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How to inhabit the future? Rethinking development through mobile methodologies in highly depopulated areas

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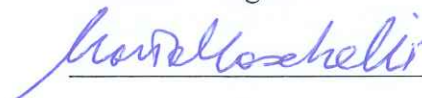Registr. number: 1238271

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Student's signature

È tempo di mettersi in ascolto.

È tempo di fare silenzio dentro di sé.

È tempo di essere mobili e leggeri,

di alleggerirsi per mettersi in cammino.

È tempo di convivere con le macerie e

l'orrore, per trovare un senso. […]

Che senso ha se solo tu ti salvi.

Bisogna poter contemplare, ma essere anche in viaggio.

Bisogna essere attenti, mobili, spregiudicati e ispirati.

Un nomadismo, una condizione, un'avventura,

un processo di liberazione, una fatica, un dolore,

per comunicare tra le macerie. […]

Luoghi visibili e luoghi invisibili,

luoghi reali e luoghi immaginari

popoleranno il nostro cammino.

Ma la merce è merce e la sua legge

sarà sempre pronta a cancellare

il lavoro di chi ha trovato radici

e guarda lontano.

Il passato e il futuro non esistono

nell'eterno presente del consumo.

Questo è uno degli orrori, con il quale

da tempo conviviamo e al quale non abbiamo

ancora dato una risposta adeguata.

Bisogna liberarsi dall'oppressione

e riconciliarsi con il mistero.

Due sono le strade da percorrere,

due sono le forze da far coesistere.

La politica da sola è cieca.

Il mistero, che è muto, da solo diventa sordo.

Un'arte clandestina per mantenersi aperti,

essere in viaggio ma lasciare tracce,

edificare luoghi, unirsi a viaggiatori inquieti.

E se a qualcuno verrà in mente, un giorno,

di fare la mappa di questo itinerario,

di ripercorrere i luoghi, di esaminare le tracce,

mi auguro che sarà solo per trovare un nuovo inizio.

È tempo che l'arte trovi altre forme

per comunicare in un universo in cui tutto è comunicazione.

È tempo che esca dal tempo astratto del mercato,

per ricostruire

il tempo umano dell'espressione necessaria.

Bisogna inventare.

Una stalla può diventare un tempio e

restare magnificamente una stalla.

Né un Dio, né un'idea, potranno salvarci

ma solo una relazione vitale.

Ci vuole un altro sguardo

per dare senso a ciò che barbaramente

muore ogni giorno omologandosi.

E come dice il maestro:

«Tutto ricordare.

Tutto dimenticare».

(Antonio Neiwiller, 1993)

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to investigate how the post-development approach may innovate in a transformative way the place-based approach in local development projects, in order to open up the possibility of learning 'from the margins' and imagining a 'pluriversal' future.

This will be done through an exploratory case study characterised by the application of creative and mobile research methodologies. The disruption advocated by the post-development approach, in fact, necessarily requires to rethink the nexus between epistemology and methodology.

In particular, this research will consider a community walk undertaken in Gagliano Aterno (AQ), a small, marginal and depopulated village in an 'inner area' of Abruzzo region. This region was heated by a major earthquake in 2009 and it is currently a very complex field for the experimentation of local development projects aimed at repopulating and revitalizing it. In particular, the community walk performed in Gagliano Aterno prompted the local community to investigate the past, the present and the possible future of the village and was considered by the organizers an important step of the local development project named 'Ritornanti al futuro', which was animated by the aim of constructing shared aspirations toward the future.

The research highlights that 'cognitive injustice' – which lies at the basis of the modernist ontology of universalism – is one of the main criticalities to address in order to frame local development in a transformative perspective. In order to enact the disruption advocated by post-development scholars, this research suggests that is strongly necessary to deeply question the power relations arisen in approaching such territories. This implies to take care of the connections between epistemology and methodology and to conceive oneself as part of what need to be transformed.

Through the present investigation, I claim that a more just future for all may be constructed by properly by learning 'from the margins', searching for different conceptions of living, thinking and inhabiting that enable us to imagine a different, possible and 'pluriversal' future.

Introduction

In the centre of the region Abruzzo, along the Apennines ridge, there is Gagliano Aterno (AQ), a small and marginal village located in the 'inner area' *Gran Sasso – Subequana*, on the slopes of the Sirente – Velino mountain chain. In 2009 a major earthquake heated the village and the surrounding area, worsening the severe depopulation phenomenon which had manifested since the 1960s – 1970s with the advent of industrial development. Nowadays, the village counts 253 residents, but fewer stable inhabitants. The post-earthquake public reconstruction only started in 2021, in correspondence with the election of a new, young and visionary mayor, who believe in the possibility of re-generating Gagliano Aterno through experimental and extra-ordinary local development projects.

Local development approach, in fact, has been considered the most suitable approach to contrast territorial inequalities and depopulation for its strong potential in supporting the regeneration of economies and societies of 'less developed' regions (OECD, 2001). It is defined as a specific form of regional development in which endogenous factors have a central role in "pursuing effective 'spatial equity'" (Conti, Giaccaria, 2001, p. 108). It enacts a *self-centred* territorial approach, which assume that place matter in development issues.

Among the most recent development policies that have been promoted in order to tackle depopulation and territorial inequalities, emerges the National Strategy For Inner Areas (SNAI). In fact, the Italian contemporary debate on development policies for marginal areas has been centred, more or less directly, around this innovative policy that has been experimented in Italy within the 2014-2020 EU cohesion policy. The Strategy has not only represented an innovation in the field of development policy – with its explicit 'place-based' approach – but it has also been the catalyst of several theoretical contributions and empirical analysis, leading to a vibrant academic and public debate. Nowadays, a plethora of different actors – researchers, politicians, civic networks. NGOs, local institutions and enterprises – are currently debating, planning and acting in relation to 'inner areas'. For some, the extreme nature of inner areas "makes them interesting laboratories for social innovation" (Calvaresi 2016), whilst others interpret them as a 'battleground' of different visions of development, different

rationalities and interests at stake, with of course different means to participate in this game (Emidio di Treviri 2021).

The present thesis aims to contribute to such debate, trying to contaminate the place-based approach with the post-development perspective.

Post-development refers to a collective effort to deconstruct the idea of 'development as progress' in order to question the whole development paradigm, which is considered at the roots of the current ecological degradation and of persisting social inequalities (Sachs, 2010). The term 'post-development' properly refers to this challenge, which constitutes also the main specificity of this approach: it does not try to find an alternative development or alternative paths to development, rather it pushes for alternatives to development. It does so by including a variety of systemic critiques and ways of living which represent transformative initiatives. In particular, the perspective of the 'Epistemologies of the South (De Sousa Santos, 2014) points out that actually there are other possibilities to the current western model of existence, but they have been actively constructed as 'non existencies', through their designation as 'inferior', 'unproductive', 'ignorant', 'particular', 'backward', 'local', or 'lazy'. This perspective stresses the importance of 'cognitive injustice' in relation to the issue of inequalities and advocates for an epistemological shift in order to enable our capacity to learn from the different experiences of the world.

Therefore, the main research question stimulating this research is: in which ways the adoption of a post-development perspective may innovate in a transformative way the (local) development approach?

To answer to this research question, creative and mobile methodologies has been selected as the most suitable methods for enacting the epistemological shift advocated by post-development scholars, since they represent a break in relation to traditional social research methodologies, widening our possibilities of exploring places and making visible and valuable the plurality of knowledges, practices and experiences of the world.

In fact, the second research question stimulating the research is: what can we learn 'from the margins' by applying creative and mobile research methodologies in a post-development perspective?

The research has been constructed starting from my personal internship experience which took place in Gagliano Aterno. From May to September 2021, I lived in the village as

part of the local development project initiated by the mayor, that basically consists in hosting young social researchers as temporary inhabitants, as trigger element to stimulate local population 'capacity to aspire' (Appadurai, 2004) and local development dynamics. In particular, from July to September 2021, Gagliano Aterno was also the object of a specific action-research project called 'Ritornanti al Futuro': its objective was to make visible and re-centralize small villages of mountain and marginal areas, focusing on the cultural, social and economic opportunities that these places may offer, not only for those already living there but also for the youngest generations in general. The idea at the basis of the project is that it is necessary a cultural, relational work in order to transform these potential opportunities in tangible realities. In fact, the name 'Ritornanti al Futuro' refers to the attempt to break with a threatening and disillusioned perception of the future, which is considered an immaterial obstacle to re-think our modalities of living and to construct alternatives ways of inhabiting the world as human beings.

Within this context, I will base my specific focus on the 'community walk' which represents the first step of such initiative and it aimed to build a research community to investigate the past, the present and the possible future of Gagliano Aterno. Therefore, walking has been selected as research method that is part of a broader realm of creative and mobile methodologies, and which to allows to investigate the emotional, symbolic and relational dimension of a place, on the basis of the consideration that "space is, simultaneously, in the present, in the past and in the future, in terms of memory – individual or shared – and in terms of imagination and planning" (Giorgi et al. 2021, p. 154). Moreover, in order to stimulate participants' immersion in the temporal investigation, a photo-exhibition of Gagliano in the past has been used as photo-elicitation strategy and two clowns have been engaged for simulating to be in a temporal elsewhere.

The community walk was realized on 18 of July 2021 and it involved around 50 people: among them, part of the local community of Gagliano Aterno, people from neighbouring villages and some external visitors, namely researchers who were invited as mentors or experts on the topic of the broader project the community walk was part of. The community walk was and was recorded through a smartphone and it was also live streamed on the Facebook page of the project 'MIM Gagliano Aterno'. The video has been used as the main source of audio-visual data for the analysis of the community walk. Other visual data gathered and used for the following analysis were the photo realized during the walk. An observation protocol has been

realized as a set of guidelines for the following collaborative descriptive analysis of the video, which has been realized by an interdisciplinary work group composed of both researchers and non-researchers. Moreover, since the thesis aims to look at that experience of the community walk from an embodied and situated perspective, the visual data were integrated with my personal observations, realized starting from field diaries and ethnographic mental notes. All the materials – *verbatim* from participants, transcript excerpts, bibliographic references and field diaries - that were originally in Italian were translated by me.

The thesis is structured as follow.

The first chapter will address the question of the crisis of development: it will starts by situating development discourse within its historical origins and describing its evolution through time; then, local development will be presented as one of the approaches that represent an alternative way of conceiving and practising development; finally, the post-development approach will be deepened.

The second chapter will focus on the SNAI policy as a territorial development policy aimed at tackled marginality: firstly, it will be described as a 'place based' policy and analysed making references to different scholars; secondly, it will be assessed adopting a post-development perspective.

The third chapter describe creative and mobile methodologies: initially, the epistemological roots of creative methods will be reconstructed; then mobile methodologies and in particular walking as research method will be presented.

In the fourth chapter, the specific context of the case study and the research design of the community walk will be described.

The fifth chapter consists in a descriptive account of the community walk, focusing in particular on three meaningful moments for the sake of the following analysis.

In the sixth chapter, I will deepen methodological reflexivity as a strategy to reflect on the research process, on the implications of methodological choices and on power dynamics arisen within it, especially focusing on the relationship between the researcher and the participants.

In the seventh chapter I will analyse the relationship between the participants and the temporal journey represented by the community walk: in doing this I will focus firstly on the verbal level of analysis and then on the embodied one; finally I will intersect the two dimension in order to highlight correspondence or discrepancy among them.

In chapter eight, I will present, discuss and reflect on research results, by focusing both on the space-temporal investigation and on answering to the specific research questions outlined within the context of this thesis.

Chapter 1 – The crisis of 'development'

"The arrow of progress is broken and the future
has lost its brightness: it holds in store more threats than
promises. How can one believe in development, if the
sense of orientation has withered away?"

(Sachs, 2010, p. XVII)

The Development Dictionary: A Guide To Knowledge As Power is one of the first collective efforts to deconstruct development discourse as necessary step of a wider decolonization of minds, published in 1992, that is more than thirty years ago. At that moment, Wolfgang Sachs and the other scholars contributing to the book – including Gustavo Esteva, C. Douglas Lummis, Marianne Gronemeyer, Gérald Berthoud, Ivan Illich, Majid Rahnema, Arturo Escobar, Barbara Duden, Jean Robert, José Maria Sbert, Vandana Shiva, Claude Alvares, Harry Cleaver, Serge Latouche, Ashis Nandy and Otto Ullrich – had just proclaimed the end of 'the development era', driven by the conviction that the conclusion of the Cold War – and the end of the related geopolitical competition between two different socio-economic models – would have also led to the end of 'development' as world issue. Therefore, in the mentioned book, they aimed to break with 'development' as a way of thinking, scrutinising and deconstructing all the vocabulary surrounding development discourse: 'needs', 'progress', 'poverty', 'standards of living', and so on.

About twenty-five years later, in 2019 the same collective of scholars and many more, wrote another book, *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary,* in which introduction we can find the bitter realisation that even if the development era had ended as geopolitical program, the opening of transnational markets gave to 'development' a further boost: a western-style consumer economy had become the model for almost all countries and populations (Khotari et. al, 2019).

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But coming back to Sachs's quote, what is this breakdown of development dream? It mainly refers to the failure of the development promise to bring prosperity for all by following the same path, the western economic model. As Sachs (2010, p. X) pointed out: "The shiny side of development is often accompanied by a dark side of displacement and dispossession; this is the reason why economic growth has time and again produced impoverishment next to enrichment". Displacement, dispossession and impoverishment not only in relation to other human beings, but also with regards to non-human beings and nature. Social polarisation and environmental destruction seem to be inevitably interrelated with development.

Nowadays, in 2023 we still have to completely dismantle 'the mental structure' of development (Sachs, 2010). The future is ever more threatening and a sense of orientation seems more and more far away: the experience of Covid-19 pandemic, the recent war in Ukraine and the ongoing impasse in relation to the ecological crisis, have brutally confronted us with our inability as human beings, as a collective subject, to cooperate rather than compete, even when cooperation is clearly the only way towards collective survival. We are still dealing with this broken arrow, with our rusty capacity of imagining and creating a different future.

However, according to Sachs (2010) the failure of development allows us to deepen the roots of this unfulfilled promise, which deeply relates to the core assumptions about the nature of social progress at the basis of development discourse. Therefore, in this chapter I will firstly explore the origins and the evolution of development discourse, searching for a definition of the term; secondly, I will briefly present the debate around the possible solutions that have been proposed to overcome the problems related to our conventional development model; thirdly, I will explore the specific notion of local development and the place-based approach as alternative approaches to development; finally, I will present the specificity of the so-called post-development approach, which is the theoretical framework I meanly refer to.

1.1 Situating the 'development discourse': its origins and evolution

The idea of development is deeply rooted in western culture:

> At the heart of Western thought, then, lies the idea of a natural history of humanity:
> namely, that the 'development' of societies, knowledge, and wealth corresponds to
> a 'natural' principle with its own source of dynamism, which grounds the possibility
> of a grand narrative. […] In this view, the 'order of things' – that is progress – cannot

be stopped: 'development' is not a choice but the finality – and fatality – of history (Rist 1997, pp. 39-40).

However, development as a transitive term, as an active re-order of society is quite younger.

According to Sachs (2010), the development era began with the Inaugural Address of President H. Truman in 1949 and it ended with the Fall of Berlin Wall in 1989, which inaugurated the globalisation era. Truman's speech, in fact, institutionalised 'development' as the geopolitical program of the 20th century, installing also the binary opposition between 'developed' and 'underdeveloped areas'. Since that historical moment, the concept of development and its necessary opposite has been shaping the world and the way we live in it.

Looking at Truman's (1949) speech[1] we may easily recognize some constitutive elements and assumptions of development discourse:

- Poverty conceptualised in material terms as a handicap and a threat for all;

- The expansion of industry and economy framed as 'progress';

- The opposition between developed and underdeveloped areas as the basis to justify external interventions;

- The leading role of US in showing the right path for all ("we must embark on a bold new program…");

- The necessary efforts by all wealth nations in fostering development of poorer nations through UN system of cooperation ("our commerce with other countries expands as they progress industrially and economically");

- The quantitative dimension of development intended as growth ("more food, more clothing, more materials"; "greater production");

- The promise of development as a cure for all ills ("the key to prosperity and peace");

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[1] https://www.trumanlibrary.gov/library/public-papers/19/inaugural-address

- The means through which development must be fostered: scientific advances, capital investments and industrial progress.

More in general, Sachs (2019) identified four main aspects constituting the idea of development: 1) chrono-politically, it is assumed that there is only one social evolution path, thus all nations proceed in the same direction, just moving forwards or backwards; 2) geopolitically, the developed nations indicate to other countries which way to follow; 3) socio-politically, the development of a nation is measured through gross domestic product (GDP), which indicates its economic performance, thus the variety of the world is reduced to the difference between rich and poor nations; 4) the actors who support development are mainly experts of governments, multinational banks, and corporations.

The geopolitical context of Truman's speech helps in understanding and historically situating the inauguration of the development era as a post-colonial era: the main aim behind the US was to attract former colonies in the western sphere of influence in order to avoid them joining communism. However, it was also a way to continue pursuing the colonial extractive relationship that was at the basis of western society development and of so-called Euro-Atlantic civilization (Sachs, 2010).

The latter argument may partly explain why, despite the fact that the geopolitical context had changed drastically in 1989, development survived and continued to be used to frame North-South relations (Sachs, 2010). In fact, as some scholars (Rist 1997, 2007; Sachs, 2010) have pointed out, development demonstrates a never lasting capacity of surviving as a discourse and as a practice.

Following Sachs (2010, p. X), this may be due to the fact that development "is a concept of monumental emptiness, carrying a vaguely positive connotation" and it may mean almost everything. Therefore, "it does possess one function: it allows any intervention to be sanctified in the name of a higher goal" (Sachs, 2010, p. XIX). In fact, its "meaning depends on where and by whom it is used" (Rist, 2007, p. 485), e.g., the idea of development of the World Bank is surely quite different from the one of Greenpeace.

Indeed, it is not a case that we struggle to find a definition of what development really is. At UN level we can find a bunch of definitions, but they do not describe it as a process;

rather, they always include social evolutionist assumptions and set western culture as the ideal condition of existence, resulting in vague and normative definitions[2].

In general, two different perspectives in relation to the term may be identified: those who explicitly relate development to growth and claim for equity in a quantitative sense (i.e., more GDP) – the concept of relative justice – and those who associate development with the empowerment and autonomy of communities, claiming for rights and resources for the powerless – the concept of absolute justice (Sachs, 2010). According to Sachs (2010) it is not fruitful to mix these two perspectives together in one concept. Let's try to understand why.

Gilbert Rist may help us in framing development as a practice, moving away from normative definitions. In fact, according to him (2007) a proper definition is a fundamental step for debunking development. In his book *The History of Development: From Western Origins to Global Faith* he defines (1997, p. 13) development as:

> A set of practices, sometimes appearing to conflict with one another, which require – for the reproduction of society – the general transformation and destruction of national environment and of social relations. Its aim is to increase the production of commodities (goods and services) geared, by way of exchange, to effective demand.

This definition represents the attempt to frame development 'as it is': an observable process, a social practice, a model of social reproduction that destroys natural environment and social relations, since it is based on the ever-increasing production of commodities and on the ever-increasing expansion of the world market. But let's analyse more in deep this definition:

- "A set of practices, sometimes appearing to conflict one another" refers to the fact that development is a kind of 'performative word': any measure may be justified 'in the name of development', thus we can find very different policies to promote it along history (mercantilism, liberalism, protectionism, Keynesianism, neo-liberalism, etc.);

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[2] As we can see, in the Human Development formulation "human development is a process of enlarging people's choices. The most critical ones are to lead a long and healthy life, to be educated and to enjoy a decent standard of living. Additional choices include political freedom, guaranteed human rights and self-respect – what Adam Smith called the ability to mix with others without being «ashamed to appear in public»" (Alkire, 2010, p. 2).

- "which requires for the reproduction of society" means that every development path aims to keep the social organisation of the society;

- "the general transformation and destruction of natural environment" refers to the fact that our economic development is based on progressively turning natural environment into a 'resource' to be appropriated, the enclosure movement in England during the industrialization process is a perfect example of how a common – in this case 'land' - can be turned into a commodity, in order to foster its productivity and integrate it into market mechanisms;

- "and of social relations": development determines the replacement of personal relationships with market relationships , therefore also human beings become 'resources' and are expected to sell themselves in the labor market;

- "its aim is to increase the production of commodities (goods and services)" refers to the imperative of growth, measured through GDP and conceived as infinite, as the main real aim of development processes;

- "geared, by way of exchange, to a solvent demand" means that the improvement led by development are only possible for those who are solvent, who are integrated into the market.

This definition allows us to understand why it is impossible to pursue both relative justice (equity in quantitative terms, in relation to GDP) and absolute justice (more rights and resources for the powerless) since 'development-as-growth' *necessarily* implies over-exploitation of natural environment, creation of waste and emissions, biodiversity losses, disruption of social relations and an overall process of commodification (Sachs, 2010). That's why, as Sachs (2010) pointed out, the semantic vagueness around the term development creates confusion and political cover-up: because the two main ways of intending development we mentioned above are conflicting perspectives, since relative justice is impossible without growth, and absolute justice is impossible with growth.

That's the core of the development crisis: growth was meant to be infinite, but nowadays it is widespread that Earth has its limits; therefore, it should follow that growth too is *necessarily* a limited process. As Sachs (2010, p. XI) pointed out: "assigning the Euro-Atlantic model of civilization to a vanguard position either along the course of history or across the social ranking

order has by now lost any legitimacy: it is proven to be incompatible with the planet". But as Rist (2007, p. 490) argued:

> There is a positive side to restoring a sense of limits. Instead of viewing 'development' as the history of progress, we could also look upon it as [...] a history of successive losses – which, again, mainly concerns not only the natural environment, but also social bonds and conviviality.

However, we are still dealing with this arduous change of perspective, more than ever.

1.2 'Crisis solutions'

In the last years, multiple crisis – migration crisis, urbanization crisis, ecological crisis, economic crisis, epidemiologic crisis – have been linked, more or less directly, to our current model of development, but *what* needs to be changed and *how* are still open questions and field of political conflicts.

In fact, in recent years we have seen several attempts to reform the concept and the practices of conventional development through different means – consider the concepts, and corresponding practices, of 'green economy', 'circular economy', 'local development', 'modular economy', 'degrowth', etc. – but the concept that has probably been most successful is the one of 'sustainable development'.

At the foundation of the concept lies the idea of 'sustainability' that was proposed by the famous Brundtland report of the World Commission on Development and the Environment (WCDE) in 1987, published in response to an urgent call by the General Assembly of the United Nations to formulate "a global agenda for change", especially in relation to environmental concerns. In fact, the idea of sustainability strictly relates to the ecological crisis we are living in, since it refers to the possibility for next generations to afford well living conditions in relation to the depletion of natural resources currently taking place. In fact, 'sustainable development' is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED, 1987, p. 37).

Moreover, since the 1970s "a dichotomy emerged in the discourse of development, juxtaposing the idea of development-as-growth to the idea of development-as-social policy" (Sachs, 2019, p. XIV). The latter lies, above all, on Amartya Sen theorization on justice, freedom and wellbeing and it has been translated in the formulation of the concept of 'human

development' in 1990, defined as the process of enlarging people's choice. Therefore, along with GDP to measure wealth creation at *country* level, we now have also other social indicators to measure *people wellbeing*, such as life expectancy, mean years of education, national income per capita, and so on.

This continuous re-configuration of the idea of development has progressively led to the affirmation of what nowadays are the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which include the juxtaposition between development-as-growth, development-as-social policy and the idea of sustainability. SDGs have been identified by the UN in 2015. The UN Agenda 2030, that includes the SDGs, should constitute a sort of guideline for reforming our economic model. SDGs are based on the idea that 'sustainable development' should involve three fundamental and interconnected dimensions: the social, the economic and the ecological one. Therefore, it represents an important conceptual shift from a mono-dimensional way of conceiving development as mere economic growth to a multi-dimensional one, which includes wider dimensions of wellbeing.

Moreover, the Agenda 2030 is defined by the UN as having unprecedented scope and significance, and the SDGs as "universal goals and targets which involve the entire world, developed and developing countries alike" (United Nations, 2015, p. 3). The passage indicates another relevant shift in development discourse: with the emergence of biophysical constraints to economic growth, development is not a problem of the poor anymore; it is not about catching up with the rich, but rather it is a global issue in relation to our possibility to survive on this planet as human beings. Therefore, now the overall economic system comes into question.

