Mountain Community.

First of all, SIbaTer supports municipalities to carry out and publish a census of the abandoned assets that may be potentially regenerated by assigning them to the local community, and particularly to young people aged between 18 and 40. Second, municipalities are assisted in setting the whole administrative process and procedures (e.g., public calls for tenders) to assign abandoned assets free of charge to community actors. Third, if interested to apply for the concession of the assets, community actors are required to submit a valorisation project to the respective municipality, receiving technical assistance by the Project. This project must be integrated with additional measures to support youth entrepreneurship. Finally, the Project offers organizational support for adequate services to facilitate community access to other benefits and incentives offered aimed at the economic and social growth of Southern Italy. For example, in order to support the financing of the valorisation projects presented with "Banca delle Terre", young people who meet the specific requirements will also have access to other national funding or incentives dedicated to youth entrepreneurship and/or to the agricultural sector.

The SIbaTer project foresees that community and collaborative economy initiatives such as Community Co-operatives can represent one of the most appropriate tools to recover and regenerate abandoned lands and assets. Community Co-operatives are bottom-up initiatives established by a network of stakeholders or citizens using the co-operative organizational form to manage local commons, regenerate community assets, administer quasi-public services, or produce goods in order to support local communities in their own development projects (Bianchi and Vieta, 2019). Community Co-operatives support a people-centred development, considering first and foremost local needs and citizens' interests rather than profits, with the aim of improving the living conditions of the whole community, not only of the co-operative's active members. The aim of the Community Co-operative is to

generate value and redistribute it within the community. In order to do this, it is essential to share a business risk, and therefore it is required the presence of transversal resources and competences and a business governance that activates a shared local development process. This model is based on participatory democracy, and thus promotes social cohesion in the territories. Within the SIBaTer project, Community Co-operatives represent a model for valorising abandoned lands and assets by producing goods and services at a local level, capable of creating job opportunities, especially for the youth, thus enhancing enabling conditions for regenerating fragile territories and urban peripheries.

The table below summarizes the main key features of the SIBaTer Project responding to our selection criteria.

CRITERIA	SIBaTer Project
Capacity to catalyse SDG localization	The activities promoted by the SIBaTer project, with the ultimate aim of regenerating territories / communities and creating economic opportunities for young people, are linked in several ways to the Agenda 2030. The initiative considers the SDGs a necessary and indispensable reference framework as it constitutes a common language at international level. They are used as a conceptual platform, although they are not directly the focus of the project. As such, the project pursues and catalyses SDGs 2,3,4,8,10,11,12.
Focus on specific vulnerable groups / communities / territories	The project aims at supporting local authorities in the regions of Southern Italy by regenerating abandoned lands and assets both in rural areas and on the outskirts of large cities. At the same time, the valorisation processes directly involve young people, promoting youth entrepreneurship and creating new economic opportunities in areas where they are often missing, i.e., areas affected by depopulation, and marginal communities facing several socio-economic challenges in terms of accessibility, exclusion and opportunities.
Systemic change	The "Banca delle Terre" represents an unprecedented systemic action on a national scale. The SIBaTer Project helps to increase awareness on the law and to contribute to its implementation. The process put in place by the initiative is not only focused on the capacity-building of municipalities through technical support and knowledge transfer from the national level. The activation of communities and territories is equally fundamental, and for this reason the project has designed a wide partnership able to stimulate the demand for lands by community actors.