However, the Agenda 2030 is also the object of substantial critics. For instance, Sachs argues that even if economic growth is no longer the main aim, the reductionism of development thinking still continues. Along with GDP, we now have several social indicators to guide and measure the performances of each country in relation to specific objectives – health, nutrition, education and so on. As Sachs puts (Sachs, p. XIV):

> Data allow comparison, and comparison constructs deficits along a timeline […].
> Reducing deficits in the world has been the aim of development for the last 70 years.
> In that sense, the Human Development Index, not unlike the GDP, is a deficit index;
> it classifies countries hierarchically and thereby makes the assumption that there is
> only one kind of social evolution. This is how development thinking reveals its
> secret: it lives by the dictatorship of quantitative comparison. (Pluriverse, Foreword,
> p. XIV)

Sachs (2019) argues that the failure of development is clearly evident in the Agenda 2030. Once development was conceived as a path of progress, while nowadays "progress has turned out to be regress" (Sachs, 2019, p. XIII) and life is increasingly a matter of survival, not of progress. For Sachs (2019, p. XIII) "the Sustainable Development Goals should really be called SSGs – Sustainable Survival Goals".

In fact, sustainable development still includes the concept of growth, now turned into 'green and inclusive growth'. As Rist (2007, p. 487) claimed, "'sustainable development' is nothing but an oxymoron, a rhetorical figure that joins together two opposites". The main issue around the question of development, indeed, is properly the different approaches in relation to development-as-growth: there are those who argue that sustainability is possible within a growth paradigm and those who think the opposite. And it is on the basis of such fundamental difference that the various solutions proposed in relation to the crisis of development are emerging.

Khotari et. al. (2019) consider 'crisis solutions' to development by distinguishing 'reformist solutions' from 'transformative initiatives'. The former are basically a range of innovations promoted as crisis solutions, aimed at maximising the efficiency in using natural resources and tackling inequalities without questioning the growth paradigm at the basis of our development model. Among others, we find in this category the so-called 'circular economy', 'green economy', 'ecosystem service trading', 'modular economy', 'sustainable development', etc. On the contrary, transformative initiatives, or radical alternatives, are worldviews and practices that incarnate different ways of being, living and thinking, potentially representing alternatives to the universalizing logic of development. This is expressed by concepts and practices such as 'commons', 'buen vivir', 'degrowth', 'food sovereignty', 'ubuntu', the Zapatista movement, etc.

In general, reforming solutions have been proposed mostly in the Global North, whilst transformative initiatives are being experimented both in the Global North and in the Global South. For instance, degrowth is a concept coming from western scholars (see N. Georgescu-Roegen, A. Gorz and S. Latouche) or the Zapatista movement is a libertarian socio-political movement based in Chiapas, Mexico. We have to specify here that 'Global North' and 'Global South' do not correspond to rigid geographic entities; rather one may exist within another, since social inequalities and unequal power relations may be found within countries as well as beyond them (Trefzer et. al., 2014).

In the next paragraph we will deepen 'local development' and the 'place-based approach' as reformistic solutions based on an alternative way of conceiving development, which reflects also in an innovative way of structuring development policies, especially aimed at tackling territorial inequalities and social polarization.

1.3 Local Development and the 'place-based approach'

The issue of the persisting territorial inequalities across and within countries is matter of regional development policies, whose aim is properly to reduce regional inequalities through supporting economic activities in all regions, as we can read on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) website[3]. In this context, local development is defined as a specific form of regional development in which endogenous factors have a central role and territories and places are assumed as fundamental starting points.

It has emerged as a consequence of the shift from a *functional* form of regional development to a *territorial* one (Conti, Giaccaria, 2001). The first one is also referred as 'development from above': it concerns "the planning of the distribution of economic activities in a 'rationally structured' space, i.e., in a system of centres and networks" (Conti, Giaccaria, 2001, p. 108) and it incorporates a monolithic, positivistic view of development. In this perspective, only few selected actors generate the transformation of society.

On the contrary, regional development in territorial terms is also referred as 'development from below':

> This is not an option of autarchic development, but of development promoted by forces endogenous to the region itself, as the means for pursuing effective "spatial equity", understood not (and not only) on the basis of economistic criteria, but in terms of social welfare and quality of life, regional solidarity, self-realisation and local decision-making capacity (Conti, Giaccaria, 2001, p. 108).

Therefore, it is a model of *self-centred* development, which focuses on the territorial dimension within which local community's needs are satisfied (Conti, Giaccaria 2001). Instead of a 'space'

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[3] https://www.oecd.org/cfe/regionaldevelopment/regionaldevelopment.htm

to be externally planned in *functional* terms, in this approach we have a 'territory', an active subject: indeed, in relation to the question of development,

> The conceptual category of territory introduces the idea of a complex set of local resources (material and human), defined by specific physical-environmental, cultural, ethical and ideological features, political practices and unique forms of association, socio professional capacities and a virtually "unrepeatable" business climate. (Conti, Giaccaria, 2001 p. 110)

For many years, modern social science has conceived the *uniqueness* of places as a disturbance for the linear and necessary unfolding of development. On the contrary, in local development perspective, since places are active subjects, it means that their development does not depends on the ability of that specific place to adapt to a single and uniform path, rather it is connected with the ability of local actors to create, diffuse and coordinate several relational factors – such as trust, skills, reciprocal understanding, etc. (Conti, Giaccaria, 2001). Therefore, it is argued that "there are multiple possible pathways and multiple spatial arrangements for economic development" (Barca et al., 2012, p. 146).

From a policy perspective, even if a series of theoretical transformations occurred – as the endogenous growth revolution (Romer, 1986; Lucas, 1988, quoted in Barca et al. 2012, p. 135) with its stress on the role of human capital and innovation, the new economic geography (Krugman, 1991, 1995; Fujita et al., 1999, *ibid.*) with the focus on agglomeration and distance, and the institutional turn in economics (Rodrik et al., 2004; Acemoglu and Johnson, 2006a,b, *ibid*.) – however, in the field of policy implementation these theoretical changes were not so easily incorporated and development interventions remained linked to 1950s growth and development theories for a long time.

Then, the growing unbalances led by globalisation opened up a space for reflection on how to tackle such issue, but the debate was still anchored to the contraposition between the territorial approach and the old functional one. Barca et al. (2012) well explained these two contrasting perspectives: the first is based on 'spatially-blind' strategies, "policies that are designed without explicit consideration to space" (World Bank 2009, p. 24) – *one-size-fits-all* – considered as the most effective way to reach efficiency, equal opportunities, and to improve individuals' living conditions wherever they live; whilst, the other perspective is that of the 'place-based' approaches, which assume exactly the contrary – places matter – and the interactions between institutional and geographical factors are critical to development.

In the last thirty years, the territorial paradigm has officially gained international acceptance and now even institutions such as the World Bank and the OECD have recognized that every kind of territory at any scale may contribute to economic growth through different development patterns. The OECD calls it 'territorial development policy', or 'new paradigm of regional policy': a policy whose aim is to enhance wellbeing and living standards in specific regions and to generate regional competitive advantages maximising the potentialities of regions' assets, reducing inefficiency and social exclusion. Local development, in particular, has been identified as having a strong potential in supporting the regeneration of economies and societies of 'less developed' regions and in fostering local participation in the decision-making process (OECD, 2001). This new territorial paradigm is instead called by Barca (2009, p. 5) as 'place-based development policy' and defined as:

> A long-term development strategy whose objective is to reduce persistent inefficiency (underutilisation of the full potential) and inequality (share of people below a given standard of well-being and/or extent of interpersonal disparities) in specific places, through the production of bundles of integrated, place-tailored public goods and services, designed and implemented by eliciting and aggregating local preferences and knowledge through participatory political institutions, and by establishing linkages with other places; and promoted from outside the place by a system of multilevel governance where grants subject to conditionalities on both objectives and institutions are transferred from higher to lower levels of government.

This definition specifically responds to the dispositions established by the European Union Treaty for cohesion policy, addressing both the efficiency and equity dimensions necessary to promote an overall 'harmonious development' within EU (Council of the European Union, 2008). Cohesion policy, in fact, aims to reduce "disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favored regions" (Council of the European Union, 2008, art. 174). As we can notice, in this passage – as in many OECD papers too[4] – we can still find references to the linearity of development, to an (assumed) ideal condition of existence. The vocabulary of development discourse is still here. And that is not

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[4] E.g. in the already cited OECD Report of 2001, we still find expressions as "depressed and underdeveloped areas":https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/urban-rural-and-regional-development/best-practices-in-local-development_9789264193369-en#page1

surprising if we contextualize the cohesion policy and the place-based approaches within the project of EU as 'social market society' to be institutionally constructed – pursuing at the same time the objectives of efficiency and equity.

Therefore, local development and place-based approaches can be considered more suitable approaches to pursue a 'sustainable development' (especially in relation to the issue of equity); however, even if in these approaches we have relevant theoretical shifts towards more 'epistemic justice' – in the sense that local knowledge and know-how are recognized – and more 'political justice' – since "local control of the endogenous mechanisms of the generation of development" (Conti, Giaccaria, 2001, p. 108) is envisaged – however, a series of limits can be identified if we look at them from a transformative perspective.

Firstly, from an operational point of view the participatory processes at the basis of such approaches often don't take seriously into account the unbalanced power relations of the different actors involved (or not) in such processes and their effective capacity to count. Secondly, there is little reference to the ecological dimension and, when mentioned, the proposals to address climate change and ecological degradation are usually framed as innovations within the overall objective of economic efficiency, as it is in the 2009 Independent Report[5] realised by Fabrizio Barca to reform EU cohesion policy. Finally, the growth paradigm at the basis of development is not questioned, it is just reformed including wider dimensions of wellbeing.

In the perspective of the cited authors – Fabrizio Barca and Sergio Conti – the conception of wellbeing includes broader aspects than the mere economic dimension, and economic competitiveness is seen as one of the means to reach the wellbeing of a local system, not an aim *per se*. In the view of Conti and Giaccaria (2000, p. 246), in fact, local development is framed in a systemic perspective "as the process through which a place reproduces its own identity", thus development concerns no longer the market but the local system.

However, as we have seen in the previous paragraphs for the concept of 'development', Conti and Giaccaria (2001) highlighted that also the one of 'local development' is ambiguous and can be filled with different perspectives: in many interpretations local development is just a specification of economic development or it is often treated as synonym of competitiveness. As Görmar et. al. (2019) argued in relation to EU, there is an increasing focus on neoliberal

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[5] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2009_2014/documents/regi/dv/barca_report_/barca_report_en.pdf

concepts such as competitiveness, innovation and growth in territorial cohesion policies and that would undermine the potentialities of tackling spatial justice.

Therefore, as we have seen in this paragraph, even if now socio-cultural factors are taken into account in the explanation of economic phenomena and the territorial perspective has modified our idea of development processes, as Conti and Giaccaria (2000, p. 246) pointed out, local development "can *not* change the conception of development itself". In addition, the place-based approach explicitly claims that there are alternative pathways to development, which demand attention to geographical and institutional contexts, but it does not represent an alternative to development; rather, it is an approach that demands for the integration of all places in the economic development through different development patterns.

That's why, according to us, in order to reach its transformative potentialities local development should be disentangled from the concept of infinite growth and from the idea of expanding the market as means to reach greater social justice and/or environmental protection, since as we have seen in Rist's (1997) definition of development, it is properly the ever-expanding nature of development-as-growth which causes the destruction of the environment and of social relations. On the contrary, the recognition of limits is a critical step to re-embed the economy in the biosphere (Sachs, 2010).

Until now, politics has been compelling "to push either equity without ecology, or ecology without equity. It is hard to see how this dilemma can be resolved unless the belief in 'development' is dismantled" (Sachs, 2010, p. VI). Therefore, in this thesis it is argued that local development as an approach should be integrated and contaminated – or even, overtaken – by the post-development approach, as it will be proposed in the next section.

1.4 The post-development approach – questioning the whole paradigm

To start with, let's consider how the post-development approach considers the problem of equity (and indirectly also the ecological question):

> It will not be possible to reconceptualize equity without recovering the diversity of prosperity. Linking the desire for equity to economic growth has been the conceptual cornerstone of the development age. Delinking the desire for equity from economic growth and relinking it to community- and culture-based notions of well-being will

be the cornerstone of the post-development age. (Sachs, 2010, p. XII)

In fact, the post-development approach attempts to deconstruct the idea of 'development as progress' in order to question the whole development paradigm and finally overcome it. The term 'post-development' properly refers to this challenge, which constitutes also the main specificity of this approach: it does not try to find an alternative development or alternative paths to development, rather it pushes for alternatives to development. It does so by including a variety of systemic critiques and ways of living which represent cultural alternatives respectful of life on Earth (Khotari et al., 2019).

As we have seen in the first paragraphs, the post-development approach sees development discourse at the intersection of colonialism and capitalism, as a historically constructed discourse to continue pursuing the colonial extractive relationship that was at the basis of western economic development and civilization (Sachs 2010, 2019). Therefore, it is a discourse constructed in order to maintain a social practice that was vital and necessary for the social reproduction of western societies. Given this continuity, a question comes up spontaneously: is it possible to decolonize development policies? If so, how? Which are the ingredients to do it? We will try to respond to these questions after having examined some of the main arguments of the post-development approach, that we consider crucial in relation to our argumentation.

Firstly, post-development attempts to challenge the mainstream economic world-view and the related increasing process of commodification of nature and social relations aimed at maximizing economic efficiency, opposing the right to act in accordance to values of justice, democracy and culture (Sachs, 2010). Therefore, not only the imperative of growth is rejected, but also the predominance of economics as a science: for post-development scholars, economics is a cultural discourse, which should be historically contextualized in relation to the specific conditions in which western societies have developed. Economics, in fact, is based on a set of assumptions on social progress and human nature – individualism, the law of scarcity, the rational of maximizing self-interest… – which does not refer to natural characteristics of human beings, but rather it represents the perspective of a specific and historically situated culture, the modern western one.

In relation to this, it is argued (Sachs 1992) that conventional economics does not differentiate between different kinds of poverty. On the contrary, post-development scholars distinguish frugality from destitution: frugality represents a situation in which basic needs (water, shelter, foods…) are satisfied, but people are poor in the sense that they cannot access

the market due to low (or no) income; whilst destitution indicates a situation in which basic needs have been compromised, for example because their access have been made dependent from financial income (Sachs, 1992). Therefore, this view implies that a person in a situation of frugality may enjoy a better life in comparison to a person in a situation of destitution but with higher income. However, GDP and other economic indicators do not capture these differences and they indicate only a quantitative difference, since the *ratio* at the basis of development thinking is the 'dictatorship of quantitative comparison' (Sachs, 2010).

Connected to our biased conception of poverty, also our conception of wealth and wellbeing is limited and culturally constructed: it is argued that we should look at the variety of the world in search of less material conceptions of prosperity, instead rooted in cultural, spiritual and communitarian dimensions. That would make "communities more resilient against resource crisis and economic shock" (Sachs, 2010, p. XIII) and, above all, it implies the acknowledgment that different styles of prosperity are possible, beyond economic growth.

Related to this last point, a second fundamental argument of the post-development approach is the rejection of "the modernist ontology of universalism, in favour of a multiplicity of possible worlds" (Khotari et al, p. XVII). Post-development scholars, in fact, call for 'finding pluriversal paths' against the hegemony of a single world: there are a multiplicity of initiatives, concepts, practices and perspectives already in the making that together compose a 'pluriverse', in opposition to a 'universe': "a world where many world fits" as the Zapatista Movement perfectly explains.

In particular, the perspective of the 'Epistemologies of the South' (Boaventura De Sousa Santos, 2014) points out that actually there are other possibilities to the current western model of existence, but they have been actively constructed as 'non existencies', through their designation as 'inferior', 'unproductive', 'ignorant', 'particular', 'backward', 'local', or 'lazy'. In fact, it is argued:

> nonexistence is produced whenever a certain entity is disqualified and rendered invisible, unintelligible, or irreversibly discardable. What unites the different logics of the production of nonexistence is that they are all manifestations of the same rational monoculture. (De Sousa Santos, 2014, p. 272)

Producing something as non-existent, indeed, implies a process of exclusion: in this way, the perception according to which "there's no real alternative" – as the famous Margaret Thatcher's

slogan stated – becomes reality, since producing something as nonexistence means producing it as a non-credible alternative to what exist.

Five logics of production of nonexistence have been identified (De Sousa Santos, 2014). The first derives from the monoculture of knowledge and it is based on making modern science the only acceptable form of knowledge: in this case, nonexistence manifests as ignorance or lack of culture. The second logic lies in the monoculture of linear time, which assumes that history has a unique meaning and direction, which has been identified each time as development, progress, modernization, and so on. It produces nonexistence describing others as backward, therefore producing other contemporaries as non-contemporaries, as in the case of 'underdeveloped countries'. The third form is the monoculture of the naturalization of differences: it consists in using categories that naturalize hierarchies; therefore, the nonexistence here takes the form of a natural, therefore incontestable, inferiority. The fourth logic is the monoculture of the dominant scale, thus nonexistence is produced as 'local' or 'particular', it means incapable of being credible alternatives to what exists at a global and universal level. Finally, the last form is the monoculture of the capitalistic logic of productivity, according to which "capitalist economic growth is an unquestionably rational objective" (De Sousa Santos, 2014, p. 274): productivity intended within this framework is unquestionable too; therefore, nature and labour are considered productive only when they generate profit. Here, nonexistence is produced in the form of nonproductiveness.

As we have seen, De Sousa Santos is interested in stressing the importance of 'cognitive injustice' in relation to the issue of inequalities, since according to him (2014) 'cognitive injustice' underlies all the other dimensions of injustice – political, social, sexual, ethnic, cultural, historical, religious, or ecological. As he (2014, p. 361) explicitly puts: "global social justice is not possible without global cognitive justice". Therefore, injustice and oppression can only be overcome through an epistemological break.

In the passage below, De Sousa Santos (2014, p. 275) perfectly explains the implications of producing something as non-existent and he proposes a new analytical tool in order to transform the non-existent into the existent – thus 'expanding the present' - and the impossible into the possible – therefore, opening alternative possibilities for the future:

> The social production of these absences results in the subtraction of the world and
> the contraction of the present, hence in the waste of experience. The sociology of

absences aims to identify the scope of this subtraction and contraction so that the experiences produced as absent may be liberated from those relations of production and thereby made present. To be made present means for them to be considered alternatives to hegemonic experience […]. The sociology of absences […] thereby creates the conditions to enlarge the field of credible experiences in this world and time, thus contributing to enlarging the world and expanding the present. The enlargement of the world occurs not only because the field of credible experiences is widened but also because the possibilities of social experimentation in the future are increased.

Therefore, through the analytical tool of the 'sociology of absence', De Sousa Santos (2014) aim to substitute monoculture with ecologies: in fact, the question is not about totally rejecting western modernity, rather the core is scaling down it and "including it in a much broader landscape of epistemological and political possibilities" (De Sousa Santos, 2014, p. 74). In relation to this, an epistemological shift is hardly necessary, as the Western monoculture has undermined the capacity of the Global North to learn from the experiences of the world. There are many instances where the Global North may learn from the Global South, as we have seen for our limited conceptions of poverty and prosperity or in relation to the issue of human-nature relationship.

These issues of global cognitive injustice and the related incapacity of the Global North to learn from the Global South are strictly connected to our initial question: is it possible to decolonize development policies? And if so, how? The epistemological break advocated by De Sousa Santos (2014) seems the necessary step in order to decolonize development. In fact, it is properly the possibility of learning from the so-called Global South that may represent the key to reach this objective.

One of the first issue that prevent Global North to learn from other experiences of the world – and thus need to be tackled if we want to decolonize development – is related to the geographical distribution of problem-solving knowledge: according to conventional development policies, problems are located in underdeveloped areas and problem solving in developed areas; experts has the knowledge necessary to development, whilst recipients don't. Even if in the last years there have been improvements in this sense – for example in relation to the introduction of participatory techniques to ideate, realize and evaluate projects or in the place-based approaches to development standing at the basis of the concept of local development (see section 1.3) – these changes do not affect the hierarchies produced by a donor-

recipient relationship. Participatory and place-based approaches are a way of reaching the outcomes of development policies in a more efficient and effective way. They do represent a step forward in relation to the recognition of local actors' agency, but local actors' agency is recognized only as long as it fits the conventional development paradigm – i.e., only if it is internal to its discourse.

As we have already seen, the variety of the experiences of the world – the pluriverse – as proposed by post-development scholars (2019)   may provide alternative conceptions of wellbeing and less material notions of prosperity, contributing to debunk the inner conception of development-as-growth. Moreover, the distinction between poverty as frugality and poverty as destitution may also inspire us in finding a different conception of global inequality: not any more a struggle against underdevelopment, but rather a struggle to end oppression and exploitation (Khotari et al., 2019; De Sousa Santos, 2014). Framed in this way, development policies should struggle for more global justice, not for more development aid.

This research thesis considers local development in a post-development perspective, and claims learning from the Global South – from those 'underdeveloped' areas left apart from development process – is the path that shall be walked towards a more just future for all. To do so, it considers the importance of searching for different conceptions of living, thinking and inhabiting, stressing the role of commons instead of market, focusing on autonomy and self-reliance, solidarity and reciprocity, struggling for the rights of nature, global justice and ecological sustainability. This also means calling for "re-politiciz[ing] the ongoing debate over socio-ecological transformation" (Khotari et al., 2019, p. XVII) and making visible the unbalanced power relations at the basis of global inequalities.

In this last paragraph, we aimed at deepening post-development thinking in order to try to decolonize development policies and propose a transformative view of local development by contaminating it with the post-development approach. In the following chapter, we will analyse the National Strategy for 'Inner Areas' as a place-based development policy and the related theoretical debate on the future of marginal areas with the lens of post-development, in line with the aim of this thesis to investigate through a case study a specific fragile territory situated in an inner area of central Apennines. This place left apart by development processes but conditioned by its spatial effects will also serve to ask what we can learn from it with reference to our capacity to inhabit the future, in line with in a post-development perspective.

Chapter 2 – Territorial development in Italy: the debate around the SNAI

"Inner areas [...] need permeable, empathetic, prolonged gazes, 'sentimental connections'. [...] We need eyes capable of seeing what is not seen, [...] we need analyses capable of penetrating the silent suffering of ruins and men, of emptying forests and communities. We need to interrogate the hurts in order to find the cure, to discover life in the ruins, not to consider marginality as natural. What is needed above all is the 'obstinacy of hope', the indispensable condition for resisting and acting in difficult places that are hostile to development."

(Cersosimo, Licursi, 2022)

Over the past twenty years or so, increasing relevance has been attributed at EU and national level to the issue of territorial disparities as we have seen in the previous chapter. Increasing attention has been given to those areas mentioned in turn as 'inner areas', 'marginal areas', 'peripheral areas', 'remote areas', 'fragile areas', and so on.

Marginal areas have traditionally been identified as border territories, mountain areas or as places geographically distant from urban centres (Bock 2016, quoted in Vendemmia, 2021, p. 41). However, the complex process of marginalization of territories cannot be explained only by geographical position and distance. In fact, recent studies interpret marginality as a wider lack of socio-economic and political connections, overcoming the physical conception of distance and marginality on which was based the contraposition between centre and periphery (Leimgruber 2004, Bock 2016, in *ibid.*).

According to Barca (2014, p. 10), 'inner areas'

> have experienced, since the 1950s, a process of marginalisation which, firstly, has manifested through intense phenomena of de-anthropisation: a) reduction of the population below the critical threshold and demographic ageing; b) reduction of employment and of the degree of utilisation of territorial capital. Secondly, this process has manifested in the progressive quantitative and qualitative reduction of

the local supply of public, private and collective services - the services, that is, that define in contemporary European society the quality of citizenship.

Within this context, the Italian contemporary debate on development policies for marginal areas has been centred, more or less directly, around an innovative policy that has been experimented in Italy within the 2014-2020 EU cohesion policy: the National Strategy for 'Inner Areas' (SNAI). In fact, the Strategy has not only represented an innovation in the field of development policy – with its explicit 'place-based' approach – but it has also been the catalyst of several theoretical contributions and empirical analysis, leading to a vibrant academic and public debate.

In fact, a plethora of different actors – researchers, politicians, civic networks. NGOs, local institutions and enterprises – are currently debating, planning and acting in relation to 'inner areas'. For some, the extreme nature of inner areas "makes them interesting laboratories for social innovation" (Calvaresi 2016), whilst others interpret them as a 'battleground' of different visions of development, different rationalities and interests at stake, with of course different means to participate in this game (Emidio di Treviri 2021).