Multi-actor processes and dynamics	The SIBaTer Project actively involves different type of national and local actors, ranging from the public sector, the third sector and the private sector. With regard to the valorisation of abandoned lands and the involvement of youth, the project relies on a large partnership of actors, including Legacoop and ConfCooperative along with their territorial branches, which, at present, bring together more than 15000 cooperatives. Other third sector organizations and collaborative economy initiatives, such as Community Co-operatives, are actively involved in the revalorization of abandoned lands and assets.
Multi-level territorial processes and dynamics	The SIBaTer Project stems from national legislation and aims to have an impact at the local level, thus touching all intermediate levels. It is a national initiative managed by National Association of Italian municipalities and IFEL Foundation. The Project targets the Southern Italy Regions – Abruzzo, Basilicata, Calabria, Campania, Molise, Puglia, Sardinia, Sicily – and their Municipalities. At present, 348 Municipalities have completed the process of joining the project.
Institutionalization	The "Banca delle Terre" (Land Bank), introduced by law n° 123\2017, aims to census the lands and assets owned by municipalities and private individuals that are "in a state of abandonment". The SIBaTer Project provides institutional support and capacity building to Municipalities in order to be autonomous in mapping abandoned lands and assets and in designing tenders for heritage enhancement involving young people.
Social/transformational resilience	The varied network of actors that SIBaTer Project brings together aims to foster and enhance social and economic opportunities by favouring the regeneration of abandoned spaces in vulnerable areas. The project helps municipalities and local communities to understand that there are sustainable forms of land use that can provide opportunities for territorial development, enhancing employment and improving the quality of life.
Potential replicability	Both the scope of the project in terms of community / territorial regeneration and its leadership through the involvement of the national association of municipalities makes this case interesting and replicable in some emerging countries where similar issues and organisations exist. The initiative has the potential to be replicated in contexts other than Italy, including the possibility of being structured at a regional or departmental level rather than at a national level.

Source: Authors




4.7 Other illustrative experiences

An additional set of illustrative virtuous experiences taking place in Italy on SSE and STC was identified and analysed, having been mentioned by key informants and/or in relevant reports.

These additional experiences display relevant features of the Italian approach to SSE and STC and thus are worth being briefly described although they were not comprised in our final selection of case-studies. Anyway, they can potentially broaden the scope of this study and provide some addition insight for further work in the future.

		Social enterprise “Girasole”
LINK	https://impresasocialegirasole.org/	
OBJECTIVE	Mixed public-private social enterprise	
OBJECTIVE	Participatory and innovative community welfare with the aim of consolidating, giving continuity and developing, in an ‘institutionalized’ form, a ten-year experience of partnership between the public sector and third sector entities in the management of socio-welfare and socio-educational services, safeguarding the quality of the services provided, avoiding to negatively affect public budgets and achieving a precise vision of local welfare and the relationship between entrusting bodies, private social entities, users of services and the local community as a whole.	
LOCALIZED SDGs		
MAIN ACTIVITIES	Welfare services for children (i.e., family centres, kindergartens, home assistance for minors, foster care), for adults (i.e., social housing, job training and re-insertion programs) and the elderly (home assistance, healthcare services), people with disabilities (schooling support services, educational centres).	
LOCATION	Lecco, Lombardy Region (Northern Italy)	
LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION	District of local municipalities	

 Resilient Madonie: A laboratory for the future	
LINK	https://madonieareainterna.it/
MODEL	Local development strategy for inner and fragile areas
OBJECTIVE	Through social innovation practices that strengthen community networks and inter-municipal governance, the strategy promotes sustainable models of territorial regeneration and smart specializations to enhance human, naturalistic and cultural capital and reverse the trend towards emigration of young people and depopulation.
LOCALIZED SDGs	
MAIN ACTIVITIES	Structuring of the design process and governance model of the strategy; conduction of a wide participatory process that involved local actors and citizens; Identification of main local assets and opportunities; drawing of preliminary ideas and drafting of the strategy; selection of the projects and final elaboration of the strategy; approval of the strategy and of the Framework Programme Agreement; implementation of the first set of projects concerning production, health, education, mobility
LOCATION	Madonie area, Sicily Region
LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION	Association of municipalities

	Cooperativa Dedalus
LINK	http://www.coopdedalus.it/
MODEL	Social cooperative
OBJECTIVE	Dedalus is an economic, social and democratic enterprise, aimed both at improving the well-being of local communities and at creating job opportunities for its members. It is also attentive to the rights and well-being of its staff, without distinction of role, national origin, gender or religious affiliation.
LOCALIZED SDGs	
MAIN ACTIVITIES	The primary objective of the activities undertaken by Dedalus is the construction of processes for accessing social citizenship rights in all their forms. Dedalus currently promotes and supports citizenship, reception and work orientation paths in particular for people who are victims of trafficking, unaccompanied foreign minors, women in difficulty, transsexuals.
LOCATION	Naples
LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION	Neighbourhood and municipal level
	Food Policy – Comune Milano
LINK	https://www.foodpolycymilano.org/
MODEL	Metropolitan policy
OBJECTIVE	Milan has decided to commit to making its food system more equitable and sustainable by adopting its own Food Policy. It represents one of the legacies of Expo 2015, and it is a support tool for the city government promoted in synergy by the Municipality of Milan and the Cariplo Foundation to make the Milanese food system more sustainable.

LOCALIZED SDGs	
MAIN ACTIVITIES	The ongoing actions concern the activation of new projects in the various municipalities and the involvement of public and private actors who can initiate experiments and sustainable models of production, processing, distribution, food collection and promote information and awareness tools for citizens to improve the quality of services and knowledge of the Milanese food system.
LOCATION	Milan
LEVEL OF IMPLEMENTATION	Metropolitan level

5. PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS AND POLICY GUIDELINES

The diffusion of good practices is a key mechanism ensuring that good ideas can inspire as many relevant actors as possible and can create a multiplicative global effect on local communities. In this regard, our 6 case-studies can potentially inspire similar practices and showcase replicable models in other countries.

Table 6. Relevance and potential replicability of each case-study

Model / Case-study	CONSORTIUM OF COOPERATIVES - Consortium "Sale della Terra"
Relevance	Consortium "Sale della Terra" is an exemplary consortium of cooperatives contributing to maximize territorial social impact, by adopting an overarching and systemic development approach and by leveraging more resources as compared with a single social cooperative. The ensemble of coordinated and coherent actions by a multitude of territorial organizations pursuing a strong and shared social mission generates a potential for systemic and innovative change in the local economic, social and welfare systems as a whole, while, at the same time, providing context-specific activities and services tailored to territorial needs.
Potential and key determinants for replicability	The experience of the Consortium and its model shows a great degree of potential to be replicated in other contexts. The organizational model of a Consortium of social cooperatives allows for a flexible and adaptable response to localized territorial needs, hence showcases a high potential for successful application in different contexts. In other words, it is a versatile and suitable model that provides an organizational umbrella to local organizations pursuing a common human development vision. Moreover, the cooperative model, as well as the Consortium of social cooperatives, is indeed quite widespread worldwide, suitable to rural context and urban areas. The existence of market demand for the produced goods/offered services by the Consortium, as well as an internal structured organizational setup, are key preliminary determinants for replicability. Moreover, a Consortium of social enterprises (or similar organization) builds on a shared objective and social mission, on strong collaboration and coordination among its members and the core willingness to join forces in order to maximize the social impact.
Model / Case-study	WORK INTEGRATION SOCIAL ENTERPRISE - Social enterprise "Quid"
Relevance	Quid adopts an alternative vision and strategy to the mainstream market and social logics, a model where what the traditional market leaves behind becomes the starting point for a new economic, social and environmental paradigm, in that: (i) discarded materials/commodities and by-products resulting from market values chains become inputs for a new product life-cycle, hence providing low cost or cost-free supply for another production chain; and (ii) people belonging to a socially disadvantaged category or at risk of social exclusion and 'left behind' from the labour market are offered a job training program and stable job contracts. This entails restoring their social dignity and providing them a stable salary to expand their capabilities.
Potential and key determinants for replicability	Quid experience and its circular and inclusive business model show a great degree of potential to be replicated in other contexts. Both the circular business model based on the reuse of industries' stock excess as well as the job placement practice of people belonging to vulnerable social categories are, indeed, replicable in other contexts. Quid showcases that human fragility and unutilized resources can be subverted into strengths and strategic opportunities which are, at the same time, human, social,