In this chapter, I will analyse the specificity of SNAI policy and the academic and public debate around the issue of 'inner', 'marginal' or 'fragile' areas. Firstly, I will describe the SNAI as an example of a 'place-based' and 'people-centred' policy; secondly, I will consider its major transformative elements and limits in a post-development perspective. It will be shown how the issue of 'inner areas' often intersects other kind of vulnerabilities and problematic aspects connected with territorial public policies, with reference to mountain areas, depopulated small villages, or seismic areas.

2.1 The National Strategy for 'Inner Areas' (SNAI)

The National Strategy for 'Inner Areas' (SNAI) is an Italian public policy, emerged in 2013 out of the initiative of Fabrizio Barca, at that time Minister for Territorial Cohesion during the so-called 'technical' government led by Mario Monti (16 Nov. 2011 - 28 April 2013). As shown in the previous chapter, this policy originated within the wider context of the debate on EU territorial cohesion policy, marked by the publication of the 2009 Report by Barca himself, *An Agenda for a Reformed Cohesion Policy*, which introduced the 'place-based' approach to development as the best method to pursue a 'harmonious' territorial development.

From a political and institutional point of view, SNAI represents an innovative policy at both the national and EU level, explicitly aimed at constituting a turning point in the scenario of development policies for marginal areas (Lucatelli, 2002). It is a 'place-based' policy, oriented at recognizing the physical and social fragilities of Italian 'inner areas'. These were defined by Barca (2014, p. 10) as follows:

> a) [inner areas] are at some significant distance from the main essential service centres (education, health and mobility);
> b) they contain major environmental resources (water resources, agricultural systems, forests, natural and human landscapes) and cultural resources (archaeological assets, historic settlements, abbeys, small museums, skills centres);
> c) they are extremely diversified, as the result of the dynamics of varied and differentiated natural systems, and specific and centuries' old anthropisation processes.

The peculiarity of SNAI policy is that it conceives inner areas both as places of marginality and possibility (Pasqui, 2021): in fact, it stresses the importance of tackling marginality as pre-condition for the habitability and the local development possibilities of those places, to be enabled through the provision of essential public services (school, mobility, healthcare), co-designed in collaboration with local actors. As we will see, it is specifically the epistemological and methodological implications of this aspect that will be focussed in the case study presented in this research.

SNAI aims to intervene on a double dimension, which constitutes also one of the main innovations of the policy: favouring citizenship rights through the provision of essential public services and, at the same time, fostering the construction of local development projects aimed at valorising the natural and cultural heritage of these areas, favouring local production chains, thus creating new job opportunities.

The long-term objective of the Strategy is to reverse the demographic trends of inner areas. This is to be achieved by creating those conditions of liveability that every citizen of the country should have the right to enjoy, regardless of being born in a medium-sized or large city, a small village or in rural areas (Lucatelli, 2022). In fact, it has been evidenced that in recent times the different levels of public welfare provisions have been one of the main causes of internal migration in Italy (Colucci 2018, quoted in Vendemmia 2021, p. 41)

2.1.2 The focus on welfare

One of the distinctive elements of this policy is the relevance attributed to local welfare systems, to the accessibility to essential services as pre-condition to ensure citizenship rights.

This translated also in an innovative methodology for the identification of 'inner areas': firstly, the overcoming of the traditional dichotomous oppositions (urban-rural, north-south, centre-periphery, mountain-lowland) as a starting point for mapping inner areas; on the contrary, it has been decided to start from people, whose quality of life is crucial in relation to the choice of staying or leaving those territories, focusing on the access to basic services such as education, health and mobility; secondly, the decision on which public services to be used for discerning between 'poles' (centres of services provision) and 'inner areas' (areas characterized by different degrees of spatial peripherity) has been done through the direct engagement of local institutions, universities and civil society organizations (Lucatelli, 2022). Therefore, the territorial boundaries of the project areas covered by the Strategy have been defined within a deliberative process (Barca, 2018).

As Carrosio (2016, p. 53) highlighted, "the remarkable aspect of this methodology is that it measures peripherality as distance from services, introjecting a conceptual link between development and welfare services in the construction of the indicator". This link seems to be confirmed also in the analysis of Cersosimo et al. (2018) on the Italian geography of the 'fulls' and of the 'empties': even here, a correspondence between economic wellbeing and the intensity of the supply and use of essential services has been found.

The results of inner areas' identification have been summarised in the map below, updated to the 2020 Italian census and modified for the EU programming period 2021-2027.
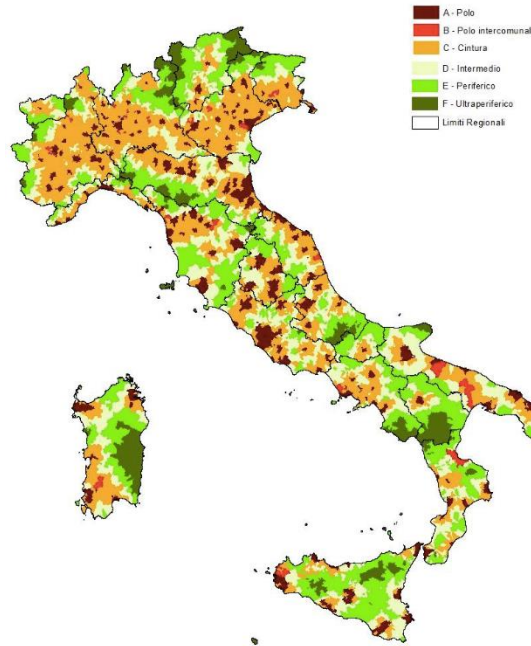
Figure 1. Classification of municipalities according to degree of remoteness

Source: NUVAP (Italian Department for Cohesion Policies) and NUVAC (Territorial Cohesion Agency), 2020

Inner areas are those indicated in green in the map: the darker the green, the more peripheral (that is, the more distant from the centres of provision of essential services) is the area. The map provides us with a polycentric vision of the Italian territory, with wide and diversified network of small and medium-sized municipalities. Inner areas account for about 53% of Italian municipalities and about 23% of the Italian population, residing in a portion of the territory that covers more than 60% of the national surface (Lucatelli, 2022).

Therefore, SNAI defines inner areas as places with severe citizenship deficits, namely territories where residents are forced to live with essential public services that are well below average urban standards, both from a quantitative and qualitative point of view. In fact, the pivot of the policy is properly to provide these areas with 'infrastructures for everyday life' (Cersosimo, Licursi 2022), in order to guarantee its residents a dignified and safe life, as it is for the inhabitants of urban areas.

The focus of SNAI on welfare and citizenship rights it is in line with the overall approach behind the policy, which is the 'social investment' approach (Carrosio, 2016). The latter is specifically oriented at favouring young generations and is based on Amartya Sen's theories on capabilities and functioning (Sen 1997, quoted in Carrosio 2016, p. 57). In fact, it

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aims to remove all the obstacles that impede to exercise full citizenship, in order to increase 'substantial freedom' (Barca, 2018), namely, the capacity of the human person to fully develop him/herself. As Carrosio (2016, p. 57) pointed out, in this approach "local welfare systems point(s) to increase the citizens' capabilities, making sure that they acquire the power and the resources to exercise a full citizenship and take control of their lives. Mobility, education and health are three foci of this approach".

2.1.3 Tackling depopulation

The long-term objective of SNAI policy is addressing the severe depopulation of inner areas as a national problem. In fact, one of the peculiarities of such policy is properly that it treats the question of inner areas as a national question, connected with the wider demographic, socio-economic and environmental transformations of Italian territories (Pasqui, 2021).

As highlighted by Carrosio (2016), the demographic question in Italy is characterized by both quantitative and qualitative population changes: the demographic decrement is accompanied by an ageing population and the weakening of intergenerational relationships, with a severe impact on the job market, on the sustainability of local welfare systems and on the losses of local traditions and know-how.

These conditions are even more pronounced and critical in inner areas, especially in the more peripheral regions of the country. There, such demographic dynamics led to a weakening of population presence and monitoring over the territory and changes in land use and destination, resulting in the loss of active land protection, increasing hydrogeological risks and biodiversity losses (Lucatelli, 2022).

The depopulation of inner areas, in fact, implies a twofold loss: the degradation of vital ecosystems developed over centuries and civil decline in those areas, and the deterioration of safety conditions and quality of life in the whole country. As Cersosimo and Licursi (2022) pointed out, the abandonment of inner areas is leading to floods, environmental degradation, landslides and desertification.

Therefore, in this perspective a policy for inner areas is a policy for the whole country: a relational project to reconfigure the relationships between the Italy of the 'empties' and the Italy of the 'fulls' (Cersosimo et al. 2018). The struggle against the depopulation of inner areas is in fact seen as intertwined with the pandemic and climate emergencies, and with the increasingly urgent necessity to decongest other areas of the country (Tantillo, 2022).

The policy, in fact, aims to recognize the complementarities and the interconnections between the parts – the polycentrism and the territorial variety – as distinctive elements of the Italian territorial context, concealed by a traditional polarized representation based on urban-centric visions of development and on a blind trust in market mechanism. As Cersosimo and Licursi (2022, p. 3) explained:

> A unilinear, vertical and reductive idea of progress that ignores that the anthropological over-fullness of the centre, and the complementary over-emptyness of the margin, imply growing territorial faults and entanglements of social anger, anti-institutional feelings and widespread resentment in the areas that are 'losers' and 'do not count' […] and that are less and less able to count through the mechanism of democratic representation and, thus, in policy design.

SNAI policy aims to reverse the economistic logic of rationalization that penalizes depopulated areas, improving the provision of public services properly to make these areas livable places, to remove all the obstacles to their re-inhabit. In fact, if the severe depopulation constitutes the major trend of inner areas, there is also an underground counter-trend of people choosing to live there, return or immigrate (Barca, 2018), especially after the advent of Covid-19 pandemic. The policy aims to respond to these opposite trends, envisaging areas of low population density as an opportunity, as places that can be re-inhabited (Cersosimo, Licursi 2022).

2.1.4 The method of co-design

A place-based policy requires a specific method in order to operationally consider constraints and potentialities of each place and to treat residents not as mere recipients of standard services but rather as co-protagonists in the design of local welfare systems. The most suitable method to operationalize the place-based approach has been identified in co-design (Barca, 2014).

The method of co-design – considered as one of the main innovations of the SNAI policy – shapes and crosses the whole policy, from the phase of identification and selection of the areas, to the planning and the implementation of the Strategy: a unique effort in the history of territorial development policies, as Lucatelli (2022) pointed out.

With its emphasis on the involvement of local stakeholders and communities in the definition and implementation of the policy, the strategy has made visible and has catalysed local planning and leadership skills, assumed as fundamental levers to promote change and reverse demographic trends (Lucatelli, 2022). As Carrosio (2016, p. 62) puts it, this "confirm the extraordinary predisposition towards innovation that characterizes peripheral areas – despite the dominant thought that see social innovation as a dominant trait of urban centers". In fact, the *ratio* at the basis of co-design is to foster citizen participation and the adoption of new governance models in order to empower local communities in shaping their own future (Cersosimo, Licursi 2022).

Instruments such as 'scouting' and 'focus group' have been largely used as participatory methodologies for the construction of the policy, confirming the intention of involving in the process not only the institutional actors but all the relevant stakeholders of the territories.

In fact, the participatory dimension of co-design aims to construct a shared vision of the future "through a lively, open, informed and reasonable dialogue" (Barca, 2018), both in inner areas and at national scale. It reverses the usual way of constructing policies for the territories through call for tenders that treats citizens and local institutions as beneficiaries of interventions decided elsewhere (Lucatelli 2022; Tantillo 2022), and that often doesn't take into account the increasing lack of resources, skills and staff at municipal level to effectively respond to these calls, creating a vicious cycle of marginalization that is difficult to stop.

Therefore, for some (Cersosimo, Licursi 2022) the SNAI represents a 'policy-method', a collective learning process to catalyse collective intelligence and action. This necessarily makes it a 'time consuming' policy:

> SNAI is deliberately a patient, experimental, reflective public policy, as all difficult
> policies that involve multiple [...] actors should be, especially when they are aimed
> at reconstructing fragile, frayed communities and repopulating them. [...] This work
> requires listening skills and the adoption of a reflexive approach to analysis. [...]
> Designed and built from above and below, in the dynamic interaction and mutual
> listening between the ministerial decision-making centres of central government and
> the subjects of local regulation, mayors and innovators above all. A necessarily
> pendular construction: knowledge and partial choices coming and going along
> decision-making chains with the aim of structuring and institutionalising a policy-
> method capable of provoking effects, transformations, desired changes [...] in

contexts that require ongoing learning, adjustments and corrections, that are typical of 'democratic experimentalism'" (Cersosimo, Licursi, 2022, pp. 10-11).

However, as it has been highlighted (Cersosimo, Licursi 2022), the 'time consuming' and the participatory dimension of the policy have found many resistances and critiques both at local level – due to a traditional and localist culture interested in the conservation of the status quo – and at State level – due to a strongly centralist and proceduralised administrative culture. The latter criticizes the inevitably long timeframe of 'social dialogue', pointing to it as the cause of public spending inefficiency.

According to Cersosimo and Licursi (2022), this vision has been reinforced with the adoption of the Italian National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) in 2021, aiming at reviving the economy after Covid-19 pandemic and enabling 'green and digital' development. Given the tight timeframe in which the NRRP has to be completed, this favoured the transversal alliance between parts of the political class, high bureaucracies at regional and state level and neo-liberal economists around the imperative of 'speeding up spending'. Nowadays, administrative neo-centralism has re-emerged: few centres – blind to the diversity of the territories and the sole repositories of knowledge – decide how funds are allocated, not through an ordinary policy but through a system of calls and derogations (Cersosimo, Licursi 2022).

2.1.5 What about the ecological question?

Inner areas are characterized not only by their distance from public essential services, but also by important environmental and cultural resources, highly diversified by nature and following secular anthropization processes (Barca, 2014).

From this definition, it seems that SNAI policy would fit within that approach to territorial and landscape protection, widely consolidated in the literature (Latour, 2000; Magnaghi, 2000; Pizziolo, Micarelli 2003; Gambino, 2003; quoted in Pappalardo 2021, pp. 83-84), that rejects the clear and dichotomous separation between natural and anthropic components, claiming that is an artifice; on the contrary, the system of relations between them is reinterpreted and reconfigured as in continuous evolution.

SNAI policy, in fact, sees depopulation as one of the main causes of increasing hydrogeological risks and of the degradation of vital ecosystems developed over centuries, due to insufficient human monitoring and presidium over territories (see Paragraph 2.1.3). The strict relationship between ecosystems and social dynamics present in those areas have emerged also

during the phase of co-design with local actors, who identified natural resources and environmental management as fundamental issues for inner areas (Pappalardo, 2021).

One of the peculiarities of SNAI policy is the active approach to environmental protection that, beyond the mere imposition of constraints, allows for the valorisation of collective capacities (Pappalardo 2021). Environmental protection and conservation are intended as 'care of territorial resources' and the same population resident in those territories has been identified as the most competent actor to carry it out; it has been named the 'guardian of the territory' (Barca, 2014).

However, notwithstanding the policy had the merit of having shed light on the importance of human-nature relationship in inner areas, according to some (Pappalardo 2021; Pessina 2021), it operationally was unable to effectively address either the 'nature-culture symbiosis' or solely environmental risks and natural management. This has been due to the fact that SNAI's national budget was too strictly anchored to the three key sectors of the policy – health, education and mobility – and to the achievement of precise results and indicators (Pappalardo 2021). On the contrary, natural management, protection and valorisation were meant to be realized through local development projects, funded not by ordinary national budget but rather applying to EU funds, in order to stimulate pro-activity, local planning capacities and local partnerships.

Therefore, it is argued (Pappalardo 2021) that the relationship between basic rights, natural heritage and environmental resources should be better tackled in the future planning.

2.2 Assessing SNAI policy in a post-development perspective

If we look at the SNAI, we may recognize several steps forward in relation to our aim of contaminating local development with a post-development approach.

Firstly, the place-based approach gives dignity and relevance to every place, recognising the variety of Italian territory as a value. Differences among places are not any more used to construct the dichotomous oppositions (urban-rural; mountain-lowlands; north-south…) traditionally present in territorial development, but rather to create a relational project between the Italy of the 'empties' and the Italy of the 'fulls' that valorises such differences.

Secondly, marginality is not seen as natural or inherent to specific geographical areas, but as an effect of the traditional 'spatially-blind' approach to development. Therefore, marginal areas within SNAI are not conceived as 'ignorant', 'inferior' or 'particular', nor

ontologically 'backward' or 'unproductive'; rather their marginality is seen as an effect of an historical process of marginalisation, caused by specific development discourses and practices.

Thirdly, the idea of development within the SNAI is explicitly linked to the issue of justice and equity, thus the policy focuses on citizenship rights and welfare access in order to tackle spatial injustice. Moreover, the focus on the idea of habitability of a place and the aim of contrasting depopulation makes local economic development just a mean to reach these objectives, not an aim *per se*.

Fourthly, the call for "hand[ing] territorial protection back to local communities" (Barca 2014, p. 41) and the focus on the concept of 'care' seems to recognize communal ways of being and the rights and autonomy of local communities in territorial management and in the access to local resources – that are critical elements in a post-development perspective.

Finally, one of the most relevant elements of the policy from a transformative perspective is the method of co-design. Co-design is fundamental in relation to the aim of decolonizing development policy, because it overcomes the traditional geographical distribution of problem solving between experts and beneficiaries, recognising local problem-solving knowledge as central in a place-based policy. In fact, as we have seen, co-design envisages policy construction as a collective learning moment, based on a circular process that breaks the opposition between top-down interventions and bottom-up processes, opening up the possibility of learning from the 'Global South' within a mutual learning relationship (at least in theory).

Co-design challenges the linearity of policy intervention by focusing on the importance of the *process* of policy construction in order to catalyse effective transformations and desired changes. In fact, the idea is that only by involving local actors in the definition and implementation of the policy through a shared 'social dialogue' it may be possible to reach effective changes in those territories.

Therefore, it may be argued that SNAI policy makes several steps forward in relation to 'cognitive justice' (see Chapter 1). It, in fact, seems to partly challenge the rational western monoculture that constructs other experiences and ways of living as 'non-existencies', by recognizing local tacit knowledge next to the modern scientific one, by focusing on the presence of social innovation practices in inner areas rather than on their 'backwardness', by valorising differences rather than using them to naturalise hierarchies, by making 'local' a starting point to construct viable alternatives also at national and EU level.

The only logic that seems not really well rejected is the 'monoculture of the capitalistic logic of productivity', which designates something or someone as 'unproductive' and makes economic growth an unquestionable objective (De Sousa Santos, 2014). This may better explain also the limits of the SNAI in addressing the complexity of the ecological question.

The local development perspective at the basis of the policy, in fact, is that of 'activating latent local capital': inner areas are conceived as "contain[ing] much untapped natural and human capital, seen as strategic for the recovery and growth of Italy's economic system" (Barca, 2014, p. 3). This confirms also the strict nexus established within SNAI between the valorization of latent capital in inner areas and the general aim of economic growth at national level:

> From a national perspective, the potential inherent in Inner Areas represents an 'economic development potential'. A demographic and territorial examination of the great swathe of Inner Areas immediately shows how consistent their overall development potential is, and therefore how important their contribution to stabilising the trajectory of national economic development is. (Barca, 2014, p. 11)

If we look again at the 'social investment' approach and at the importance attributed to welfare, they now seem to reveal also an additional *ratio*: the provision of public services is a measure for tackling spatial injustice, but it is also a pre-condition to enable the capacity of local actors to valorise territorial latent capital, thus contributing to national economic development. As explicitly sustained by Barca (2014, p. 8), within SNAI policy "growth and social inclusion therefore are [conceived as] mutually interdependent"; whilst the ecological issue does not really seem to find a place.

In fact, in the policy we can observe that juxtaposition between development-as-growth and development-as-social policy that makes impossible – according to post-development scholars – to address also the ecological question, that would require "delinking equity from growth and relinking it to community – and culture-based notions of wellbeing" (Sachs, 2010, p. XII), as the only way towards a more just world for all, humans and non-humans. Instead, the policy contains both the concept of relative justice (equity in quantitative term, related to growth) and that of absolute justice (more rights and resources for powerless people), which are conflicting perspectives in a post-development perspective (see Chapter 1).

The idea of 'habitability', which could have been potentially transformative in relation to our aim of finding less material conceptions of prosperity and wellbeing, is thus tainted by

the presence of the unquestionable (implicit) objective of the policy: to contribute to national development intended as economic growth.

The limits of SNAI policy in addressing the ecological question are therefore connected with the incapacity to deal with environmental and equity issues in a systemic way (see Chapter 1): they are treated as separate fields to be tackled with sectorial interventions, following a reductionist approach and ignoring the fundamental relationship they entail with development-as-growth. This prevents to effectively address the complexity of the current environmental and social challenges and thus to reach systemic change.

Even if SNAI policy seemed to theoretically recognize the importance of resizing local development on the basis of the nature-culture symbiosis present in inner areas, at the end nature has been basically framed as natural capital to be valorised and/or natural heritage to be protected. We therefore may argue that this is linked to the fact that the policy is still internal to the 'monoculture of the capitalistic logic of productivity', which represents the major limit from a post-development perspective, undermining the transformative potential of such policy. Therefore, the conception of nature as 'natural capital' and the focus on economic growth seems to place SNAI policy within 'green economy' theories, which argue that assigning a monetary value to nature and integrating them into market system is the best way to go out from climate and biodiversity crisis.

In fact, the monoculture of capitalistic logic of productivity affects the capacity of recognizing other ways of conceiving and living the relationship with nature. Inner areas, as the same SNAI highlights, are characterized by an historical symbiotic relationship between human activities and natural ecosystems, but the imperative of growth and productivity undermines the capacity of seeing this relationship and fostering it as a credible alternative to the current model of development at local and global level.

Therefore, even if co-design operationally seems to recognize the possibility of learning from other experience of the world – from the so-called Global South – the adherence to the monoculture of capitalistic logic of productivity undermines also the capacity of truly learning from those other experiences. The epistemological break toward 'cognitive justice' advocated by De Sousa Santos (2014) is not yet fully accomplished.

In the next chapters, I will therefore deepen the relationship between epistemology and methodologies to better investigate the inextricable relationship between knowledge and power,

looking for critical perspectives which may contribute to break the 'cognitive injustice' of development discourse and practice

In particular, in the next chapter I will present creative and mobile methodologies as suitable methodologies to try to enact that epistemological shift which may enable our capacity of learning 'from the margins'.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

"A location is an embodied and embedded memory [...] location is a materialist temporal and spatial site of co-production of the subject"

(Braidotti, 2006).

The research design aims to construct an exploratory case study to investigate how the adoption of a post-development perspective may innovate in a transformative way the place-based approach in local development projects. It is believed that such an approach requires a strict connection between its ontological, epistemological and methodological premises. To learn from marginal territories in a post-development perspective mobile and creative methods have been selected as those that may allow researchers as well as local communities to re-think development 'from the margins'.

In this chapter, creative methodologies will be illustrated and a more specific focus will be devoted to mobile methods as part of the broader, hybrid and mostly qualitative realm that compose creative methodologies. In particular, in my research a community walk was used to build a less hierarchical relationship with research participants. In this way, the epistemological shift advocated by post-development scholars (see chapter 1) was enacted by choosing among a range of methods that represents a break in relation to traditional social research methodologies, widening our possibilities of exploring places and generating a new kind of knowledge about them (Giorgi, Pizzolati, Vacchelli, 2021).

In the next paragraphs, I will clarify what is meant by creative methodologies intersecting mobile methods, and I will then narrow down my focus to walking as a research method. In addition, I will explain how these methodologies and methods connect with post-development approach.

3.1 Creative methodologies

The emergence of creative methodologies finds its ground in the diffusion of concepts as 'emotion', 'body', 'time' and 'space' as critical concepts for conducting social research (O'Neill and Roberts, 2020, quoted in Giorgi et al., 2021). In particular, the growing interest to everyday life opened up the experimentation on how to collect and analyse data to study social dimensions such as memories, emotions, embodiments, movements and mobilities (Holmes and Hall, 2020, quoted in *ibidem*).