	<p>economic/market and environmental opportunities. This alternative logic and approach can indeed be applied in various and different sectors and fields where there are material waste and leftovers, as well as socially and economically marginalized people. Setting up a Work Integration business model requires on the part of the business idea developers a strong social vocation and engagement, significant entrepreneurial mindset and skills, human capacities and competences to deal with vulnerable people, and, indeed, the existence of market demand for the produced goods/offered services.</p>
Model / Case-study	COMMUNITY FOUNDATION – “Fondazione di Comunità di Messina”
Relevance	<p>The Messina Community Foundation offers an interesting model of community foundation. In fact, in order to guarantee the sustainability of its human development policy, it invests in productive economies with a constant entrepreneurial mindset in order to catalyse and promote self-sustaining systems and, therefore, multiplying its sustainability effect and social and economic impact.</p>
Potential and key determinants for replicability	<p>The experience of the Messina Community Foundation and its model shows a great degree of potential to be replicated in other contexts even though its origin and scope of intervention are deeply embedded in its own territory. Moreover, as for its multi-stakeholder and pluralistic nature, the community foundation offers a flexible and adaptable model for different territories and their governance. A key determinant to replicate the Messina Community Foundation approach is managing to transform stocks and assets into financial flows and relatively stable sources of funding guaranteeing economic, decision-making and operational independence, in other words, designing and carrying out strategic and mission-oriented financial investments. Other key factors could be determinant when replicating a Community Foundation model, such as a strong connection with the territorial community, a strong internal heterogeneity and diversity of active and motivated local actors and networks (i.e., universities, research centres, social cooperatives, social enterprises, cultural centres, ...), the capacity to understand and govern the complex processes of change in a territory, as well as the strong expertise and competences of actors.</p>
Model / Case-study	LOCAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY FOR INNER AND FRAGILE AREAS – “Milk Mountain” Strategy for the Emilian Apennines
Relevance	<p>This experience is exemplary of a model of designing and implementing a local development strategy for an inner and fragile area by leveraging the valorisation of typical products with high value-added and by integrating it with the upgrading and renewal of public services for citizens and communities.</p>
Potential and key determinants for replicability	<p>The experience of the “Milk Mountain” strategy for the Emilian Apennines, and of the Italian National Strategy for Inner Area (SNAI) in general, shows great potential for implementation in other contexts. The issues addressed, primarily the lack of services and the depopulation of rural internal areas, are common in many emerging countries. The joint leadership by small municipalities, the pivotal focus on typical products and</p>

	local value chains, and the role played by community actors make it an even more interesting case in terms of replicability. Building cohesion and social capital and improving governance capacities are key determinants to pursue a similar strategic planning approach. At the same time, counting on in-depth technical expertise provided by local and national experts as well as on proper administrative capacities within municipalities surely represent relevant enabling conditions to make the design process smooth and effectively implement the strategy.
Model / Case-study	LOCAL ACTION GROUP FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT - Local Action Group "Maiella Verde"
Relevance	This experience is exemplary of the application of the LEADER / Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) approach in Italy, which aims at mobilising and involving rural communities to achieve smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. This approach relies on Local Action Groups as political and technical bodies that are able to tie the local partnership of actors with the managers and technical team in charge of designing and implementing a local strategy for rural development.
Potential and key determinants for replicability	The role played by LAGs in rural areas across Europe could be crucial in similar areas in several emerging countries. Indeed, the issues addressed – such as depopulation, the crisis of farming, the crisis of local production due to competition in the global market, low youth and female employment, the lack of services and economic opportunities – are also experienced in rural areas in many other countries. The following factors could be determinant for replicability: trust, cohesion and social capital at the local level; a clear governance model; the embeddedness within the local community along with autonomy / impartiality from specific private interests by LAGs' managers and personnel; technical skills for the design and implementation of local development strategies, for territorial animation and project management.
Model / Case-study	INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT TO COMMUNITY REGENERATION - SiBaTer Project
Relevance	The SiBaTer project is exemplary of a model of institutional upgrading for social and territorial cohesion in Italy. On the one hand, it acts to improve the administrative capacity of municipalities in regard to the competences assigned to them by the law. On the other hand, it fosters the creation of a favourable environment for the generation of community / youth entrepreneurship proposals aiming at the valorisation of abandoned lands and assets.
Potential and key determinants for replicability	Both the scope of the SiBaTer project in terms of community / territorial regeneration and its leadership through the involvement of the national association of municipalities makes this case interesting and replicable in some emerging countries where similar issues and organisations exist. The existence of unused heritage of public or private properties (e.g., lands, buildings and assets) representing both a problem and an opportunity for regeneration is probably the most important triggering factor to boost a similar process. Moreover, the following factors are highly relevant for potential replicability and successful implementation: engagement of local communities and