The intent is to develop interaction strategies that enable the researcher to grasp intimate and hidden aspects of the social experience of the participants. Such experimentations range from the introduction of visual and sonic methods to a refocus of embodied methods, the incorporation of new technologies as well as artistic practices in the research process. Methodological multimodality is also encouraged as a way to investigate a specific problem from different perspectives (Giorgi et al., 2021). In sum, "creative methods cross different disciplinary boundaries – between traditionally defined research phases, between research and action, between participants and researcher" (*ibidem*, p.40) and they represent a way to reveal new elements of interest for social research.

3.1.1. Breaking boundaries

Creative methods are suitable in order to grasp the 'reality' in which social actors are embedded. Such 'reality' is contextual, defined by space and time, and by limits and opportunities determined by the economic, cultural and normative environment in which social actors live. The specificity of creative methods, then, is the potentiality to grasp – and incorporate into the subject/object of study – the social and material, the intimate and the global, the inner and the outwards dimensions not only of a research topic, but of both the research participants and the researchers as part of that same topic.

Firmly locating themselves in a constructivist epistemology, creative methods represent a breaking ground on usual separations between strict disciplinary methodological protocols. Creative methods can be useful in many different academic fields, and they have been used in interdisciplinary research groups and in research experiences.

3.1.2. Epistemological roots

As highlighted by Giorgi et al. (2021), creative methods have been influenced by three main epistemological approaches: participatory action-research, art therapy and post-structuralism. All of them question the conditions in which knowledge is produced and investigate the role of the researcher in such process.

Participatory action research (PAR) informs creative methods in the sense that social actors' cognitive capacity and experience is recognized as valuable – since "PAR recognizes the existence of a plurality of knowledges located in various institutions" (Giorgi et al. 2021, p. 26) - thus the research process is conceived as a collaborative experience between the participants and the researcher. Moreover, PAR is explicitly oriented at creating a circular cycle between action and reflection, in order to enable collective learning and the transformation of social reality. This research approach aims to break the traditional hierarchical relationship between the researcher and the researched, challenging the extractive (colonial) dimension of social research in order to produce a kind of knowledge that may benefit the involved communities. For the breadth of its objectives, PAR thus requires attention not only to the results of the research but also to the process itself. Therefore, PAR goes into the direction of challenging the 'cognitive injustice' highlighted by post-development scholars (De Sousa Santos, 2014) and it opens up the possibility of learning from the Global South.

Art therapy informs creative methods especially in relation to the creation of artefacts and uses different 'media' through which the person may express its emotions and experiences, both in a conscious and unconscious way; the artefact is at the same time a way to help participants to communicate beyond words and a way to reach hidden dimensions of an experience, connecting imagination to emotions. The influence of art therapy in creative methods make them suitable to be used with marginal groups, since it methodologically aims to create the conditions for inclusion, focusing on every single member within a group.

Post-structuralism – especially feminists' theories, indigenous and postcolonial approaches – influences creative methods for its focus on the hierarchies and the power relations that are embedded in the production of knowledge (Giorgi et al., 2021). Post-structuralism, in fact, questions the objectivity of science: since reality is a social construction, thus it is impossible to build a comprehensive and exhaustive knowledge. What exist is a plurality of partial and subjective perspectives on reality that need to be decodified. Therefore,

research results are only partial and situated versions of the reality and the validity of research is related to the capacity of the researcher to grasp the subjective experiences of the participants and translate them into the research results. Post-structuralism, even more than PAR, focuses on the importance of 'reflexivity' within the entire research process, which involves a deep analysis of the relationships between the researcher and the participants and their respective 'positioning' in determining the research results. And, even more than PAR, post-structuralism opens the way to give voice to marginal people and places, representing the philosophical background of the post-development approach and the so-called 'epistemologies of the South' (De Sousa Santos, 2014). Those approaches, as already explained in Chapter 1, aims to make visible and legitimize alternatives to the western model of development, focusing on the "necessity to redefine the global sociological imaginary starting from new productions of thought that are both political praxis and common research methodology" (De Sousa Santos, Meneses, 2009, quoted in Giorgi et al., p. 34).

Reconstructing the epistemological roots of creative methods allows to better understand the transformative intent at their basis: to operate a methodological break in order to try to decolonize and depatriarchalize the research process and thus make visible and valuable the plurality of knowledges, practices and experiences of the world, in line with a post-development perspective.

3.2 The vocabulary of creative methods

3.2.1. Co-production

In relation to the research process, it indicates a participatory kind of research in which knowledge is co-produced with the communities. As highlighted by Rose and Kalathil (2019), co-production aims to open what Homi Bhabha (1994) called a 'third space' between the expert knowledge and the local, contextual knowledge of the participants. According to Bhabha, the 'third space' has the potentiality to generate something really new, both in relation to the production of knowledge and to collective social practices.

However, it has also been stressed that the potential of generating new meanings and experiences can be realized only when power relations within the research process are seriously

taken into account, examined and questioned. In fact, "the dynamics within the co-production process reveal inequalities in who has the power to express a veto on what can be said or done within this space" (Giorgi et al., 2021, p. 36).

This latter is a fundamental question, in general, but especially in the context of this specific research – and even more if a post-development approach is adopted. In fact, in Chapters 6 and 7, I will further reflect on the importance of considering and questioning power relations in order to realize the potentialities of the community walk as a kind of 'mobile third space' between moving bodies, gazes and narratives that are identified as expert and non-expert with reference to the project, or internal and external to the local community. Not last, these moving bodies, gazes and narratives are enacted by participants of different gender and sexual identification, as well as of different generations.

Figure 2. The participants of the community walk discussing about the past of Gagliano Aterno in Piazza Grande.
Photo by Matteo Volta – 18 July 2021

3.2.2. Elicitation

The concept and the practice of elicitation in research has been developed within the fields of visual sociology and anthropology. According to those disciplines, images are

"symbolic representations that strongly evoke deep elements of human unconscious, especially when visual traces can be connected to memory" (Giorgi et al., 2021, p. 37). Elicitation, then, is the technique which uses objects or photos – in this case the term photo-elicitation is more commonly used – as a kind of sensorial stimulus to generate words by participants, gaining access to representations of their identity and experiences that connect the self to the society, to their own culture and history (Giorgi et al., 2021).

In the context of the community walk, photo-elicitation has been used properly to stimulate participants' memories connected with the past of Gagliano Aterno, as I further explain in Chapters 4.

Figure 3. The photo exhibition exposed along via Fara.
Photo by Flavio Lattarini – 18 July 2021

Elicitation, in fact, can be considered a strategy that favours the process of embodiment as, through a visual sensory stimulus, it provides access to representations of one's identity and experiences in both symbolic and material ways" (Giorgi et al., p. 38).

> There is a man around fifty who has crouched down to take a closer look at one of
> the photos that has been hung at the bottom of the fence. He is not the first person I

have seen crouching or bending down to get a better look at one of the photos... We probably expected that the exhibition would be seen more en passant, but instead the participants are interested in every single face, they want to see them up close, they touch them, they take them in their hands to get a better view, they establish a bodily relationship with them. (From personal field diary)

3.2.3. Embodiment

Embodiment refers at the same time to the fact of being and having a body and it conceptualizes the body as something dynamic, not separated from the mind – as dualist ontologies affirm – but connected to it. Moreover, recent studies in neuroscience shade light on the role of the body in the production of knowledge and on the interconnections between body, emotions, memory and cognitive activity (Rivoltella, 2012). Therefore, body is not an object, but rather "a becoming that consists of a series of processes, movements, intensities and flows; in other words, a mobile assemblage defined by its unpredictability and contingent affective capacities" (Giorgi et al., 2021, p. 40). Creative methods engage participants' body both from a material and a discursive point of view, challenging the dualism of body and mind by constructing embodied data.

As we can observe in the previous citation, during the community walk there has been not only a cognitive kind of elicitation that connected the pictures to participants' memories, stimulating them in telling stories about the past. But there has been also a corporal, embodied dimension of such elicitation. The need to touch, to point with fingers every face within the photos, the corporal relationship between participants while observing together the pictures, their proxemics - i.e., the embodied dimension - tell us something different; it reveals something more than what we may catch if limiting the analysis only to a verbal dimension.

Figure 4. Two inhabitants of Gagliano looking at one of the photos in an intimate proxemics.
Photo by Matteo Volta - 18 July 2021

Among those who have most recently contributed to the establishment of creative methods (Von Benzon et al., 2021; Giorgi et al., 2021), a general acknowledgement exists of mobile methods as part of the forerunning methodologies for the creative turn in the social sciences and humanities. Therefore, in the next section I will present mobile methods, before moving to the specificity of walking as a research method.

3.3. Mobile Methods

Mobile methods refer to those methods where the researcher and the participants are in motion in the field (Hein, Evans, Jones, 2008). The potentialities of those methodologies to grasp the ways in which people and communities value (and relate to) places have been highlighted not only within research contexts, but also in the field of urban planning and policymaking. For instance, we can find reference to these methodologies also in the website of the Council of Europe, as a way of putting in practice the Faro convention through the organization of what has been called 'heritage walk', as collective practice for acknowledging

what one community define as heritage, sharing notions of it, and taking collective care of what from the past a certain community considers important for her present and the future[6].

The conviction at the basis of applying those methodologies is that they may reveal something new and different, about the ways in which people relate to places, if compared with traditional stationary methodologies (*ibidem*). In this sense, they share a commitment for considering meanings as well as practices, and the specific social and material entanglements that make up a specific place or process.

Mobile methodologies share with creative methods the importance of the body as "affective vehicle through which we sense place and the movement, and construct emotional geographies" (Sheller and Urry, 2006, p. 216; see also Buscher, Urry, Witchger 2011 and Sheller 2021). However, the specificity of mobile methodologies is the use of movement as part of the research approach itself. Research in motion therefore represents another way to explore alternative ways of being and knowing, in line with a post-development approach.

3.3.1. Walking

Among the mobile methods, most attention has been given to walking as a research methodology. Walking with people through their environment is considered a way to better understand the relationship between people and places and it often allows to collect rich qualitative data (Giorgi et al., 2021).

Walking as methodology has been highly used also in development project as a way to understand people life (Narayanasamy, 2009). In the field of rural development, walking takes the form of transect, which is considered a specific method of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). Transect walk has been mainly used to understand people livelihood, natural resources, topography, soil and vegetation. They are considered "an effective way to learn about rural life and development, particularly about the complex interaction between man and his environment,

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[6] See https://www.coe.int/en/web/venice/heritage-walk?desktop=true

of natural resources and their management, of farm-based livelihoods, about local vegetation and much more" (Narayanasamy, 2009 p. 83).

One of the most used forms of engaging walking as a research method in the broader context of social sciences has been the 'walked interview' or 'walking and talking' (Hein et al., 2008) or, even if with some differences, 'talking whilst walking' (Anderson, 2004). Some authors (Hein et al., 2008) highlighted that research participants find easier to express their attitudes, feelings and emotions if they are in motion through a place, compared with the setting of traditional interviews. Moreover, the fact of being in a more informal setting leads to more interesting kind of interactions, both among participants and between the researcher and the participants. Finally, it has been stressed that the mere action of walking usually stimulates a sense of connection with the environment.

Walking as a research method envisages a phenomenological perspective which considers space as the same time as producer of and produced by practices (Giorgi et al., 2021). The relationship with space is therefore conceived as a dynamic process. This is the reason why we decided to investigate the temporality of Gagliano Aterno through walking.

In the next chapter, the context of the case study and the specific research design of the community walk will be presented.

Chapter 4 – The context of the case study and the research design

It is in culture that ideas of the future,
as much as of those about the past,
are embedded and nurtured.
(Appadurai, 2004)

The case study analysed concerns Gagliano Aterno (AQ), a small, marginal and depopulated village in an 'inner area' of Abruzzo region, heated by a major earthquake in 2009. In 2020, a new young mayor was elected, and thanks to him the whole area became a fieldwork for the experimentation of local development projects aimed at repopulating and revitalizing the village. Gagliano Aterno was also the object of a specific project, that I will discuss at length in the following lines.

From May to September 2021, I lived in Gagliano Aterno as part of an internship experience that brought me to collaborate with the Municipality and the research group *Montagne in Movimento* (MIM) in the realization of the action-research initiative 'Ritornanti al Futuro', among others. The community walk I will base my specific focus represents the first step of such initiative and it aimed to build a research community to investigate the past, the present and the possible future of Gagliano Aterno in a social and material way that could be better grasped by walking collectively through the village itself. Secondly, as mentioned above, Gagliano Aterno can be considered a marginal and fragile territory, left apart from the 'development promise' of the modern, industrial, growth-based model of development (see Chapter 1) but strongly conditioned by its spatial, unequal effects, thus representing an appropriate territorial context from which to learn something in a post-development perspective. Finally, the ongoing local development project in Gagliano seemed to me a suitable and interesting experience to be analysed, since it promotes the involvement of citizens in some decision-making processes through a local assembly called *Communitas Galliani*, the institution of a community energy, the community consultation about the post-earthquake reconstruction of some strategic public buildings, and the presence of young anthropologists and social researchers as temporary inhabitants of the village as trigger element to stimulate

local population 'capacity to aspire' (Appadurai, 2004) and local development dynamics.

From the point of view of the researcher's positionality – which will further addressed in Chapter 6 – it cannot be denied that I was a privileged observer of such processes, and this allowed me to investigate the community walk I am going to focus my analysis on not only from a situated and embodied perspective, but also with a contextual knowledge given by the fact of having lived there for five months. On the other side, this internal positionality also conditions research results. There may be possible research bias as the influence of personal feelings, emotions, point of view and values in interpreting others' words and in writing up conclusions. In this context - not so much during the research design and during the community walk but especially in the following writing phase - I undoubtfully have more power to speak over others and to interpret others' point of views, perceptions and imaginaries. Therefore, the account and the analysis of the community walk will be presented as a kind of restitution of a practice, which first of all represents an account of my personal, subjective experience.

In the following paragraphs, the context of the case study and the specific research design that has been elaborated to construct the case study will be presented.

4.1. The context

Gagliano Aterno (AQ) is a small village of 253 residents – but fewer stable inhabitants – of Abruzzo region. It falls inside the 'inner area' *Gran Sasso – Subequana* and it is part of the Regional Park Sirente Velino. Gagliano - as many other small villages of rural and mountain areas - has been experiencing a severe depopulation phenomenon since the 1960s – 1970s, in relation to the advent of industrial development which leaded to internal and external migration processes. In 2009, the earthquake of L'Aquila destroyed part of the village, worsening the situation of marginality and fragility of Gagliano and increasing depopulation.

The public reconstruction of the village only started in 2021, twelve years later, in correspondence with the election of a new, young and visionary mayor, who believe in the possibility of re-generating Gagliano Aterno through experimental and extra-ordinary local development projects. His main aim is to contrast depopulation by creating new livelihood opportunities for the youngest part of the population and for new potential inhabitants. In addition, he was interested in involving local population in some decision-making processes

and in the overall management of the village.

Therefore, he started to construct a network of collaboration with people interested in such issues that may want to partner with him to regenerate Gagliano: he established a collaboration with Antonio De Rossi – full professor of Architectural and Urban Design and director of the Institute of Mountain Architecture at the Polytechnic University of Turin – to coordinate the post-earthquake reconstruction of several strategic public buildings, such as the former Convent of Santa Chiara; moreover, he realized a partnership with the research group Montagne in Movimento (MIM) and especially with Raffaele Spadano, a young anthropologist from Abruzzo interested in the topic of mountain and 'inner areas'. The idea at the basis of the mayor' vision is that the material reconstruction of Gagliano needs to be integrated with an immaterial, relational work with local population, in order to 'reconstruct' also their capacity to believe in a possible future and to stimulate the open-mindedness necessary to host new inhabitants.

> […] Cats everywhere, inhabiting Gagliano more than humans, creeping into every possible crevice of those houses... Those houses abandoned as they were, with tables still set and clothes still in the wardrobes. Destroyed houses, broken lives, from an earthquake that seems to have occurred yesterday, despite the fact that we can finally see the cranes of reconstruction, the public one, the one that has been kept waiting for 12 years, breaking lives as well in the endless waiting, crushing hopes, disintegrating the community little by little, instilling an understandable and perhaps irremediable resignation, which today and every day that we are here we are trying to fight, with our initiatives, and perhaps with the very act of being here and wanting to be here, right here, in this village forgotten by all and invisible to most, which seems to be stuck in time, at that 6 April 2009... That's why it is important to walk, to walk together and retrace what Gagliano was in the past, what it is today, what it could be in the future... (From personal field diary).

4.1.1. Montagne In Movimento – MIM

Montagne In Movimento (MIM) is a young research group, which was born in 2019 from a collaborative ethnography experience realized for the master thesis of Raffaele Spadano – at that time student in Anthropology at the University of Turin and now early-stage researcher at the University of Valle d'Aosta for the ongoing project in Gagliano Aterno. The topic of the

thesis was the future of Majella, a mountain area located in Abruzzo region with problems of depopulation. The aim was to construct a research community – composed of both local and external actors – to investigate in a collective way what are the challenges in inhabiting those places and how to construct a more sustainable future for those territories.

The success of the experience has led to the creation of the research initiative Montagne In Movimento, a group composed of young researchers (especially coming from social sciences) supported by Valentina Porcellana, Professor of Alpine Anthropology at the University of Valle d'Aosta and supervisor of the master thesis mentioned above. The aim of the research group is to operate in small villages of mountain areas using applied anthropology and action-research as means to study, involve and support local administrations and communities in processes of change.

This is actually carried out through the activation of formal agreements with local municipalities in order to initiate specific projects. The duration of the projects varies according to the specific agreement and in relation to the aim of the intervention. The first research fields were realized in Valdilana (BI), in Cammarata (AG) and in San Giovanni Gemini (AG): they have been a sort of 'short-term' fields, with the aim of constructing specific community building events and actions – such as exhibitions and festivals realized in collaboration with the local population. Instead, the last two fields are characterized by long-term agreements: in Valchiusella (TO) a three-year formal collaboration with other public and private stakeholders has been stipulated in order to realize a community welfare project based on community nursing; whilst in Gagliano Aterno (AQ) a research grant - with the possibility of renewal every six months for 3 years – has been activated to develop a local development project with the specific aims of reactivating the local community, contrasting depopulation and support neo-population processes.

The method of the research group is based on a sort of 'invasion' of small villages and communities by young researchers. The assumed hypothesis at the basis of it is that the presence and commitment of young external actors may constitute a positive element of destabilization of local social dynamics, a kind of positive shock in relation to the activation of the local communities. But if in short-term fields the presence of young researchers is linked to the realization and achievement of a very specific goal (e.g., the collaborative organization of an event), in the long-term ones their presence becomes a form of temporary inhabiting the targeted place, in order to construct a more stable project - or better process - of community

building and local development. In this way, the researcher becomes a sort of hybrid: he/she does research in a more classical sense, but he/she is also a 'community developer' and a new temporary inhabitant. And this of course implies much more complexity to deal with.

In the case of Gagliano Aterno, the project has been carried out through a research grant funded by the Municipality of the village, which has also provided the researcher with a house on a free loan, which became 'Casa MIM'. The main researcher was the only one who got a research grant and the only officially in charge of the project, even if he was surrounded and supported by a more or less informal network of people as interns, other volunteers from MIM, friends and interested persons.

Founded as an informal research group, MIM nowadays is a research axis of GREEN (Groupe de Recherche en Education à l'Environnement et à la Nature), a recently established research centre of the University of Valle D'Aosta.

4.2. The interdisciplinary work-group

The work group participating in the action-research project 'Ritornanti al Futuro' was an interdisciplinary group, composed of both researcher and non-researchers. With different level of involvement, we all temporarily inhabited Gagliano Aterno, hosted by the house on a free loan that the mayor provided us, 'Casa MIM'.

The group was composed by two members of MIM – the anthropologist Raffaele as the main researcher and the sociolinguist Teresa, both coming from Abruzzo region; then, there were a cultural anthropologist, a territorial economist and a photographer from Abruzzo, a natural scientist that ended up as a bartender, a missed forest scientist, and I, intern of the University of Padua.

Creative methods envisages both an interdisciplinary composition of the research group and the presence of non-researchers as artists, photographers, video-makers, actors, painters and so on (Giorgi et al., 2021). However, it has been highlighted that such kind of collaborative interdisciplinary research is a challenging and difficult work modality, which requires attention and care to group dynamics along all the research process (*ibidem*).

> […] But another chapter should be opened on this 'we', which I here consider to be
> unitary, because there have been many differences between us as a group, and above

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all very deep rifts between us and the main researcher. Marco, Teresa and I were more attached to the idea of a research process shared with people - within which their voices and contributions could be valued as much as possible - than to the idea of an event-show where the participants were mainly treated as an audience. (From personal field diary)

4.2.1. Be 'in the field'

We often reflected on the strengths and the weaknesses of this hybrid work group, especially on the differences among us in relation to the capacity to be 'in the field'.

Outside MIM's house there is a small table with chairs that emphasise our presence, which transcends and oversteps the mere area and perimeter of the house provided to us. We are temporary inhabitants and 'home' for us is also the space outside the walls, it is a place of encounter. And indeed, the door of our house is almost always open, precisely to underline this fluid relationship between inside and outside. However, sometimes we have also reflected with Raffaele on the important liminal and symbolic role that this door has, in relation to going in and out of our role of 'researchers' and 'external actors', who cannot behave freely, as they wish, but must always be aware of their own delicate role, always have an outside/inside gaze and act reflexively, with respect to how to behave in the village, what to say, what not to say, how to say what to whom... And so, this door is also a kind of curtain, giving access to a backstage: when we cross the threshold of the door of MIM's house, it is a bit like going on stage, entering the scene. And here methodologically, a difference definitely emerged between those of us who had studied social sciences in various ways (even with different levels and types of experience) and those who had done another type of study or had not studied at all: the ability to observe oneself, to adopt a certain approach of reflection in action, to understand one's own role and act from this understanding. Therefore, the ability not to be 100% oneself, as if one were not doing a certain job in a certain context... It happened indeed several times that some of us could not understand and be in this effort, to perform this attitude. And so, we repeatedly risked creating friction and problems with the inhabitants of Gagliano, or worse, with those who were not so favourable to the mayor's project. One has to enter the village 'on tiptoe', as Raffaele often used to say. (From personal field diary)

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4.3. The action-research project – 'Ritornanti al Futuro'

The action-research event has been realized in four steps, taking place from July to September 2021: 1) *Gagliano in movimento. Passeggiata di comunità tra ieri, oggi e domani*: a community walk in order to construct a research community made of young researchers, local people and external visitors to investigate the past, the present and the possible future of Gagliano Aterno; 2) *Cos'è una comunità energetica? Laboratori e incontri con la cittadinanza*: public discussion and debate on the realization of an energy community in the village through a partnership between the Municipality, a local enterprise (SunCity srl) and a local association (Impresa21); 3) *Focus group di comunità. (Ri)abitare Gagliano*: focus groups with the local population to collectively investigate which are the strengthens and which the weaknesses of living in Gagliano Aterno in the different seasons of the year; 4) *Gran Gala di Gagliano Aterno. Ritornanti al futuro*: a two-days public event with the participation of both local population and external experts and guests with the aim to debate about the future of Gagliano Aterno and of inner mountain areas, to consult the local community about the future of the convent of Santa Chiara and to build relationship of collaboration with local and external stakeholders.

The project 'Ritornanti al Futuro' (i.e., Returning to the Future) aimed to make visible and re-centralize small villages of mountain and marginal areas and the earthquake-affected communities, focusing on their needs and on the cultural, social and economic opportunities that these places may offer, not only for those already living there but also for the youngest generations in general. The idea at the basis of the project is that it is necessary a cultural, relational work in order to transform these potential opportunities in tangible realities. In fact, the name 'Ritornanti al Futuro' – inspired both by the movie 'Back to the future' and by the work of Appadurai on the 'capacity to aspire' as a cultural capacity (2004) – refers to the attempt to break with a threatening and disillusioned perception of the future, which is considered an immaterial obstacle to re-think our modalities of living and to construct alternatives ways of inhabiting the world as human beings. Therefore, the project aims to be a first step of a broader path/process to deconstruct the Thatcherian 'there is no alternative' and reflect on the possibilities that 'inner areas' may represent to experiment new forms of organising the social and economic life – starting from face-to-face relationships, ecological and gender issues – and to progressively construct a different vision of 'welfare', not based on

the imperative of growth but rather on social aspects, as the quality of relationships and the connection with nature that characterize those places. This is considered by the main researcher of the project as 'the recipe' for constructing a future that is not perceived as a threat but as a promise and a possibility.

The discourse on the future at the basis of the project links the conditions of young generations habiting this planet in crisis with the conditions of marginal places and communities left apart from the growth-based development model, trying to convey the idea that those places may constitute a possibility of self-determination for both, especially if they become a place of encounter between old inhabitants and new potential ones. That's way one of the most important focuses of the project is to work on the relationships between inhabitants and neo-inhabitants in order to make possible the construction of shared aspirations towards the future.

> [...] That's why it is important to walk, to walk together and retrace what Gagliano was in the past, what it is today, what it could be in the future... That's why the project is called 'Ritornanti al Futuro' (i.e., Returning to the Future), so that this word, 'future', can begin to be used again here in Gagliano, to have a meaning; but also, because in the end we all, human beings on this planet, must reinvent a new way of being in the world so that this word, 'future', can be named, can have a meaning for us all. And so, we seek a new way of inhabiting the future here in Gagliano, trying to retrace together with the inhabitants the history of this village, its past, its present, and imagining a possible future, trying to put it back on the tracks of History, where it deserves to be. Trying to avoid its oblivion, reconstructing together its memory, fulcrum of the link between yesterday, today and tomorrow. (From personal field diary)

Within the scope of this thesis, it has been decided to focus on the case study of the community walk, because it was considered the most significant event in relation to the overall project's aims as well as to the thesis objective.

4.4. Walking through Gagliano Aterno

It has been decided to use walking as a research method and as a collective practice to investigate the past, the present and the possible future of Gagliano Aterno, since it seemed the

best way to explore the 'atmosphere' of a place, the feeling and affective dimensions that link people to it. In fact, walking makes possible to grasp the relationship which the walking space has for the participants in relation to an emotional and temporal elsewhere (Giorgi et al., 2021). In our case, then, it has been considered the most suitable method to investigate the emotional, symbolic and relational dimension of a place, in relation to its past, its present and its future, on the basis of the consideration that "space is, simultaneously, in the present, in the past and in the future, in terms of memory – individual or shared – and in terms of imagination and planning" (Giorgi et al. 2021, p. 154).

The choice of organizing a community walk has been taken by discussing within the work group and by consulting the mayor of the village. It has been both a public event and a research strategy. The event was attended by about 50 people, among inhabitants, people from neighbouring villages who have a connection with Gagliano, and external visitors.

As has been highlighted by Giorgi et al. (2021), within the research design of a 'walked interview' the route of the walk may be more or less structured on the basis of the research objectives and choices. In the case of the community walk, it has been decided to propose a specific route, duo to the high number of participants and to orient the walk towards the research objectives. However, this choice has been taken even because the mayor and the main researcher also want this to be a public event to share what they were doing in the present and what they were planning to do in the future, so it has been preferred to maintain more control over the process.

Since our investigation engaged a temporal dimension, the chosen route included some specific stages as elicitation stimulus to simulate the immersion in the temporal journey. We therefore decided to use what De Leon and Cohen (2005, quoted in Hein, Evans, Jones, 2008) called 'object probes' (as photo-elicitation) and 'walking probes' (meaningful places selected as stages to visit in relation to the past, the present and the future of Gagliano). This has been considered a way to stimulate participants in sharing experiences, emotions, personal stories, memories, expectations and imaginaries, in line with our aim to investigate participants' collective memory, perceptions of the present and imaginaries about the future.

Therefore, the route has been structured with two stages for the past, two for the present and two for the future (see Fig. 5).

The choice of the stages of the past have been taken by consulting local inhabitants on

meaningful places in relation to the past of Gagliano Aterno: Piazza Grande as the old main square and the viewpoint of Via Fara as the street where most manufacturing and craft activities were located.

Figure 5. The map of the route realized for the community walk.
Source: picture from Giacomo Marguglio

On the other side, the choice of the other stages has been taken by the main researcher and the mayor, on the basis of what has been considered meaningful in relation to the present and the future. Piazza Kennedy as first stage of the present, for the presence of *Com'è,* the recently born street food ape car – in a village where there are no restaurants at all – as example of the possibility to generate a micro-economy through small entrepreneurship projects. The so-called 'community garden' was chosen as second stage of the present, as an example of the activities that Montagne in Movimento was carrying out with the youth of the village. The old fountain *Librice* as the first stage of the future, to be the place where the first set of solar panels for the future energy community of Gagliano Aterno will be installed. Finally, the second stage of the future – and the last of the community walk – was the convent of Santa Chiara, as the place chosen to become the new urban centre of Gagliano, and for which a community consultation was planned in September, so that the inhabitants could express their wishes regarding the future use of the convent.

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It has been decided not to use the walked interview, but rather the more informal 'talking whilst walking' (Anderson, 2004). This for three main reasons. First of all, as mentioned, the community walk was conceived both as a public event and as a research strategy, involving around 50 people – both internal and external to the local community – so it has been privileged the collective dimension over the individual one. Secondly, one of the main focuses of interest was the interactions between participants and their way to move and relate to place, thus we prefer to create a more informal setting than a walked interview. This because walking as research method is suitable to investigate places as relational and interactive spaces: the different ways in which participants relate to the specific route proposed allows to "identify the different socio-spatial practices of different social groups that coexist in material and spatial terms, but actually experience and move through different places, insofar as their experience of place is profoundly different." (Giorgi et al. 2021, p. 154). Thirdly, we were interested in the creation of a kind of 'third space' between expert and local knowledge, internal and external perceptions and youth and elderly visions, therefore the interview has not been considered the most appropriate form to reach it.

In fact, walking as a research method has been conceived "not as just moving from one place to another, but rather in a relational perspective, which considers space as co-produced" (*ivi*, p. 152). As we deepen in the next chapters, different spaces and different narratives may be created on the basis of participants' characteristics and roles.

4.5. Simulating a space-temporal journey

The community walk design also envisaged the presence of some artists: two clowns were engaged to be part of the event. Their role was to simulate the space-temporal journey and realize performances that were more or less connected with the past, the present, and the future of Gagliano at almost every stage of the route.

> Two characters pop out of the house - the Chien Barbu Mal Rasè - an artistic duo
> who has been hired for the event, to stimulate participation through art. They are
> dressed in old-fashioned clothes and carry an equally old-fashioned suitcase. They
> greet the participants and ask them if they are from the area, because - they say - 'we
> got lost for a moment'. The participants reply, some say they are not from the village,
> others say yes. Then, they begin to fidget, to say random things, in order to wait for

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the rest of the group to arrive, and they try to stimulate the participants to come closer, acting as 'public movers', thus trying to place the participants in the space with a comical, clown-like manner. […] Then they say that in this summer of 1956 the mayor asked them to come here, because this is the most important village in the valley, and he told them that the show will be in the main square. The problem is that they don't know where it is... They therefore ask the participants where they should go, where the main square is, highlighting that they are looking for the main square in 1956… (From collaborative audio-visual analysis)

Figure 6. The clowns engaged for the community walk at the 2ⁿᵈ stage of the past in via Fara.
Photo by Matteo Volta – 18 July 2021

At the first stage of the past, in Piazza Grande, they simulated to be in the 1956: they asked tips to participants on where to find some commercial activities in the village of 1950s and they realized a little clown show, not related to research issue nor to the context. At the second stage of the past, in Via Fara, where a collective discussion on emigration processes was planned, they simulated to be an emigrating theatre company and they realized another little clown show, even here not pertaining to research topics. At the first stage of the present, in Piazza Kennedy, they simulated to be the great-grandchildren of the previous clowns, a contemporary theatre company of French anthropologists, and they performed another show on contact juggling, definitely out of theme. At the stage of the future, at the old fountain *Librice*,

they made a performance on the community energy, simulating to be the pro-grandchildren of the clowns of the present.

Figure 7. The clowns' performance at the 2nd stage of the past, at the belvedere of Via Fara.
Photo by Lucia Polito – 18 July 2021

4.6. The photo-exhibition of Gagliano in the past

A pre-existent photo-exhibition has been used as photo-elicitation strategy to stimulate participants' memories connected with the past of Gagliano Aterno. The photo-exhibition was realized by a Danish woman, Inge, who bought a house in Gagliano Aterno in 2006 and since that moment she comes every summer to the village with her family during holidays. The idea of creating the photo-exhibition came to her mind during the summer afternoons spent at the bar, while the old generations taught to her daughter how to play 'scopa' card game and she listened to their stories about the past of Gagliano. The more she asked about the more they told. At that time there were also students coming to Gagliano from the University of Detroit, many of them with Abruzzo roots.

Therefore, Inge thought about the realization of a photo-exhibition about the past of Gagliano to connect US students and the precious knowledge of the oldest generation of

Gagliano. In her idea, then, the pictures should link the two generations together in order to generate community building through the common story of Gagliano's population. She talked about the idea to the former mayor and he accepted. Therefore, Inge asked for old photo to the inhabitants of Gagliano and to the community emigrated to Hamilton (Canada) and to US. She found an enthusiastic collaboration from people.
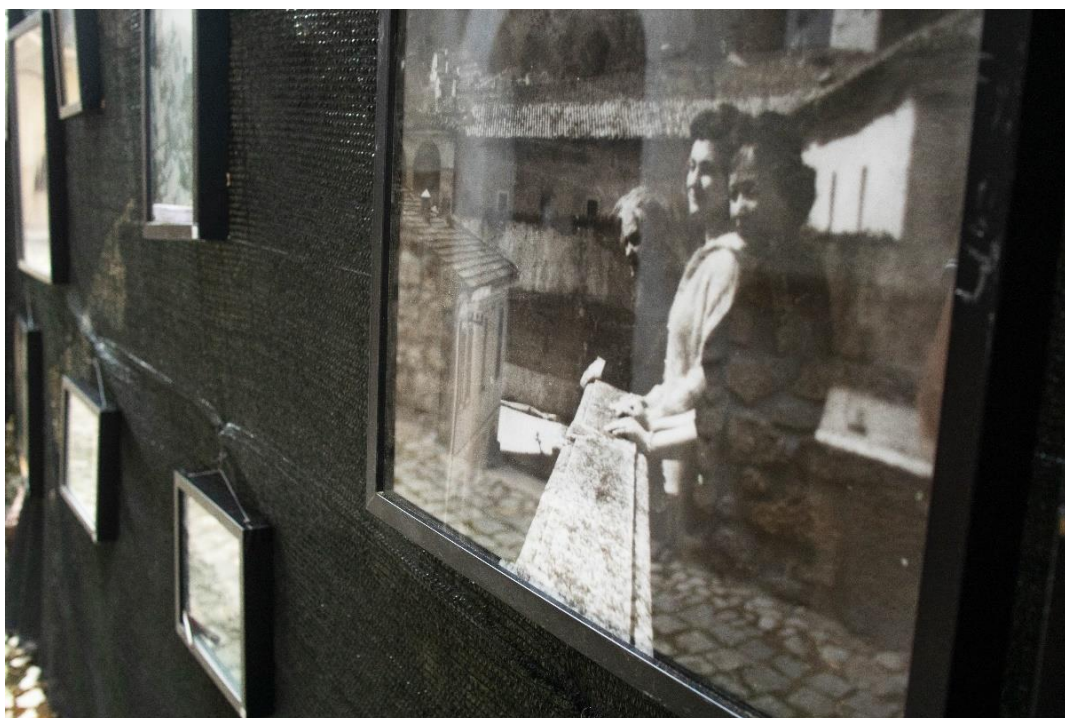
Figure 8. The photo exhibition in Via Fara.
Photo by Lucia Polito – 18 July 2021

> I was told many precious stories that cannot be found in history books, stories that were told by Gaglianesi in the café or by people whose families emigrated to the United States and Canada. From this activity, I realised that Gagliano has a very rich past and at the same time enormous potential for the future. We are lucky to be part of it. (From the exhibition panel)

The photo-exhibition has been exposed for two years in the convent of Santa Chiara since 2013. Then, after the earthquakes of 2015-2016, it has been exhibited at festivals and feasts. Finally, it has been kindly conceded to be part of the community walk as elicitation strategy. In Inge words, it "once again finds its meaning in the connection between the past, the present and the future" (*ibidem*).

4.7. An audio-visual, collaborative analysis

The community walk was also conceived as a public event and was recorded through a smartphone. It was also live streamed on the Facebook page of the project 'MIM Gagliano Aterno'. The video has been used as the main source of audio-visual data for the analysis of the community walk. Other visual data gathered and used for the following analysis were the photo realized during the walk by two members of the research group, a master student in photography and a sociologist, and other videos realized by the work group to document the different spaces simultaneously created by the participants along the walk.

An observation protocol has been realized by a team composed of a sociolinguist, a cultural anthropologist and I. The team produced a set of guidelines for the following collaborative descriptive analysis of the video, which has been realized by the interdisciplinary work group composed of both researchers and non-researchers.

Moreover, since the thesis aims to look at that experience of the community walk from an embodied and situated perspective, the visual data were integrated with my personal observations, realized starting from field diaries and ethnographic mental notes, then elaborated in fulfilled interpretative notes. In this way, it has been possible to include the experience of the route as narrated and practiced by the participants and, at the same time, incorporate the researcher experience as part of the data produced.

4.9. Coding method

For the analysis I used an inductive approach: I codified different types of data (photo, video, field diaries and observations), starting from more descriptive categories to more conceptual ones.

Then, I chose to divide the analysis into two parts: the first part corresponds to the construction of the data and the analysis made in collaboration with the participants during the community walk and the following restitution; the second part is the comprehensive analysis made by myself, in which I try to reflect on the overall research process - highlighting its limitations and contradictions as well as its possible influence on the research results – on what has come out from the analysis with participants and on the relations between the verbal level

of analysis and the embodied one; finally, I try to connect the overall analysis with post-development theories.

4.8. Ethics

From the ethical point of view, since the audio-visual data are all publicly available on Facebook it has been decided not to ask participants to sign the informed consent. However, in following personal reflections and studies I realize that we should have formally asked the consent to people before filming them and streaming live on Facebook, for example by placing a sign at the start of the walk stating something as "whoever takes part in the walk agrees to be filmed and shared on Facebook".

Therefore, in my thesis I take care of this aspect by adopting an anonymization mechanism in order not to reveal the participants' identity. Such anonymization mechanism consists in omitting the real names of the participants and substituting them with fictious ones.

Moreover, in my final write-up I decided to quote several *verbatim* of the participants coming from the transcripts of the recorded videos of the community walk. In order to best represent what the participants told, I generally do not modify the transcripts excerpts unless strictly necessary for the reader's understanding.

Chapter 5 – The community walk

"Walking, like telling stories, is the
movement between places"
(Hein et al., 2008)

In this chapter, an account of the community walk performed on July 18 2021 will be presented. The chapter will be focusing on three specific moments of the walk, that will be illustrated in deeper detail. In the following paragraphs (part of) the research community will be presented; then, the discourses of the planners (the mayor and the main researcher) and of the external expert (professor Ciuffetti) will be illustrated; finally, the account of the most meaningful fragments of the walk will be narrated. In this last part, the descriptive part will also include the analysis made up with the research participants.

During the whole chapter, I will use at the same time data coming from the collaborative descriptive audio-visual analysis made by the interdisciplinary work group, data from my personal field diaries and *verbatim* from the research participants.

Therefore, I will mix a more descriptive narrative style with a more analytical one, in order to vehiculate the complexity of such walking experience, by including the different perspectives from which the walk has been experienced.

5.1. Gagliano in movimento: a general introduction

The community walk was realized on 18 of July 2021. The event was called *Gagliano in movimento: passeggiata di comunità tra ieri, oggi e domani.* Around 50 people participated to the event: among them, part of the local community of Gagliano Aterno, people from neighbouring villages. There were also some external visitors, namely researchers who were invited as mentors or experts on the topic of the broader project the community walk was part of. They were Augusto Ciuffetti, Associate Professor of Economic and Social History at the Faculty of Economics 'Giorgio Fuà' of the Marche Polytechnic University, whose expertise deals with the economic and social systems of the Central Apennines, and Valeria Pica, who is a researcher at the Gran Sasso Science Institute (AQ). Valeria is also a native of Fontecchio, a neighbouring village of 350 inhabitants where another project of local development and revitalisation of the village through art is under way.

Gagliano in movimento didn't foresee specific settings to facilitate collective analysis. A posteriori, this is a weakness of the experience considered that a principle of the application of creative methods is to co-analysis the constructed data with the participants during the research process itself. Moreover, creative research often adopts the practice of restitution of the research process and results to the participants, asking them for feedbacks which may stimulate reflectivity and generate new data (Giorgi et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, three moments of *Gagliano in movimento* have be been selected for the sake of our analysis, as meaningful in relation to the enactment of a collective dimension of investigation:

- The first stage of the past: the collective account in Piazza Grande;
- The second stage of the past: the fragmented individual memories and the collective reconstruction of the past in Via Fara;
- The restitution of the community walk realized the 12 August 2021.

5.1.1. The research community

At the meeting point of the event, near the mediaeval fountain, a banner with the inscription 'Gagliano sogna' (i.e., Gagliano dreams), with the crest of the municipality of Gagliano Aterno and the logo of MIM – Montagne in Movimento stands out. There is also a wooden sign with the inscription 'Gagliano in movement' and 'Yesterday 1' indicating the

direction to get to the first stage of the route: Piazza Grande, the main old square of the village (see Fig. 5, p. 68).

There will be around 50 people, including the community of Gagliano, outsiders from neighbouring villages, the people involved in the project (including me), the project supporters, as the young people who have jointed the art-based local development project in Fontecchio coming from various parts of the world. There are people of all ages, even some of the children of Gagliano community, including Elena, Sonia and Melania, active participants in the ongoing project in Gagliano, as well as teenagers like Damiano, Gioia and Michele. Gagliano's old and new generation together, insiders and outsiders of the community: a good, potentially fruitful, mix.

There is Inge, a Danish woman with her daughters, who in 2013 organized the photo exhibition that we are going to use as photo-elicitation strategy within the walk. She lives in Denmark, but she has also a house in Gagliano, thus she comes to the village during holidays. Costabile, a native of Gagliano of those who live outside for work but who look forward to the weekend to return to their beloved village.

The former mayor of Gagliano, still the undisputed leader of the oldest part of the population: we relied a lot on his support for the success of this event, to ensure the participation of Gagliano's 'veterans'. At the back, next to the fountain, there is Professor Augusto Ciuffetti. There is the current mayor with his baby in his arms: he represents the generation of 40ish year olds citizens who have decided to stay; or to change their lives, as a series of other people of about the same age who are also attending the event and that represents those trying to live or move to Gagliano. Slightly older is Rodolfo, a 50-year-old native of Gagliano, who recently left a stable, well-paid job in Rome to return to live in Gagliano, in the Sirente Velino regional park that he loves so much. He has found work in the construction industry, but his desire is to create a tourism cooperative dealing with mountains.

Carmelo is also there. Born in 1948, former forester, from Gagliano. Carmelo...

> After the earthquake he moved to Castelvecchio with his wife, who after that day, no longer likes to go back to Gagliano, she can't make it. Instead, Carmelo comes almost every day. He is a man of an out-of-the-ordinary sensitivity, capable of being moved by the beauty around him, outside of any dynamics of mash-up typical of villages. Carmelo. He represents for me a certain co-constitutive relationship between man and nature: one day he told me that there is a way to take the root of

the gentian - a mountain plant used to prepare the typical liqueur drink of the same name - without compromising its reproductive capacity. In these places, it used to be normal to know how to cut a plant without damaging it, what wild plants could be used as medicine, how to pick mushrooms while spreading their spores to stimulate their reproduction... It is this local knowledge that is passed on - less and less unfortunately - from generation to generation that fascinates me the most. We often talk about these things with Carmelo. We fantasize about the figure of the 'community guardians', custodians of the mountains, of the local knowledge and know-how accumulated over centuries, over time, slowly... They, together with formal biologists, ecologists, agronomists, foresters, etc., could form an incredible team, in which scientific knowledge dialogues with local knowledge in the management of regional and national parks, in the management of the territory, in the direction of a man-nature relationship that enables life, for everyone, human and non-human. (From personal field diary)

Fazio... An inhabitant of Gagliano who breeds donkeys and lives, as many others do, on CAP (Common Agricultural Policy) subsidies, which create quite a few conflicts in the area over access to land. And then Rosario. Even he came, despite being part of the group of 'sceptics' towards the mayor's project and the initiatives we try to propose.

The personal relationship we (meaning the group of young researchers temporarily inhabiting Gagliano) established with the inhabitants is perhaps the strongest glue, it is the reason why I believe Rosario came. It is basically the main researcher's main intuition, that of starting from interpersonal relationships, of living in the village among the people, sharing the banal and simple everyday life, in this strange role of persons who are external and internal to the community of Gagliano at the same time. I personally asked Rosario to come the day before, and I surely wasn't the only one... And we did with everyone like that, on a one-to-one basis, usually at the bar.

The bar... Essential element of the sociality and vitality of any village, a meeting place par excellence, certainly at least for the male part of the population… We often talked about how women, especially those of a certain age, never come to the bar of Gagliano, despite the fact that it is the only place of conviviality still existing in the village, an outpost of tenacious resistance. (From personal field diary)

Rosario seems to esteem me in some way and for some reason - he often repeats this to me - and perhaps he has also developed a certain affection for us in general. That's why I believe he

came in the end, despite his steadfast scepticism and his attitude oscillating between resignation and indifference in front of our initiatives and the possible future of Gagliano. And then surely also out of mere curiosity: to see what this 'community walk' is all about, what these strange young people have been thinking, what's going on in the village...

Then there are Michele and Giulio, MIM researchers who have come from the Alps, where the mountain issue is taken seriously, where there is plenty of fundings for research, local development projects, cross-border cooperation... They have come here, from the Alps to the Apennines - a turnaround - to attend and support our little event, created and carried out with volunteers rather than with funds, with the sweat of those who are just starting out.

Also taking part is a lady with her son, living in Gagliano, who I had never seen before despite having moved to live in the village since early May. It is now July. Maybe they are not used to go to the bar or in the square. I am happy to see them there, it already feels like a little success. And there were so many others that I cannot mention them all.

Before the event begins, Giulia and I distribute the maps of the community walk. I reach the back of the group and hand the map to Marzio, but he refuses it. Just as he does not take part to the walk with us. As I will further explain in Chapter 6, only in hindsight will I understand why…

5.1.2. The planners' discourses

The event begins and the main researcher is the first to speak. He talks of the future of these small villages as "a great cultural, socio-economic opportunity" to be realized by constructing "share desires, share aspirations" and "by rediscovering a collective dimension". That is the reason to undertake this community walk together. He invites everyone to "talk freely and tell anecdotes, wishes, disappointments, ideas about how Gagliano was, how it is today, and how it could be tomorrow". He then gives the floor to Luca, mayor of Gagliano Aterno.

He also speaks of a path of sharing, of a collective re-appropriation of places, underlying that "these are places of everyone" and that "without the shared participation of Gaglianesi and non-Gaglianesi alike, these places have no future". He shares his emotion in participating to an event organised together by young people from Gagliano and young people from outside. "Passion and skills" are, in his opinion, essential elements for the relaunch of inner areas, of

small municipalities. He emphasises that he believes that "no place is destined to die, least of all Gagliano". He then refers to the banner that is behind him lowered from above the fountain with the inscription 'Gagliano sogna' (Gagliano dreams), and concludes by saying that that banner, and the young people who organised the event, want to invite them "not to cry on, to truly believe in a rebirth of Gagliano".

And with this he makes a final reference to the older generations who, according to him, tend towards resignation, and invites them not to resign themselves, "because these places still have so much to say and truly can still be protagonists, but we must all be together".

The discourses of both focuses on the importance of rediscovering a collective dimension. In addition, the mayor underlies that this collective dimension should include both inhabitants from Gagliano and external people, revealing one of the most critical aspect of the overall project of the mayor: the management of the delicate relationship between internal and external people to the community.

5.1.3. The expert's discourse

Professor Ciuffetti takes the floor. He thanks everybody for the opportunity to share this experience together. He praises Gagliano Aterno for its beauty and hospitality: "When you arrive you really feel welcome". Then, he makes reference to the research community he feels to be part of, positioning himself as an internal member of it as a strategy to try to balance the differential power he may have as 'expert' within this process, and emphasizing the relational nature of space as co-produced by subjects: "Here, in your village, and if I may say so, in our village, because today I feel part of your community to all intents and purposes".

He introduces himself as a historian who works in particular on the history of the Apennines, who came to Gagliano not so much to talk as to learn, to learn together with the participants and to understand the dynamics of the history of the Apennines, since he comes from the Umbria-Marches Apennines and has studied above all that portion of the territory. Recently, he has tried to study a little of the history of Gagliano Aterno, of the Subequana Valley, trying to grasp what might be the common elements and he has found many, demonstrating that there is an Apennine civilisation that runs along the ridge of the peninsula and that particularly in Central Italy has very strong features. He tells the participants that maybe along the way they can talk a little more about this together.