	youth around the theme of valorisation and innovation of their territories; high personal motivation and commitment by mayors and civil servants; existence of national and local partnerships sharing of a common vision, development objectives and working methods; possibility of being structured at a regional or departmental level rather than at a national level. Taken together, the presence of these soft factors would enable a smoother process of institution-building for community regeneration towards Sustainable Human Development at the local level.
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Source: Authors

As a follow-up of our analysis, 6 Policy Guidelines (one for each case study) were designed in order to provide detailed information and inputs to inform a multilateral / UN-level strategic visioning and programming perspective, including both UN and UNDP Country Offices, as well as national policymakers and LRGs in relevant areas. In other words, these Policy Guidelines aim at inspiring the adoption of similar models of SSE and STC by LRGs and local actors in emerging countries, counting also on the support by UN or development partner projects.

These guidelines were elaborated by applying a case-study research. In particular, for each experience, desk-based analysis of relevant documentation was combined with in-depth individual or collective interviews with leaders and key informants. In line with our conceptual and interpretative framework, case studies were analysed considering their start-up, development and Theory of Change, mapping all the relevant actors and territories involved in the process and respective interaction modalities as a basis for ad-hoc governance solutions, assessing the risks faced during the implementation and the strategies developed to cope with these risks, providing insights about the changes generated.

Therefore, these Policy Guidelines [\[available here\]](#) go far beyond a simple descriptive approach, in favour of an in-depth analytical investigation of the key determinants of selected practices. This allows for the identification and understanding of how the latter are embedded in a multi-level local system, in other words, how they relate to and engage with enabling/constraining policies and norms, institutional settings and organizations, ecosystem actors and services. Furthermore, our analytical approach supports the detection of features and processes that can provide key insights informing policy practices worldwide.

FINAL REMARKS

Nowadays, it is clearer than ever that initiatives of social and solidarity economy (SSE) and policies for social and territorial cohesion (STC) are interlinked in effectively enhancing SDG localization, in order to counter the intersection between vulnerability, inequalities, and unsustainability that have been exacerbated by the pandemic.

In this scenario, our conceptual and interpretative perspective has framed SSE and STC within territorial ecosystems, leading to a variety of potential outcomes in the four pillars of Sustainable Human Development (SHD): Equity and cohesion; Participation and empowerment; Sustainability; Productivity and efficiency. Moreover, we argue that they can enhance the transformative resilience of local systems, by conceiving internal and external stressors and shocks as opportunities to structurally transform the system itself towards SHD. Finally, SSE initiatives and SCT policies may entail a real process of institutional change, which involves reshaping political incentives to continuously nurturing collective action and agency for SDG localization.

In this regard, Italy has a long-lasting experience in implementing integrated local development initiatives concerning social and territorial cohesion and social economy in its own territories in order to foster Sustainable Human Development at the local level. Moreover, several Italian experiences in both SSE and STC are devoting efforts to transforming the current emergency in an opportunity to further enhance the four pillars of Sustainable Human Development within their territorial ecosystems.