He feels that communities and villages need to tell and be told, to re-appropriate their past, so that "this past then becomes a seed to be put in a pot to then sprout a plant that is the plant of the future". He believes that this is an important point, because "if one has an awareness of the past, of one's roots, of one's history, one can build a future that is certain, and beautiful, and above all true, authentic and not artificial".

Then, he briefly presents the history of the Apennines in relation to population and depopulation. He tells that during the medieval age a process of population took place - because of a sharp rise in temperatures which allowed the population to settle at higher altitudes - and a series of economic processes began: pastoralism, transhumance activities and manufacturing activities. He calls that period a 'golden age', during which also *Universitas* were born, that is the collective management of land and natural resources by communities.

He then points out that the decadence of these territories is recent. "That traditional economy based on agriculture, pastoralism, agro-forestry, manufacturing and craftsmanship, but also on the so-called 'multi-activity' – i.e., the ability of farmers to carry out several different activities – and on seasonal migrations […], held up at least until the 1950s. Until the 1950s, there are no processes of depopulation". He illustrates some data he had researched on the population of Gagliano Aterno: in 1936 there were 1646 people living there, in 1951... He pauses to underline that the data are from ISTAT and that he hopes they are reliable, at which point the former mayor of Gagliano comments "they are not reliable", arousing laughter from the participants. Professor Ciuffetti resumes by saying that in 1951 there were 1157 inhabitants, in 1971 the population had halved: "it was at this stage, therefore, that the socio-economic model of the Apennines, which had held up for a long time and had allowed the populations of the Apennines to live in decent, acceptable conditions, disappeared".

Professor Ciuffetti goes on to point out the contradiction of the economic miracle: the years in which Italy experienced prosperity and modernity, the Apennine territories suddenly become poor, marginal, places of emigration. But according to him, "this is an interpretation that comes from the areas of industrial development, […] without taking into account the wealth that these territories have accumulated over the centuries".

Finally, he speaks of a third time: today. Today and the future. He refers to the crisis of the industrial model, of large urban spaces, and on the necessity of new socio-economic paths, which may constitute alternatives to certain dominant economic models. "So, these places, these communities such as that of Gagliano Aterno, can have a new centrality, a centrality that

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is a prospect for the future". However, he also highlights the importance of starting from the past as constitutive of the future: "be aware of our past, our roots, our wealth, our culture", what he calls 'the Apennine civilisation', and from this "begin to build, slowly, brick by brick, a new future, strong, authentic, that can truly provide wellbeing for all".

5.2. Starting walking around

5.2.1. Gagliano in Movimento: Yesterday 1

As Professor Ciuffetti stops to talk, the community walk officially starts. The participants begin to talk animatedly amongst themselves and there is a general hesitation to proceed that is cut short by a "Vamonos!" from Raffaele – the main researcher – who points the way forward. We start walking toward the old main square, Piazza Grande. Along the route we encounter the two clowns that were engaged for dynamize the event. They wear old-fashioned clothes, simulating to be in the 1950s – 1960s. They interact with the public by asking them about the old square.

We arrive at Piazza Grande, where we have set up part of the photo exhibition on Gagliano in the past, using a transenna of the reconstruction work as a base for hanging photos. The exhibition then continues along the route dedicated to the past, linking the first and second stages.

The sign with the inscription 'Piazza Grande' is set into a wall that looks as if it could collapse forward at any moment and it is almost entirely covered with climbing plants.

> Several times as I passed through Piazza Grande, I thought of the earthquake as an expression of nature overpowering man: and not only because of the earthquake itself, for the immediate and bursting impact it has on things and human lives, but also because of the post-earthquake, for that slow appropriation of spaces that nature little by little makes, taking advantage of the abandonment and immobility of human beings. (From personal field diary)

Several people immediately approach the exhibition, intrigued. In the meantime, Raffaele can be heard commenting to someone that he has predicted the long lead times, but seemed rather anxious that despite his predictions these times are getting even longer.

The clowns start their little show, but only part of the public responds well to it. Once the show has finished, the clowns start to ask to the participants where to find some commercial activities in the village of the past, simulating to be in 1956. They ask about the butcher shop, and little by little participants start to talk to each other's about how many butchers there were in Gagliano in the past, where they were located, and so on. The escamotage of the clown succeeds in stimulating participants' elicitation:

> […] Participants point out to them the butcher's shop that used to be on Piazza Grande, of which today only a sign remains. One participant highlight that there were two butcher's shops, and one person is heard saying to another: "One was here, the other was under the house of... Don't you remember it?". At this point, the clowns thank them and greed. The participants applaud, especially the youth and the external visitors, while one notices the group on the left, mostly made up of Gaglianesi, currently inhabiting or not, who continue to talk about the butcher's shop and other memories. (From collaborative descriptive audio-visual analysis)

The clown's escamotage opens the way for the collective account of the past of Gagliano. Raffaele take the floor and asks to the former mayor and Cosimo, two participants of the older generation, to tell something about how was the everyday life in Gagliano in the 1950s 1960s. Cosimo and the former mayor start to talk about the past of Gagliano and little by little the participants join the account by commenting, precising and questioning.

Some main themes come out from the discourse of the participants about the past: the sense of community; the autonomy of the village, based on a specific human-nature relationship and on the presence of socio-economic activities and services in the village; then the turning point in the 1960s – 1970s.

Cosimo introduced the theme of the community, as a dimension made of both conflicts and sense of trust and protection:

> "We were a gang. We used to fight all the time... between the different wards of the village. [...] It was great! There was a lot of community. […] We ate where we were, the mothers didn't worry about where we were, once we went out... away, we came back in the evening. [...] The doors of the houses all with the keys outside... It was very nice. I would gladly go back...", he concludes, smiling. (*ibidem*)

The former mayor too highlighted the conflictive dimension of the community: "There were also conflicts. Up until 100 years ago, there was also a lot of murder here...". Then, it

continues by saying that he wants to give a picture of the Gagliano of the past, but considering Gagliano as a model of many others small villages that have similar characteristics. And here comes the autonomy and independence of the villages as the main theme:

> "60 years ago, 70 years ago, villages such as Gagliano were a community in itself, in the sense that they were independent both from the point of view of basic necessities, namely, they produced the essential goods for themselves and at the same time they had most of the services at local level". (*ibidem*)

To better explain the autonomous dimension of the village, linked to a co-constitutive relationship between human beings and nature, the former mayor makes reference to the professor's discourse at the beginning of the event:

> "The basic necessities, as the professor said earlier, came out of the cultivation of the land, of pastures and forests. So, the basic necessities for those who lived in Gagliano – wheat, lentils, maize and everything else they needed for their sustenance, so to make bread, and also for the sustenance of their animals – were locally produced" (*ibidem*).

Meanwhile the former mayor is talking, the other participants listen with interest, they are silent, at most someone comments something of the stories, but the attention to the account of the older generations is maximum. Then, the former mayor specifically refers to the presence of local services in Gagliano, and the other participants start to intervene more in the discourse:

> "There was the conduit doctor, stable, permanent in Gagliano, who was a dentist, who was...", some of the participants suggest "the gynaecologist", someone else comments "...everything!", and the former mayor continues, "who was a gynaecologist, he was a surgeon, he did everything! [...] There was the obstetrician… Everyone like me who was born in the 1950s was born at home, not born in a hospital! [...] Most people were born and gave birth at home, with the help of the obstetrician", someone specifies "the midwife", and the former mayor continues "the midwife, that one... However, bear in mind, no one knows but these two figures were salaried by the municipality; until the 1970s, maybe until the early 1980s, now I don't remember well, they were salaried by the municipality...". (*ibidem*)

At that point, a woman tries to intervene by saying that the situation descripted lasted until the health reform. But the former mayor does not give her the floor, precluding her the

possibility to better express her opinion. And this happens more than once. We are in circle, but this setting does not automatically allow everybody to speak. On the contrary, it seems to favour the strongest personalities, the leaders, as will be further analysed in Chapter 6. In fact, a part from comments and murmurs – that in any case represents a form of participating in the account – the telling of the story is firmly in the hands of the former mayor.

The comparison between past and present times highlights the presence of a multitude of activities, which made the village alive and liveable.

> The former mayor: "there was the pharmacy, there was the municipal tax collector's office... [...]. There were three groceries – those who are a few years older than me will remember – there was one that was here (indicating Piazza Grande), one that was here in this building (indicating from the opposite side, via Torrione) and one that was in front of the Church of San Martino". One participant is heard commenting "Don Beniamino was there" and another "wasn't the foundry there?!"; the former mayor replies "I don't remember the foundry, let's forget about things from 100 years ago... There was a foundry, but it's not something from the 1950s and 1960s...". Then, he continues: "there were two butcher shops...", a lady suggests Alberto's name, "there was Alberto, Anna..." - he speaks while confronting other participants – "there was Anna here" (pointing to Via Torrione or the Piazza), but a lady disagrees "yes but not in the 1950s...". (*ibidem*)

The last passage highlights how this account of the commercial activities of the past reawakens memories that are also sometimes discordant among the participants: everyone remembers things from the past but without being able to place them exactly in time, thus, memories of the 1950s are mixed with earlier and later memories. The former mayor tries to keep the thread of the story focusing on the 1950s; he accepts comments from other participants, but does not allow the thread of his discourse to be interrupted or overlaid by other stories and memories.

The everyday life of the Gagliano in the 1950s – 1960s was characterized by the presence of stable manufacturing activities and services, as well as by more 'mobile' professionals as "the Venetian", who used to come from Sulmona to Gagliano Aterno to sell fabrics and textiles, which people bought and then brought to the tailor of Gagliano, or as "the Parasol", who used to come from Pratola to sell cheese, cold cuts and other alimentary products. There was a kind of complementarity between the stable manufacturing activities and services at local level and the more mobile professionals who used to come from outside the community

and integrated the local economy of Gagliano; so that – in the former mayor's words – "the village was a society itself".

Then, echoing what the professor had said about the recent decadence of the small villages of Central Apennines, the former mayor talks of a radical change, which totally upset Gagliano, and which, in his words, clearly manifested in the progressive decrease of animals, reflecting the abandonment of that life style characterized by a strong connection between the livelihood of the inhabitants and the natural environment.

> "There has been a change, a radical, radical change, in the space of a decade... Maybe those of my brother's age remember it... Carmelo... where is Carmelo?". He looks among the participants searching for him. Carmelo is next to us guys, together with Rosario: they're both smiling, it's perceptible even though they're wearing masks. He follows: "There was a radical transformation, in my opinion, above all from 1960 to 1970, there was a completely radical transformation that turned Gagliano upside down. I remember that at the beginning of the 1960s, there were hundreds and hundreds of animals here, cows, horses, donkeys... By 1970, all this had almost disappeared. […] I remember that in the mid-1960s, maybe even my contemporaries should remember, the countryside was almost all abandoned, do you remember that?". (*ibidem*)

The former mayor relates these changes in the lifestyle of the village with the overall changes which happened in the broader society during the 1960s – 1970s, which prompted people to seek better living conditions, fostering emigration. He connects material and immaterial dimensions in his interpretation of such changes, underlying how the expansion of market changed people's life perspectives, expectations and desires:

> "Because societies, and the society, have always evolved; people, all of us, tried to improve our living conditions, because, in short, digging the soil was not exactly a pleasant thing to do... […] Society became industrial: early factories were born in L'Aquila, in Sulmona and a lot of people left to work in factories. New services were born in the cities that were not there before, many market products were unknown…". (*ibidem*)

5.2.2. Gagliano in Movimento: Yesterday 2

Raffaele announces: "We are going back on the road!". Part of the group immediately set off again, especially the youngest and those from outside the community of Gagliano, but also a few from Gagliano, like Rosario, who instead of being with the usual people he usually spends time with, tends to keep up with the young people. Others participants, however, mainly current or former inhabitants of the village, remain in Piazza Grande to comment some of the photos that are hanged to the fences.

We walk down the streets of the village, in the old historical centre – where almost nobody lives any more – until we come to the sign indicating the second stage 'Gagliano in Movement: Yesterday 2' where most of the photo exhibition of Gagliano in the past are hanging on railings. The two clowns are waiting to us at the beginning of via Fara, where there is the belvedere.

We are late on schedule, therefore Raffaele decides to cut the second stage stop, where we have planned to talk with participants specifically about emigration issues. He tells the clowns to do their theatre show, but he adds that we would then leave immediately, without stopping there to talk.

Once the clowns' show is over, the younger group and some of the organisers begin to walk along Via Fara, while part of the group remains to comment on the pictures exposed at the belvedere. There are photos exposed all along Via Fara, hanging from the many metal fences that are all around the village and that prevent access to the places that are inaccessible due to the 2009 earthquake. Raffaele, to prevent people from stopping there and the time from stretching further, emphasises "this is not a stage!", as if to incite participants to continue walking at a certain pace. Yet it is impossible not to stop in front of those photos...

In fact, the participants continue to slowly walk, looking at the photos that are hung all along Via Fara and commenting on them together, while professor Ciuffetti is taking notes on his notebook. In the meantime, someone from outside the community, such as Simón from Fontecchio – a South American who came from Florida to move to Fontecchio village because interested in the role that art can play in the revitalisation processes of these territories – seems to be interested not only in the photos but also in the architecture of the village, especially the houses and what remains of them...

At this point there is a new division, a kind of relevant split in the walk: the group in the lead continues to walk, while half of the participants still remains near the photos. The group

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that proceeds more quickly, 'the head' of the group, is mainly composed by the young externals from Fontecchio, some members of the work group, the main researcher, the mayor and few other people from Gagliano. On the other side, 'the tail' of the group was mainly composed of inhabitants of Gagliano, especially the older generations, but also some of us from the interdisciplinary group, including me.

On that occasion, I too had to make a decision. Or better, on that occasion I had the possibility to make a decision on which part of the walk to follow:

> People of Gagliano are so much absorbed by the photo exhibition. I never thought it would have had such an effect. After all, this is already the third or fourth time that they see this exhibition... I have never seen them so engaged, touched, *moved*, even happy. I feel that something is happening there at that moment and I cannot go on. I stop with them to listen, to ask questions... After all, I have a nostalgic love for the past, also - and perhaps above all - of what I have not experienced and will never be able to. If not through these kind of sharing moments. […] And then, after all, I already know what will be said in today's and tomorrow's stages of this walk... The interesting thing would have been to discuss it with Gaglianesi and non-Gaglianesi. But since the local community is almost all here and something is happening here and now, I decide to stay. (From personal field diary)

Via Fara is strewn with photos hanging from the barriers, thus the dynamic is that there are various small groups of people (mainly from Gagliano and some of us from the interdisciplinary work group) commenting on the photos scattered at various points along the street.

Some main themes come out within this fragmented but collective account of the past: memorable personalities of Gagliano; memorable places and a general sense of nostalgy for the past.

In talking about the Gagliano of the past, it is the people who lived there that are the main subject: people who are sometimes identified with their trade – so we hear of the blacksmith very often, but without saying his name – sometimes with the place where they worked or lived, sometimes with their degree of kinship with someone else - the wife of one man, the son of another... Always in a relational way.

In fact, during the former mayor and Cosimo's account at the first stage of the past, the connected theme has been the activities that these people carried out in the village and which very often had a relationship with the wider territory. Activities and people which draw a

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relational picture, of a village which was autonomous – locally producing the basic necessities – because embedded in a co-constitutive relationship with the territory, with humans, animals and land.

The village's 'golden age' is therefore a place in which there is human life, as opposed to today, where nature seems to be eating away little by little what remains of that human life that had been there in the past, reoccupying every possible recess and conveying, for many, a sense of abandonment.

Figure 9. One of the photos exposed along via Fara and in the background destroyed houses invaded by nature.
Photo by Lucia Polito – 18 July 2021

In approaching the photos along via Fara, participants try to recognize every place and person pictured through a collective effort; there are participants of different ages, therefore the inhabitants of Gagliano help each other in remembering, thus autonomously constructing a collective, even if fragmented, memory of such past.

> Carmelo is heard talking about a house, which had some loggias; someone asks
> Marisa "but do you remember them?" and Marisa "of course, and I also remember
> when they pulled them down...", Carmelo "I don't remember this...". (From
> collective descriptive audio-visual analysis)

> In the meantime, a lady who has just arrived near to me and Franco, asks to him
> "who is this?", indicating one of the photos exposed, and Franco replied surprised

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"the well-known blacksmith from Gagliano!". Then, he thinks better of it and says "well, you... you weren't born". But she says "No, I was born, eh... I should remember certain things..." and Franco says "eh but I am at least 15-20 years older than you". (*ibidem*)

The blacksmith is one of the memorable people of Gagliano, as the old barman called "The Captain". As one of the participants highlights, these people has become example of life. Several participants stress the ability in working the iron of the blacksmith, defining him an as an artist and looking with admiration to those kinds of manual abilities that men and women of that time used to slowly develop.

> Carmelo, pointing first to the blacksmith's photo and then to me, says "she wants to know... Tell her few words…". Franco doesn't have to be asked and, turning to me, he starts to tell "This is, let's say, the greatest blacksmith artist in this village!". In the meantime, another Gaglianese approaches him, puts his hand on his shoulder and comments on another photo, but Franco is too engrossed in the story he is telling me to listen to him... And continues: "he lived in front of my house, and I used to go to his place, I used to go there and he made me turn the forge […]. He, when I was 11, went to America, and I can show you a work (marking each word slowly as a sign of admiration) made - only - with - a - hammer!". (*ibidem*)

Instead, "The Captain" was generally considered by the participants the kindest and nicest person in the village.

> Fazio tells me, pointing to a portrait photo of an elderly gentleman with a hat, sunglasses and moustache, "this was the bartender of Gagliano Aterno, known as the Captain". I then ask "he's the famous Captain?!" - they had already told me about him several times as one of the monuments of Gagliano in the past - and Fazio adds "60 years of service in the village". Franco, always impatient to tell stories, especially to young people, says to me "I can tell you about, let's say that I know him a little more closely because I used to do chores at his home...", a lady intervenes "he's a legend!", and Franco adds, "he's the kindest person in the village!". Meanwhile, other participants also comment "the Captain is the national monument, an extraordinary person!", "absolutely…", "a very nice person". (*ibidem*)

> Franco follows: "When I remember these people, I feel a strong emotion! Because let's say, that in the course of life these people form you... He was a correct person...

They become examples of life! […] An exceptional person! Things that no longer exist, no longer exist... And what to do...". (*ibidem*)

A sense of nostalgy emerges when participants talk about the 'monumental people' of the past, as also Gemma shares with me during the most intimate and quietest interaction I have had during the walk, when in front of the photos there are only me, Gemma and Floriano (another young from the interdisciplinary work group).

Little by little, the various small groups of people started to walk, in order to join the others who were already at the first stage of the present. […] After a while she leans down to take a better look at the photo that is at the bottom of the transenna and takes it in her hands, to tilt it so that she can look at it better. I bend down with her. She stays silent for a while looking at the photo in her hands. Then she gets up again and says "beautiful, beautiful photos...", I reply "yes, very much" and she again "beautiful... to see a bit of the old times". She then specifies "those times were better though! There was a lot, a lot of humanity here, it was full, but in all villages, full! A humanity that was just... overflowing!". (*ibidem*)

In the meantime, Floriano tells me that in the stage of the present the clowns have already finished the show, and at the moment Silvio, roman entrepreneur of *Com'è* – a newly established street food in Gagliano – is speaking. While walking, we together reflect about the difficulties to listen to everyone, since the walk split up first into two groups, and then into many micro-groups along Via Fara. I tell him that this may be considered a kind of datum: there is a strong desire to talk about the past, thus, in my opinion, we should do another collective investigation only into the past of Gagliano, by organizing another event where everyone may bring the photos they all have at home and maybe this time we should choose a fixed place, both to create a kind of 'safe space' (Giorgi et al. 2021) to allow even those who do not feel comfortable in walking to participate and also to see what would change if compared to a walking mode.

As we walk, I notice a sign that I have probably already seen before, because it has always been there – certainly since I have been inhabiting Gagliano – but at that moment, and not by chance, it resonates within me in a different way, moving me to the core. The sign is actually a piece of wood, on which is inscribed an hourglass on the left and a clock on the right. In the middle is written: "Together in time with a leap into the past".

At that moment, I feel I have taken the right decision in having allowed myself the time to stay with the people of Gagliano in the past. And maybe not by chance, during the writing phase I found as expert tip on community based-research the following statement: "you must rely on your intuition because it's not always a rational process. Trust your gut and allow the voices that call to us to be honoured" (Leavy, 2017, p. 241).

From that split in the walk, more than half of the participants decide not to follow the 'head' of the group, thus they stop at the first stage of the present, in Piazza Kennedy. Only 15-20 people reach the second stage of the present – the 'community garden' – and even less the first of the future – the old *Librice* fountain – where the mayor planned to install the first solar panels to realize the energy community.

The event ends with a gathering outside the bar, where Alberto starts to play some songs with his guitar, creating a spontaneous moment of sharing and interaction between old and new generations, externals and internals. Costabile, who is recording the day with his smartphone, approaches Franco and ask him feedback of the walk. Franco immediately takes the floor, without being too preachy, as if he was waiting for nothing else: "I can say that it was really a fruitful day, we learned things we didn't know before. Then these young people" - he says, pointing at me, Carmela and another girl – "who came from neighbouring villages really enlightened us". In the meantime, I approach Marco – a cultural anthropologist of the

interdisciplinary work group - and tell him that Rosario, one of the sceptics, who is usually reluctant to participate in our initiatives, has come up to me earlier to say "nice, nice, it was really nice!" and Marco replies "yes, I have seen him with a smile all the time". We both smile.

5.3. The restitution of the community walk

The restitution of the community walk took place the 12 August 2021. It was also live streamed on the Facebook group of the municipality of Gagliano. Around 30-35 people participated to the restitution, among them the mayor, the main researcher, some of us from the interdisciplinary work group, current inhabitants of Gagliano and those who live outside but return to the village during weekends and/or summer.

The restitution has been organized to ask for feedbacks, to open up the discussion with the inhabitants of Gagliano, as well as to negotiate the meanings drawn from the data.

It starts with the projection of a short video of 2-3 minutes, created from photos and shootings of the live streamed community walk. Then, the main researcher takes the floor resuming the discourse on the socio-economic opportunities which small and marginalised villages may offer and that the 'returnees' (in Italian 'ritornanti') can seize. He invites the attending people to think of the future as something positive, despite the many different crisis that nowadays the world is facing.

The idea that Raffaele tries to convey is that in these places, in the very small, it is possible to start again precisely from relationships. According to him, in fact, the specificity of Gagliano are relationships, is the lack of that pervasive consumerism that is present in the whole society. He is impressed by the mutual aid that exists in the village: even people who dislike each other or have ongoing conflicts are ready to help each other.

Raffaele identifies that relational dimension with well-being, as opposed to consumerism. This kind of relationships, together to the fact of being embodied in the Sirente - Velino mountains, according to him reminds us that we are 'social animals'. Then, he added that perhaps those who currently stay here no longer grasp how much richness and well-being there is in these places, but for those who come from outside this feeling is strong. Hence, the importance of an encounter between Gaglianesi and non-Gaglianesi, to rediscover together this dimension of wellbeing, wealth and beauty of these place. According to him, "there is a lot and

we can do a lot". In this context, he defined Gagliano, today and in the future, as "a great laboratory of participation". He invites everyone to get involved and to overcome diffidence, shyness and fear of speaking out.

Then someone invites the mayor to take the floor but he is reluctant because he would prefer others to speak. However, at the end he speaks of the following meeting that would take place in August on the community energy: he defines Gagliano as a pioneer of such kind of project. The idea is to generate circular economy, participation and profits to be redistributed to the community. He also mentions the community consultation that would be realized in September during the last event of the overall project 'Ritornanti al Futuro': the idea is to invite external guests to talk about "small villages that have succeeded" through the ability of generating services from below and intercepting resources.

However, he highlights that it is necessary to be actors of this change and also to host people from outside who are interested in creating something in Gagliano, as the two young people who would like to start a bakery business in the village. In addition to entrepreneurial activities, he also refers to the creation of the 'community nurse' in a small village in Piemonte region as example of services generated from below, of innovations starting from citizens who are able to intercept public funds. He then concludes by saying that "nobody knows whether this will succeed", but he emphasises that "one must take the risk of trying and not just doing the ordinary", because in his opinion "there is no point in administrating and living the village if you don't try to do things beyond the ordinary".

According to his analysis, initially there was a lot of mistrust towards us young people who came to the village as interdisciplinary group; then with time the inhabitants of Gagliano are gaining confidence. As an example of this, he tells of two elderly ladies who became aware of the community consultation on the Convent of Santa Chiara's future use and thus went to him to tell him that they would like a space dedicated to the elderly. He emphasises that it is not trivial that the two elderly ladies went to him to express their desires, because it means that they have exposed themselves in some way. According to his analysis, therefore, this is a sign that something is being generated with the presence of young researchers as trigger elements of stimulus and destabilization.

Titina – a person with some kind of cognitive disability – takes the floor to stress that she is part of the village too. She adds that the project, what the mayor and the young people

were doing, is beautiful and she emphasises again that she too is part of the community. She felt loved by us as young "reliable" people and by the inhabitants of Gagliano too.

Renzo, native of Gagliano living in L'Aquila, then announces that from next year he would be a 'returner', taking up the term used earlier by Raffaele. Several people gladly applaud. He adds that he will be available for collaborating in the projects that will be carried out in Gagliano.

At that moment Carmela, one component of the interdisciplinary work group, starts to ask him several questions to better understand his decision of coming back to the village, acting as a sort of facilitator, as we will further reflect on in Chapter 6. Renzo and other participants seem to be confused by those 'trivial' questions: for them it's obvious that he wants to come back since he belongs to Gagliano and therefore he "is an integral part of the community", "it is his own!". Carmela thus reflects on the fact that is not always the case that the community in which you are born is also the community where you feel comfortable and want to live. Renzo answers that since he has moved to L'Aquila in 1971 with his father, they always have returned to Gagliano for the weekends and then he continued also after the premature death of his father, who transmitted to him the attachment to the village.

Then, Teresa, who is part of the interdisciplinary group too, tries to sum up by analysing what has been said, what she has been able to observe and hear in the months she has been in Gagliano and during the community walk. She explains that we as interdisciplinary group have tried to identify some themes which came up several times during the walk: the strong sense of belonging, among others, was highlighted as one of the main themes, not only from the analysis of the discourses but also by observing participants interactions. She then tries to compare the sense of belonging of the inhabitants of Gagliano with that of the youngest generations:

> "Because we as young people are also used to a greater mobility than before, or at least in a different sense; so, we feel much more like citizens of the world perhaps, we have been grown up with this idea. Nowadays, in these small communities where some young people choose to return or to start a new life, new times and spaces are also experienced, and so this sense of belonging also returns to be called into question, doesn't it?" (From descriptive audio-visual analysis)

Then, resuming what Raffaele said earlier about relationships and mutual aid, she adds:

> "[…] The fact of being there even when in conflict, even when you dislike a person, but still being there each one as mutual help, as almost an extension of the other; I

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had this reflection during the community walk. When I'm in Gagliano I feel responsible for myself and for others, but at the same time I feel that others are responsible for themselves and for me, as if people were an extension of me... It's a bit hard to explain as a feeling but here I really feel it…". (*ibidem*)

At that moment, Raffaele intervenes by saying that the lack of job opportunities and services has been one of the causes of emigration, which broke that chain of transmission of local culture and knowledges.

But Maurizio, native of Gagliano living in L'Aquila, disagrees. According to him, the breaking of the chain of transmission of local culture and knowledges has not been the direct consequence of emigration. He highlights that the inhabitants of Gagliano have always been free spirits: they emigrated in every part of the world. According to him, the 'returning to the future' took place in the 1960s, when a great part of the population moved back from Africa. However, "in the 1960s it was not like now, there were no opportunities", therefore they moved to L'Aquila, Rome, Milan. But in any case, according to him,

> "[…] the bond with the village lasted as long as parents were alive. So, people used to come back often and most of them tried to get their children used to returning to the village. What you see these days are the grandchildren of these people who, by coming often back to the village, kept the traditions. Without most of us many things would no longer have been done, Gagliano would have disappeared already in the 1970s". (*ibidem*)

Raffaele answers to him by telling of a woman native of Gagliano but living in Milan, who had told him that when she dreams her dreams are set in Gagliano. Maurizio is not surprised:

> "Of course, because childhood took place here! In the photos that we saw during the walk […], there was that photo in front of the school… there was basically the whole village which is nowadays in Gagliano; seventy-years-olds, eighty-year-olds and so on until the younger ones. Many of those in the photos are still alive, they're here, they've brought their families here, they have continued the link with their native village. And that is what those emigrated in America have lost, perhaps for logistical reasons… Because the people from Gagliano who went to America didn't come back. […] If the Canadian or the American came back and brought their son as a child, the bond with the village continued, otherwise it stopped and it continued there, they celebrate Sant'Antonio day there, they keep up culinary traditions…

Basically an overseas Gagliano Aterno. […] So, people of Gagliano return, many return, as you can hear from the nickname, e.g., 'the Swiss'…There are people who have returned and continue to return. But the problem in my opinion is, if one has accustomed their children to love the native village. And here, many of us are basically the children of people, of Gaglianesi or of people who did their military service in Gagliano and remained here… That is… the Gaglianese… the Gaglianese is this, what you see here, what you've seen at the feast of Sant'Antonio… That's what we are…". (*ibidem*)

The mayor highlights the importance of what Maurizio has just said about the emigration in Africa, adding that during *Communitas Galliani* assembly it has been talked about the idea of realizing a museum of it. Then Maurizio continues by saying that what everyone wants in the convent is a meeting place for the people of Gagliano, for people from outside who likes Gagliano, to debate, exchange ideas...

"[…] So, for the young, for the new generations, because they maintain, as Raffaele said, the link with the territory. As the professor said about the discourse on Apennines… Since we belonged to the duchy of Spoleto, the reality of the county of Celano has been little known. We only talk about Medici, Sforza… They have tried to deprive us of our historical memory and we must recover it. […] These are territories rich in history, but for years they have been kept in oblivion. Let's take back our history! That is everyone's history! The history of the Apennine ridge. […] This was the county of Celano. Recently a researcher presented a book on Celano, all nice, Celano Celano, and Gagliano? And the Subequana Valley? Where did the family of Countess Isabella of Celano or Iacovelli reside? She resided in the castle of Gagliano. Her third husband came from Puglia […] and brought here the cult of San Nicola. This is the reality… but who knows?". (*ibidem*)

Then Maurizio stresses the fact that in the territory there are few people, therefore the importance of reasoning at a higher level than the village, including also the Subequana valley to put in common all the richness that these territories have. At that point the mayor intervenes by saying that the fact that in Gagliano they are few may be a resource, it may allow to work better and to create democratic laboratories of participation, of innovative policies. Maurizio agrees: "It can also be an opportunity… Let's think about it, this may be a great opportunity". Then he concludes:

"In the Convent there could also be a music workshop, recovering the nuns' kiosk, recovering traditions. Gagliano had one of the biggest and most important musical bands in the area and it competed with those in Puglia! Gagliano had the band, it had everything! I was reading a Michelin guide from the '40s and '50s: here there were cabinetmakers, goldsmiths, bellmakers... […] There were many job opportunities!". (*ibidem*)

In the next chapter, I will dig into 'reflexivity' in order to reflect on methodological and ethical issues arose during the research process, especially focusing on the relationship between the researcher, the research and the participants.

Chapter 6 – Digging into reflexivity

Where there is power, there is resistance, and
yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in
a position of exteriority in relation to power.

(Foucault, 1978)

…But what about all those who remained silent? Were we able to create a 'safe space' (Giorgi et al., 2021) that was physically, socially and emotionally safe such as to enable participants to freely and creatively express themselves (*ibidem*)? What opportunity has been given them to express their voice? Is it enough to incite people to take the floor for them to participate in a discussion, in an event, in a construction that someone would like to be collective and potentially transformative? Which kind of relational setting is the most appropriate to enact a collective learning experience?

In creative methods, 'relationality' is considered a fundamental question. It refers to the attention and care to the overall research process and especially to the relationships between different social actors that arise within it (*ibidem*). In fact, relationality has been considered at the same time a reality, a practice and a responsibility, which arises from the awareness that existing necessarily means being 'in relatedness' (Tynan, 2021). Relationality in research, therefore, calls into question also power relationships which arise within it, and it implies taking care of those power dynamics which shape both the research process and the results. In relation to this, 'reflexivity' has been often used as a strategy to take into account the researcher's influence in the research process, since the ethical dimension of reflexivity basically addresses the question of "how power comes to bear on the process and how we reflect on our own position as researchers" (Leavy, 2017, pp. 47-48). Reflexivity, therefore, "requires the researcher to carefully specify the research process in all its aspects, including his or her own social position and that of the participants" (Giorgi et al., 2021, p. 42). Moreover, reflecting on the implications of methods, personal values and orientations, biases and decisions in relation

to the knowledge created and to the practices realized also opens up the possibility of learning from the experience, individually or collectively.

Therefore, in the context of this thesis, my internal positioning and the situated and embodied perspective, already mentioned in Chapter 4, will be leveraged to try to adopt a methodological reflexivity in relation to the overall research process, in order to highlight contradictions and limitations that influenced both the process and the results. In doing this, I will focus on different dimensions: the role of the art, the research settings, timing issues, power dynamics and the role of the researcher. Moreover, since the case study analysed concerns the community walk as a social practice and a research process which aimed to be communitarian and co-constructed within the scope of the overall action-research path focused at generating social change ('Ritornanti al Futuro'), some critical perspectives on 'public pedagogy' will be also leveraged to reflect on the circumstances which make it possible for a collective learning process which enable the transformation of the social reality.

6.1. The controversial role of the art

6.1.1. The clowns' performances

The involvement of the two clowns within the community walk has been a controversial issue. Theoretically, the aim was to stimulate participants' interactions and sense of involvement in the space-temporal journey. However, through a reflective analysis on the practice, it can be said that the strategy somehow failed in its intentions. Or better, it depends from the points of view.

In fact, in relation to the frame of the community walk as an event, the strategy of involving the clowns succeeded in accompanying the participants through the walk. The shows that have been realized at every stage of the walk functioned in an entertainment perspective, arousing amusement among the audience. On the contrary, if the community walk is framed as a community-based research strategy, their presence may be assessed differently. In fact, the entertainment dimension did not stimulate participants involvement, rather it leaded to a fruition attitude. The role of the clowns in this case risks to overpower the collective process of knowledge construction with participants.

This consideration does not imply that they should have not been involved in the process at all, but rather it is highlighted the importance of reflecting well on the role they may have in such processes. In fact, as it has been mentioned in the previous chapter, they somehow succeeded in stimulating the involvement of participants in the space-temporal dimension by asking questions about the past of Gagliano and by simulating to be in the 1950s, therefore indicating that their role within the process can be meaningful if well studied in relation to the specific context and to the research objectives. What did not work from a research perspective were the proper clown's style shows, during which a fracture emerged between those who were interested to them – mostly the youngest and the external to the community of Gagliano – and those who remained quite indifferent.

This fracture strongly emerged during the second stage of the past, at the belvedere in Via Fara. In that point, there were both the clowns performing their show and some photos of the exhibition. In the picture below (Fig. N. 11) it can be clearly observed this fracture between a group which was in a public proxemics, in an entertainment and fruition dimension, whilst others were not looking at the show but rather observing the photos and talking in a more intimate proxemics.

Figure 11. The second stage of the past: the different focus of the participants.
Photo by Matteo Volta – 18 July 2021

6.1.2. The photo exhibition

Photo-elicitation as a strategy to elicit participants' memories, stories, emotions and feelings through images of the past of Gagliano succeeded. Moreover, it allowed to create at least partially that 'mobile third space' mentioned in Chapter 4. In fact, the photo exhibition has been the real catalyser of the collective dimension of the community walk intended as a research strategy. A community walk does not involve only a constant movement, but it requires 'moorings' (Hannam, Sheller, Urry, 2006) – in our case, the selected stages of the walk. In those moorings there's the chance to use other methods to 'move' through space and time memories and emotions, and the photo exhibition performed precisely this function.

However, also in this case the evaluation of the tool depends on the adopted point of view. During the walk, in fact, several people from the organizers complained that the photos were a distraction element from the planned walk, and that the photo exhibition should have been located at the end of the walk. However, these remarks seem to attribute little consideration to the role that those photos played for the inhabitants of Gagliano, who were seeing that exhibition for the third or fourth time and yet continue to be attracted and fascinated by it. Moreover, from the point of view of the research process, the photo exhibition has been crucial in making something happen beyond what had been already planned, as we further explain in the following chapters. In fact, it enabled participants to re-appropriate their own space-time, getting out from the logic of the event in which stages, timing and route are hetero-established (i.e., established by someone else from outside), to re-appropriate the narrative of places and finally the overall process of research.

6.1.3. The map of the walk

As for the role of the clowns, also the idea of creating a map of the walk should have been better articulated. The map was realized by an artist, Giacomo Marguglio, on the basis of the route proposed by the organizers. The idea at the basis of the map was to allow participants to write on it their feelings, emotions, ideas, and whatever come to their minds, in order to create the conditions of an inclusive research process, where participants may have a form of expressing themselves beyond the spontaneous collective moments in circle, in which often

there is not the way for everybody to speak – as we have previously highlighted (see Chapter 5). Moreover, it may have been a useful tool in order to compare in a more structured way how internal and external actors related to the walked places and to the space-temporal journey.

However, the strategy of the map did not succeed. Around 40 maps were distributed to participants at the beginning of the walk, but only 5 have been recollected at the end of the event. Some of us from the interdisciplinary group reflected upon this 'failure'. One of the considerations that came out is that maybe the map was too beautiful, too rich of details, to write on it (see Fig 5, p. 68).

As for the clown shows, art overpowered participants also in this case. In fact, creative methods highlight the potential of art – or better say, of creativity – as a tool to be used by the participants themselves. Therefore, from this 'failure' we may learn that art is useful when allows the empowerment of people who, through the act of creating something, become protagonists of the experience.

Another consideration which come out from the reflection on the map has been the lack of a specific time-space – a specific setting – dedicated to the map-writing activity. And writing while walking is not so obvious, nor practically easy.

This latter point opens up to another critical question, that is the predisposition of suitable research settings.

6.2. The research settings

In research adopting creative methods, it is usually envisaged the presence of a facilitator in order to construct that 'safe space' in which participants feel free and able to share their experiences (Giorgi et al., 2021). The role of the facilitator may be assumed by the same researcher or, if the latter is involved in the co-production process, it can be assigned to an external expert.

As it has been stressed in the context of the collective re-construction of past in Piazza Grande and Via Fara (Chapter 5), the presence of a facilitator would have been useful both to converge the individual memories, perceptions and interpretations in the construction of a more collective framework and to allow each participant the possibility to speak, preventing that typical dynamic in which the strongest personalities take the lead of the discourse overpowering the others.

This dynamic emerged also in the restitution organized to get feedbacks on the community walk by the participants. In fact, it is noticeable how only 8 out of 30-35 people – including the mayor, the main researcher and two component of the interdisciplinary group – took the floor even if at the beginning the main researcher invited participants to talk, not to be shy.

In that occasion, Teresa and Carmela tried to assume the role of facilitators, by summarising some main themes which came out from the community walk and by posing questions to participants in order to stimulate their reflection and deepen some issues. In fact, it has been possible to better investigate some relevant themes properly thanks to their attempt to create a more inclusive and research-oriented setting.

In the passage below, for example, Carmela tried to investigate Renzo's choice to move back to Gagliano, simply by asking him several questions and problematizing his answers, in order for him to better explain his choice:

> Carmela: "May I ask why you have decided that from next year you will return to Gagliano?". A few comments can be heard from the audience, a few jokes, some laughing and smiling. Renzo replies that next year he will retire, and even though it will be a paltry pension "here I'll definitely be fine, and I like it here. I always come back...". But Carmela does not seem satisfied with the answer, so she asks him: "What do you like about this community, about this place?". Renzo replies "I've always liked everything... I was born here…". At that point a lady intervenes with a comment "It's his own!", followed by another participant who adds "He is an integral part of this community!", as if it were the most obvious thing in the world… However, Carmela continues to pose questions to them "And just because of that? It is not always the case that the community you are born into is the community where you feel comfortable and want to live…"

In the mentioned passage, it is clear how such a facilitation approach may be useful in deepen participants' answers by problematizing them and in creating new relevant data. Moreover, it also allows the creation of a more collaborative setting in which, as in this case, the interpretation of a raw datum – Renzo moving to live again in Gagliano – is constructed together with the participants. The dynamic created by Carmela's questions opened the way to a reflection on the sense of belonging and community of the inhabitants of Gagliano compared to that of the youngest generations coming from outside, creating the conditions to realize that 'third space' between experts and non-experts, local and external, old and young generations.

However, such process stopped because the main researcher interrupted Teresa while she was trying to sum up what came out from the walk and her feelings about the sense of community that she experienced while living in Gagliano. From that moment only Raffaele, (the main researcher), the mayor and Maurizio – who is another leading personality – would have continued to talk.

6.3. Timing issues

Another relevant issue about creative research processes is time management. In fact, the creation of the data with the participants, as well the eventual collective interpretation phase, requires a relatively long involvement (Giorgi et al., 2021). It is important, then, to manage such issue in order to avoid the abandonment of the research by participants.

In the case of the community walk, there has been an inaccurate planning of the time required for the walk and, especially, a flawed forecast of the time needed to undertake a kind of community-based research. In many passages, in fact, emerged that we were late on schedule:

> In the meantime, Raffaele – the main researcher – keeps repeating that we need to speed up the pace and incite people to move. Raffaele, Teresa, Giulio, Michele and I discuss about the timing; some are afraid it will rain, others think that in general we can't take it too long, even for the participants themselves who will get tired at a certain point...

> Raffaele asks the participants to try to move all together and fairly quickly, for logistical reasons - since there are still three stages to go and we are many people - and because of the uncertain weather - the weather forecast predicts rain and the sky is beginning to darken.

Running behind schedule leaded to an attempt by the researchers to control, dominate the pace of the participants' walk, risking to compromise the participants' spontaneity in walking and their own way to modulate the pace of the walk. Right up to the point where the main researcher even decided to cut the collective discussion that had been planned at the second stage of the past.

Imposed and not well-planned timing may therefore be an obstacle to some collective processes. In fact, the unilateral decision to cut off the second stage of the past undermined the reconstruction of memories, confrontation with the present and reasoning about the future that started in Piazza Grande. Again, the logic of the event prevailed on the logic of the collective research process.

6.4. Power dynamics and the role of the researcher

Several issues raised in the previous paragraphs can be related somehow to the wider question of the role of the researcher and the power dynamics within the research process and with the different logics which may inform a 'public pedagogy' within a 'public engagement' work (Biesta, 2014).

As we have highlighted previously in relation to the inadequate predisposition of research settings, methodological choices are not a formal issue: it may condition the effective possibility to give voice to people and it may entail the risk of speaking in someone's place, silencing other voices.

In community-based research and in adopting creative methods, trust is an essential issue (Giorgi et al., 2021; Leavy, 2017). To build trust within a research community it is important to adopt "practices that are capable of mitigating power relations" (Giorgi et al., 2021, p. 51), thus creating the conditions to effectively construct shared meanings and interpretations. Moreover, "the more community members shape the potential outcomes and benefits of the research, the greater value they will place on the project and more trust they will develop toward 'outsiders' (researchers)" (Leavy, 2017, p. 241).

> Ways of building trust and developing relationship may include showing an active interest in participants' experiences and stories; using appropriate body language and facial expressions; demonstrating that you care about the project and the participants' experiences; and sharing things about yourself, including your personal interest in the topic. (*ivi*, p. 39)

In the context of the community walk, participants were often invited to participate, to take the floor to speak, but looking reflexively at this experience they have been given little

space and few tools to actually do so. And this, according to me, represented the main contradiction of the overall research process.

> By the way, in general I find it a bit annoying when you force people to participate. But in this context, I find even more jarring the demand for participation in being necessarily enthusiastic in a situation where people are more users than participants and the demand for participation is channelled into specific forms. They are not inviting them to participate, but rather to be enthusiastic users and to abide by the rules that someone else from outside is setting. And this made me think that this is one of the contradictions of many of what are generically called 'participatory processes': 'participation' is allowed and granted within certain limits and within pre-established frameworks, times and ways; when, on the other hand, it arises spontaneously, starting from people on the basis on their own needs, impulses and desires, it is very often not accepted and allowed, perhaps properly by those who in other situations demand participation or try to stimulate it. (From personal field diary)

This contradiction seems to be related somehow with the overlapping between the role of the researcher and that of public pedagogue. In the last decade, in fact, within the italian context an ever-increasing focus has been given to so-called 'University Third Mission' as a strategy to make the Academy more involved in the public sphere and to move academics out of their 'ivory towers', to take the role of 'public intellectuals' or 'public pedagogues' (Sandlin et al. 2017). Behind this conceptualization lies the idea that public intellectuals should or may act as civic leaders, educating others "to foster agency, engaged citizenship, and sociopolitical imaginations" (Brass, 2014, p. 91). However, such kind of construction has also been problematized for the individualistic and hierarchical conception of agency which lies at its basis (Sandlin et al. 2011; Sandlin et al. 2017).

In fact, at the beginning of the event, the main researcher spoke of the importance of constructing 'shared aspirations' towards the future through collective moments as the community walk, which aimed to be a research community made of all co-researchers. However, the distance between the verbal dimension and the practical one has been substantial. Indeed, if we look at the research process, it can be stressed that neither the route, nor the stages were decided collaboratively; the decision of cutting the second stage has been taken unilaterally, prioritizing the organizers' needs and objectives over the ones of participants; no research setting has been created to facilitate the collective co-construction of knowledge

neither the inclusive contribution of each participant. Therefore, this way of acting and conceiving the relation between the researcher and the participants seems to retrace Giroux's (2004) vision of "an intellectual *leader* that speaks to and for a public" (Sandlin et al., 2017, p. 4). In this framework, 'citizenship education' and 'civic learning' are basically understood as a 'socialization' process to a given order (Biesta, 2013), in which everyone has a particular role, place and function but it does not imply "that everyone is included in the ruling of the order" (*ivi*, p. 3).

People, then, may perceive that they have not been given the value and space that had been verbally reserved for them, and this risks undermining the relationship of trust that lies at the heart of such kinds of research approaches.

Therefore, intentions and aims are a necessary but not sufficient condition to realize a co-production process: the role that methodological choices play in making an epistemological position effective has not been taken seriously into account. In fact, the core of co-production is "working *with* communities, giving them more control over the research process and the opportunity to learn and reflect on their experiences" (Giorgi et al., 2021, p. 35), and this implies a different kind of conception of education, which see learning and knowledge as produced in the moment of interaction, not in the hands of a *leader*.

In addition, from the point of view of the inclusiveness of the process, some decisions that have been taken in the research design phase more or less consciously exacerbated even more processes of exclusion: Marzio rejected the map I brought to him before the starting of the walk and he did not take part to the community walk. At that time, I didn't understand why, but little by little I began to realize. Without going into details, he basically felt excluded because nobody took into account his commercial activity, the bakery of Gagliano, neither in the organization of the walk, nor in the designed route, nor in the picture of the map. The bakery of Gagliano has a long history: in the past it was the flagship of the valley, everybody came from neighbourhood villages to buy the bakery's products. However, in the last 50 years it experienced a strong decline, also due to short-sighted entrepreneurial choices. From that moment, the bakery and the people working there also experienced a process of marginalization, since the collective perception and narrative of the local population is that "Gagliano has no bakery". This exclusive and invisibilizing narrative was also assumed by the community walk, not only in the already mentioned design phase but also during the collective account of the past in Piazza Grande. In fact, neither the former mayor nor the other participants named the bakery among the commercial activities there were present in Gagliano. However,

since the community walk was live streamed on Facebook, one of the bakery's owners wrote a live comment to highlight the existence of the bakery and to re-vendicate the right to be part of the narrative, at least of the past.

Not taking care of these dynamics can result in making oneself complicit in such processes of invisibilisation.

Therefore, research *with* communities necessarily require a serious commitment in adopting care along all the process, otherwise the risk is to repropose power imbalances and hierarchal dynamics both in the social practices and in the production of knowledge, thus legitimising only a few to act and speak.