In a world looking for (and needing) innovative and tailored approaches to design and implement appropriate recovery and transformative strategies for the post-Covid19 era at all levels, experience-sharing and peer-to-peer learning appear extremely important, especially for SDG localization. For this reason, our study has first analysed the Italian approach and distinctive features on SSE and STC as drivers for SDG localization and then it has identified 6 case-studies that can potentially inspire similar practices and showcase replicable models in other countries.

All in all, this study, including our case-study analysis and Policy Guidelines, allows identifying key determinants to foster social cohesion and promote inclusive, equitable and sustainable economic development as an expression of 'complex' and integrated territorial dynamics, thus supporting the localization of the 2030 Agenda.

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About the authors

The study was carried out over the period August 2020 – March 2021 by a team composed by:

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APPENDIX 1: LIST OF KEY INFORMANTS

MAIN SECTOR	INFORMANT	AFFILIATION	AFFILIATION LINK	POSITION
Social and Territorial Cohesion	Bianchi Patrizio	Emilia-Romagna regional government	https://www.miur.gov.it/il-ministro	Former Regional Minister
Social and Territorial Cohesion	Barca Fabrizio	Inequalities and Diversity Forum	https://www.forumdisuguaglianze-diversita.org/assemblea/fabrizio-barca-2/	National Coordinator
Social and Solidarity Economy	Corvo Luigi	Tor Vergata University - Rome	https://economia.uniroma2.it/faculty/235/corvo-luigi	Researcher
Social and Territorial Cohesion	De Luca Sabina	Inequalities and Diversity Forum	https://www.forumdisuguaglianze-diversita.org/assemblea/sabina-de-luca/	Member
Social and Solidarity Economy	Fiaschi Claudia	Italian Confederation of Cooperatives + Third Sector National Forum	https://www.forumterzosettore.it/chi-siamo/organismi	Vice-President Spokesperson
SDG Localization	Giovannini Enrico	ASviS - Italian Alliance for Sustainable Development	https://asvis.it	Spokesperson
Social and Solidarity Economy	Gori Luca	Sant'Anna University - Pisa	https://www.santannapisa.it/it/luc-a-gori	Researcher
Social and Territorial Cohesion	Gramigna Annalisa	IFEL Foundation c/o ANCI - National Association of Italian Municipalities	https://www.fondazioneifel.it	Project contact person
Social and Territorial Cohesion	Lucatelli Sabrina	Italian Government / National Strategy for Inner Areas	https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it/strategia-nazionale-aree-interne	Former National Coordinator
Social and Territorial Cohesion	Lupatelli Giampiero	Caire centre	http://www.caire.it	Director

Social and Solidarity Economy	Mento Federico	Ashoka Italia	https://it.linkedin.com/in/federico-mento-impact	Co-Director
SDG Localization	Miraglia Martino	UN Habitat	https://www.linkedin.com/in/martino-miraglia/?originalSubdomain=it	Programme officer
Social and Territorial Cohesion	Mornioli Andrea	Dedalus Social Cooperative + Inequalities and Diversity Forum	https://www.forumdisuguaglianze-diversita.org/assemblea/andrea-mornioli	Director
Social and Territorial Cohesion	Ricci Carlo	National Rural Network	https://www.reterurale.it	Evaluator
Social and Territorial Cohesion	Sabatini Massimo	Territorial Cohesion Agency	https://www.agenziacoesione.gov.it	General Director
Social and Territorial Cohesion	Silvestri Francesco	National Strategy for Inner Areas + Eco&Eco	http://www.eco-eco.it	Consultant
Social and Solidarity Economy	Vanni Eleonora	League of Social Cooperatives	https://www.legacoopsociali.it/notizie/in-primo-piano/eleonora-vanni-eletta-vicepresidente-nazionale-di-legacoop	National Vice-President
Social and Solidarity Economy	Zandonai Flaviano	Cooperative Group CGM	http://cgm.coop/chi-siamo/	Open Innovation Manager



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