The community walk therefore represents an example of a process in which different ways of enacting public pedagogies intersects, each of them providing "a different conception of what it means to make pedagogy public, [...] that is, to conduct intentional educational work 'in' the public sphere" (Biesta, 2014, p. 5). A pedagogy *for* the public – adopted mainly by the mayor and the main researcher – in which 'educational agents' (Biesta, 2014) aim to instruct the citizens and socialize them to a given order in which they are 'included as excluded' (Rancière, 2003), facilitating the 'erasure of plurality and difference' (Biesta, 2012, p. 691). A pedagogy *of* the public – attempted by some of the interdisciplinary work group – aimed at generating critical awareness through a process of 'collective learning' (Biesta, 2014) in which the educational agents act as facilitators; finally, a pedagogy for 'publicness' (Biesta, 2012), enacted by the inhabitants of Gagliano who act as *interrupters* of a given order introducing into the public space a kind of 'dissensus', as I will further deepen in Chapter 7.

Another relevant issue concerning power relationships and the role of the researcher in the specific case of the community walk is the fact that the overall project of hosting young researchers as temporary inhabitants of the village has been an idea of the recently elected mayor. Therefore, as interdisciplinary group of research, we acted on a kind of commission. This undoubtfully conditioned the relationship that we had with the inhabitants of Gagliano as well as it contributed to frame the community walk as a public event rather than a collaborative research process. This is clear in the words of the main researcher during the restitution of the community walk that took place on the 12 August 2021:

> "[...] The community walk on 18 July to retrace together the past of Gagliano from
> a socio-economic point of view, to present what is being done in Gagliano today,
> such as the *Com'è* entrepreneurial project and the community garden as an example

of what is being done with the youngest, and finally to explain the ideas for the future, in particular with respect to the creation of an energy community and the 'participatory planning' of the future uses that the Convent of Santa Chiara may have after its post-earthquake reconstruction. The idea is to make it the new urban centre of the village." (From descriptive audio-visual analysis)

The only passage where a collective dimension can be found is in relation to the past, to be retraced 'together'; on the contrary, the present and the future are framed as something that will be shown, through the use of the expressions "to present what is being done… to explain the ideas for the future", thus confirming the socialization logic that is at the basis of the planners' idea of civic learning. We might say, then, that the main researcher's positioning – internal to the mayor political programme and funded by the municipality – influenced, oriented and gave "form to the research, reflecting political positions and ethical orientation" (Giorgi et al., 2021, p. 44).

Given the transformative intent of the community walk within the wider action-research project 'Ritornati al Futuro' – aimed at constructing shared aspirations of hope towards the future – it has been reflected that the relationship with policy makers, in this case the mayor of the village, should be better thought and managed. In particular, even if the condition of working on commission (i.e., hired by the mayor) may be inherently problematic and cannot be hidden, however there could be some strategies to try to assume a more mediating role between the policy makers and the research participants.

In addition, the condition of being temporary inhabitants complicate even more the issue of the insider-outsider status of the researchers.

6.4.1. Insiders – outsiders

Within the context of research, the dichotomy between insider and outsider has been questioned since the 1990s to highlight the fluid and contextual dimension of such perspectives (Surra and Ridley 1991). As it has been stressed (Giorgi et al., 2021, p. 46), the insider's position is the "result of a constant negotiation between the researcher and the social actors involved in the field". Moreover, "negotiating insider-outsider statuses requires building genuine relationships by engaging mutual sharing" (Leavy, 2017, p. 241).

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In the context of the community walk, we – as interdisciplinary group temporarily inhabiting Gagliano – were not totally insider neither totally outsiders, and each of us negotiated differently such relationship. In fact, in the moment in which the community walk split up into two different groups, one going directly to the stage of the present and the other remaining at the photo exhibition in the stage of the past, each of us negotiated their position and perspective in relation to this fracture.

Those of us which decided to remain with the inhabitants in the staging of the past had the chance to experience a more intimate connection with the research participants, by showing them that we cared about themselves, that we valorised their memories, their knowledge and their act of sharing, therefore enacting a 'relational ethics' (Adams et al., 2015; Ellis, 2007). Relational ethics has been defined as an

> ethics (that) recognizes and values mutual respect, dignity, and connectedness between the researcher and research, and between researchers and the communities in which they live and work… Act from our hearts and minds, to acknowledge our interpersonal bonds to others…" (Ellis, 2007, p. 4).

Therefore, although my decision at the time was made with less awareness than it is today, in hindsight I believe that it was a moment of negotiation of my position within that process, and in particular within that fracture.

Chapter 7 – Moving across space and time

Our elders taught us that the celebration of memory is also a celebration of tomorrow. [...] memory always points to tomorrow. [...] who guards and preserves memory, guards and preserves life [...]. Those who were [...] have not bequeathed us a new, complete and finished world, but they have left us clues and traces to join those scattered fragments and recompose the puzzle of yesterday to open a crack in the wall, draw a window and build a door. [...] Those who have memory actually have a door into the future. (EZLN, 2001)

If in Chapter 5, a more descriptive approach to the community walk has been used in order to document how things have been experienced from the perspective of the participants –including me – trying to realize what Clifford Geertz (1973) would called 'thick descriptions' of the walk; on the contrary, in this chapter, the walk will be treated in a more analytical way, highlighting symmetries and asymmetries, proximities and distances between internal and external to the community of Gagliano, younger and older generations, inhabitants and planners, experts and non-experts in relation to the past, the present and the future of the village.

In doing this, the verbal level of analysis will be confronted with the embodied one to find out if there is correspondence among the two dimensions; then, results and interpretations that come out from the space-temporal investigation will be discussed in order to respond to the research question of the community walk intended as community-based research practice within the action-research project 'Ritornanti al Futuro'.

7.1 Collective reasonings on Gagliano

In the following paragraph, I will focus on some themes which emerged from the three collective moments selected as meaningful within the research process (see Chapter 5) and which have been considered useful to highlight in order to better investigate the temporality of Gagliano. These themes will be unpacked by cross-analysing them and confronting how their meanings, understandings and perceptions differ or align across the different social actors who participated in the research process. Then, I will narrow the analysis by specifically focusing on the different conceptions and understanding in relation to the past, the present and the future of Gagliano among the different social actors, focusing both on a verbal level and on an embodied level of analysis, in order to then confront the two dimensions to highlight correspondences and/or differences.

7.1.1. Community and the sense of belonging

As highlighted in Chapter 5, the 'community' in the past has been described by the participants as made of both conflicts and sense of trust and protection: both Cosimo and Massimo during their accounts in Piazza Grande shared this interpretation.

However, the theme of the community didn't emerge only from the older generations during the account of the past but also from younger generations in relation to the present: in the restitution event, in fact, the theme of community has been linked both to the quality of relationships and to the sense of belonging, creating a confrontation on the different cultural understandings of 'belonging to a place' between older and younger generations, externals and internals.

In fact, both Raffaele and Teresa highlighted their perceptions about the strong relational dimension that they feel and observe in Gagliano. They both were impressed by the mutual aid which is present in the village, even between people who are in conflict. Raffaele in particular identified such relational dimension with well-being, in opposition to consumerism. For Teresa the sense of community experienced in Gagliano can be explained as if everyone is the extension of the other, as a shared sense of responsibility which goes beyond oneself. The communitarian dimension, intended as contemporary presence of conflictive and cooperative relationships, is therefore not only related to the past and does not concern only the older

generation interpretation, but is still present in Gagliano. For the interdisciplinary work group, the communitarian dimension represents the most impressive element they found in the village.

During the restitution, Teresa stressed that one of the main observations done by the interdisciplinary group after the community walk concerned the strong sense of belonging to the place and to the community. In the first stage of the past the inhabitants of Gagliano talked about community. In relation to the present, they talked instead of the sense of belonging, the attachment to the native place. When Carmela tried to problematize Renzo answer's about why he wants to come back to live in Gagliano, many participants were surprised by the questions posed by Carmela, since for them being born in a place necessarily implies being deeply and intimately attached to it: "He is an integral part of this community!".

The sense of community experienced in Gagliano, both in the past as in the present was shared by both young and older generations. The sense of belonging pinpointed instead to something else. For young people, as Teresa highlighted during the restitution, it is not so trivial this strong sense of attachment to the native place, because they have been grown up much more with the idea of being citizens of the world; in fact, Carmela pointed out that for us young people it is not always the case that the place where you are born is the one where you want to live or return.

According to the inhabitants of Gagliano the strong sense of belonging to the village depends on intergenerational relationship, in particular within family. Both Renzo and Maurizio talked about that issue: "the problem in my opinion is, if one has accustomed their children to love the native village" one said, "We moved to L'Aquila in '71, but […] we often came back here, with my father, who died young, so he left me that thing, and I... I hardly ever spend a week without coming to Gagliano", said the other. The strong sense of belonging, then, is linked with childhood age, intended as the main moment in which such attachment to the place is developed.

7.2. The space-temporal investigation – verbal analysis

7.2.1. The past

Remaining on a verbal level of analysis, for the planners – intended as the main researcher and the mayor – the past is something that should be retraced together in a collective moment of re-appropriation which involves both inhabitants of Gagliano and externals.

However, if we analyse the effective time of the discourse which has been dedicate to the past compared to the present and the future, it emerges that the planners focus within the community walk was much more oriented toward the present and the future.

On the contrary, the inhabitants seem to conceive the past as something much more connected with the present. If there are dimensions of the past that they identified as ended in present times, and toward which they feel nostalgy – as it is for the extraordinary people or the overflowing humanity or the village as alive, autonomous and liveable – however for them there are also dimensions of the past which still resonate into the present, as when Franco told about some great people of the past who in the course of life form you and become examples of life, strongly linking his past experience with the capacity to orient his present and future. This connection between the past and the present emerged also during the restitution, when Maurizio highlighted that many of the people pictured in the photos along via Fara are still alive, underlying that the past is in some sense still present and it's something which strongly relates to them.

7.2.2. The present

The planners' vision of the present is closely linked to the projection into the future. During the restitution, the main researcher talked of the present as characterized by all different kind of crisis. However, according to him the quality of relationships that is possible to experience in Gagliano at the present time is something to build on. The present projected into the future is framed as an opportunity to rediscover the well-being of those places – based on relationships and on human-nature connection – through the encounter between the inhabitants of Gagliano and external actors. For the mayor, in fact, the present can be identified with the effort of generating something new both with the inhabitants of Gagliano and with external actors. In this sense, Gagliano today and in the future was defined by both as "a great laboratory of participation". In relation to the resignation of the elderly, during the stage of the present the mayor pointed out that they don't aim to recreate the Gagliano of the past, but rather to construct innovative projects starting from the awareness of the past. In fact, in Gagliano, as in other similar places, it is possible to generate a micro-economy - as the entrepreneurial activity of the street food ape car *Com'é* demonstrated - but it is fundamental to have "ideas, courage and the

will to get involved" as the capacity to "intercept public fund". He emphasised "one must take the risk of trying and not just doing the ordinary".

On the contrary, among the inhabitants, the elderly's vision of the present seems more connected to the relationship with the past, as highlighted in the previous paragraph. However, the youngest generations seem to have a more two-way relational conception of the present: they, in fact, stressed their idea of 'community' as involving the whole Subequana Valley, not only Gagliano, and highlighted the relationship that present has with both the past and he future. In fact, they seem to care both the role that recovering traditions and knowledges from the elderly may have for the present and the future of the village and the idea of the future as something in their hands, still to be constructed starting from the present.

7.2.3. The future

The planners shared a conception of the future of Gagliano as a great cultural and socio-economic opportunity to be realized through the construction of shared aspirations between inhabitants of Gagliano and external people. According to them, in fact, no future for Gagliano will be possible without such alliance. Therefore, the possibility of future for the village passes through a shared construction, which requires both a material and an immaterial dimension. Especially according to the mayor, the older generation relationship with the future is characterized by a strong sense of resignation, which obstacles the immaterial reconstruction of the village. Instead, the planners oppose a positive vision of the future and invited the others to adopt the same attitude.

Among the inhabitants, only few expressed their perceptions about the future, since the majority of them did not walk through the stages of the future, thus no collective discussion about it was realized. However, we may refer to Maurizio as example of inhabitant who believe in the future of Gagliano and to the former mayor as opposite attitude.

During the restitution Maurizio agreed with the mayor and the main researcher's vision about the future as a "great opportunity"; however, he stressed the role of recovering past tradition and knowledges as a necessary process in order to construct a future for Gagliano and the other villages of the Subequana Valley. In fact, another relevant point of his perspective is the necessity of reasoning at a higher level than the village, including the surrounding territories of the Subequana valley, in order to put in common all the resources that these territories have. In Maurizio's conception of future therefore, the most important step seems to be the

reconstruction of the history of Gagliano, of the Subequana valley and of the Appennine ridge as something they have been deprived of and must now reappropriate, therefore strictly linking the possibility of future with the collective capacity of re-appropriating the past.

On the contrary, the former mayor has a sceptical and resigned viewpoint towards the future of Gagliano and other small villages. A scepticism that, however, seems to be based more on the awareness of the socio-historical conditions and of the importance of structural elements in determining the future of inner areas and small villages, than on a mere fatalistic resignation. Here is what he said during the account of the past in Piazza Grande, first stage of the past:

> "I am sceptical that these small villages can return to what they were...". A participant is heard to say in a hushed voice, "It's a dream...", at which point he, as if almost sorry to have mentioned his scepticism, takes up the participant's comment to downplay what was said, to keep hope alive anyway: "No, but we believe in dreams, though. We don't have to stand by and watch, we have to believe in it. We have to do anything to improve the living conditions of these villages. It's clear that everything possible must be done. So, I applaud those, the administration first and foremost, the young people – not me – the young people who really believe in this project, you from the university and everyone, everyone who is willing to lend a hand to believe in these projects". (From collaborative descriptive audio-visual analysis)

In this passage, something interesting happened: the participant's comment "it's a dream…" underlined a perception of 'dream' as something that can only be imagined, as something unachievable, outside the realm of the possible. This comment shacked the former mayor, who despite his just declared scepticism, nevertheless encouraged the participants to dream not in a nostalgic sense, but as something one can believe in. As if, despite being aware of greater processes and transformations within society, he was keen to emphasise the importance that dreaming has for communities, for people 'from below'. Here, even with all limitations, something was happening in a collective sense: a vision about the future was being built together, actually oscillating between the impossible and the possible, but in any case, it was something that was being worked on, something that they were building together.

Therefore, the resignation and scepticism that the current mayor explicitly attributed to the older generations, as previously mentioned, seems here to be potentially unhinged through a collective process of reflection on the past, the present and the future, through the encounter

of various visions and convictions that, in confronting each other within a collective process, may negotiate their own positions and potentially construct a new collective vision.

However, with his discourse the former mayor also pointed out another meaningful question. He was talking about Gagliano as an example of many other small villages of inner areas. Therefore, notwithstanding the awareness that processes are not only descended 'from above' but also acted upon 'from below', even if he believes that Gagliano may improve its living conditions, his scepticism is about the future of inner areas and small villages in general, from a more structural point of view, beyond localized best practices. When in Piazza Grande he mentioned the doctor and the obstetrician as professionals paid by the municipality, he wanted to highlight the structural problem of municipalities that at present time do not have ordinary funds to carry on their activities. He therefore shade light on the importance of the ordinary budget of local public administrations, so that there could be a real liveability in these territories. If we relate this reflection with the mayor's discourse during the restitution about his will to do "extra-ordinary" things as local administration, here emerges a fundamental question in relation to local development. Is it possible to rely only on extra-ordinary projects, innovative best practices, and capacity to intercept funds to foster an inclusive territorial development? Which kind of development model it is promoted in such way?

7.3. The space-temporal investigation – the embodied analysis

In the previous paragraphs, the verbal level of analysis of the relationship between the past, the present and the future has revealed a general fracture between planners and inhabitants: planners seem to be focused on the future, conceiving the present as projected ahead, whilst inhabitants seem to be more interested in the past, conceiving the present as strongly informed by it. This paragraph will focus on the embodied level of analysis of the walked space, including photographic material as visual data to try to capture and convey the role of non-verbal elements. Then, in the last paragraph of the chapter, the verbal level of analysis and the embodied one will be confronted in order to find out if there is correspondence or discrepancy between the two levels and to outline research findings.

As we already mentioned in Chapters 3 and 4, walking allows to understand the relationship between people and place also in relation to an emotional and temporal elsewhere.

This is the reason why walking has been considered a suitable method to investigate the emotional, symbolic and relational dimension between people and place across a temporal dimension. The consideration that "space is, simultaneously, in the present, in the past and in the future, in terms of memory – individual or shared – and in terms of imagination and planning" (Giorgi et al., 2021, p. 154) allows to understand the role that walking may play in giving access to those immaterial dimensions through the materiality of the 'situated body' (Rivotella, 2003). Emotions, imagination and memory are all processes which lie at the intersection of body and mind. The theory of 'embodied cognition', in fact, has shown that even the highest and most abstract conceptualisation activities always depend on bodily involvement (Gibbs, 2005), since "mental processes are grounded in the body maps present in the brain" (Damasio, 2003, p. 24). Therefore, analysing the community walk in its embodied dimension seems to be a further necessary step in order to leverage walking as a research method.

According to Cresswell (2011), mobility can be analysed by dividing it into its constitutive components: motive force, route, velocity, rhythm, experience and friction. These components will not be used as strict analytical tools within this context, but referring to them may be useful to better understand and keep in mind the different dimensions which compose mobility.

As we have seen in the description of the community walk undertaken in Chapter 5, walking as a practice is not always in movement but it involves 'moorings' (Hannam et al., 2006). As it comes out from the collaborative descriptive audio-visual analysis, before the beginning of the walk, when we were at the medieval fountain, the proxemics of the people involved seemed to be characterized by a kind of division between a group composed of the organisers of the event, the youngest part of the local population and the external visitors from Fontecchio – who mostly stood near the fountain – and a group composed mainly of Gagliano inhabitants. These latter, however, tended to remain distant, still in a dimension of mere waiting and fruition. This fruition attitude stopped as professor Ciuffetti mentioned the depopulation phenomenon occurred between the 1950s and 1970s: in that moment, something seemed to move, or rather stirs in the participants, and a certain hubbub began to be heard in the background...

Once the walk started, participants moved with different velocities; the ones who moved slowly were incited by the two clowns to speed up in order to reach the first stage of the past, Piazza Grande.

In Piazza Grande, during the next mooring, participants were in circle, listening to the account of the former mayor and Cosimo about the everyday life of Gagliano in the 1950s – 1960s. The account of the past reawakened memories that were also sometimes discordant, creating a broken narrative that followed the selective and non-linear dynamics of participants' memory, who were at that point not in a silence of mere listening, but rather were commenting among themselves in low voices, or intervened in the account of the former mayor to add details or confuting his memory (see Fig. 2, p. 54)

> Participants point out to them the butcher's shop that used to be in Piazza Grande. Only a sign remains today of that shop. One participant highlights that there were two butcher's shops, and one person is heard saying to another: "One was here, the other was under the house of... Don't you remember it?" (From collaborative descriptive audio-visual analysis)

> "There were three groceries, those who are a few years older than me will remember. There was one that was here (indicating Piazza Grande), one that was here in this building (indicating from the opposite side, via Torrione) and one that was in front of the Church of San Martino" (*ibidem*)

> This is not the first time I have seen such a scene: during the walk it often happened that when someone was mentioned, the place in the village where he lived or where he had his business activity was also indicated, as if for the participants there was a very close interweaving between the village, the people of the village, and the specific places where they worked or lived. (From personal field diary)

As emerged from the above passages, people of the past were often identified with the place where they worked – "the one near the church" – or with the place where they lived, highlighting the role that walking through the village played in leveraging space as a stimulus to narrativize spatial memories, since memories are embodied both into the space and into the subjects, thus bodily linking people to place.

When the collective account of the past finished, the walk started again. Part of the group immediately moved – especially the youngest and those from outside the community of Gagliano, but also a few from Gagliano. Others participants, however – mainly current or former inhabitants of the village – remained in Piazza Grande to comment some of the photos that are hanged to the fences. There was little interaction between Gaglianesi and outsiders and there a first little friction took place between those who went on ahead and those who stayed

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behind to continue talking in Piazza Grande, looking at the photos that were hanging there and physically remaining, with their bodies but also with their minds, at the first stage of the past.

Once arrived at the second stage of the past, the main researcher unilaterally established an order of priorities, deciding to cut-off the collective discussion with the participants for timing issues. Since via Fara was dotted with the photos of the exhibition hanging from the barriers, the main researcher tried to prevent people from stopping there and the time from stretching further, emphasising "this is not a stage!", as if to incite participants to continue walking at a certain pace. However, several participants continued to walk *lento pede*, looking at the photos that were hung all along Via Fara and commenting on them together.

The attempt of the main researcher to speed up the walk to reach the following stage seemed not to consider that walking has been conceived, as previously highlighted in Chapter 4, "not as just moving from one place to another, but rather in a relational perspective, which considers space as co-produced" (Giorgi et al., 2021, p. 152). The relationship with space, then, is a dynamic process in which space is as the same time producer of and produced by practices (Giorgi et al., 2021). In fact, along via Fara it can be observed that different spaces – co-existing and intersecting – and different narratives were created on the basis of participants' socio-demographic characteristics and roles.

When the main friction occurred, splitting the walk in two parts, the group in the lead walking at a certain pace towards the first stage of the past was talking about the present and the future of small villages, confronting the situation of Gagliano with that of Fontecchio. That group was mainly composed by the young externals from Fontecchio, some members of the interdisciplinary work group, the main researcher, the mayor and few other people from Gagliano. They had a less intimate proxemics in relation to the exhibited photos, as may be observed in Fig. 12.

Figure 12. The 'head' of the community walk approaching the photo exhibition in a social proxemics.
Photo by Matteo Volta – 18 July 2021

On the other side, 'the tail' of the group remained all along via Fara walking slowly and talking about the past, stimulated by the photo-exhibition in eliciting their individual and collective memories. This other group of participants may be observed establishing a bodily relationship which created a more intimate proxemics both with the photos and among them, as the following pictures shows.

Figure 13. One of the participants holding a photo in his hands.
Photo by Lucia Polito – 18 July 2021

Figure 14. Three inhabitants of Gagliano looking at the photos in an intimate proxemics.
Photo by Matteo Volta – 18 July 2021

The split in the walk, therefore, allowed to observe the different ways in which participants moved and related to place, intended as relational and interactive spaces: in particular, the different ways in which participants relate to the specific route proposed allows to "identify the different socio-spatial practices of different social groups that coexist in material

and spatial terms, but actually experience and move through different places, insofar as their experience of place is profoundly different." (Giorgi et al., 2021, p. 154).

In general, in fact, it is noticeable how along via Fara everyone proceeded at their own pace. Despite the fact that there were stages, route and times to be respected, people showed that they do not get caught up in predetermined times and ways. They chose each time whether to follow the group's lead or not.

Moreover, thanks to the split in the walk, it has been also possible to observe participants' relation to the past in an embodied dimension. Since via Fara is dotted with photos hanging from the barriers, the dynamic is that there are various small groups of people (mainly from Gagliano and some of us from the interdisciplinary work group) commenting on the photos scattered at various points along the street. These small groups dynamically assemble and re-assemble, they are not always composed of the same people who, each in their own way, modulates how much time to spend in each place.

Figure 15. Some of the participants bending down to get a better look at the photos exposed.
Photo by Lucia Polito – 18 July 2021

The participants along via Fara remembered and narrated together, stimulated by the embodied relationship with the surrounding space and photos, which acted as a stimulus to narrativize the spatial memories embodied into the space and elicit the connection between time and space. This embodied relationship elicited by the photos aroused in the participants the

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necessity and the will to recognize each face of the people shot and each place of Gagliano pictured, as can be observed both in the following pictures and in the transcript excerpts:

Figure 16. Some participants looking at a school photo of the past.
Photo by Lucia Polito – 18 July 2021

Massimo points at someone saying "this is...", then stops and questions the other six who are looking at that photo "who is this?"; the lady answers him by pointing her finger at the photo. Massimo puts on his glasses to better see the photo, or rather the faces in the photo, and points with his finger at another person saying that it was someone's wife. The lady follows him in this 'game' of recognising the various people and points to another person she has identified, turning to her husband to show him, "do you remember her, *amò*? She used to live there", pointing with her arm to the part of Via Fara that goes towards Piazza Grande, and continuing "where also she used to live...", again pointing to another person in the photo. (From collaborative descriptive audio-visual analysis)

Figure 17. Some of the participants pointing with their fingers and hands at the children in the photo.

Photo by Lucia Polito – 18 July 2021

It seems fundamental for the inhabitants to be able to recognise faces and places in those photos, as a form of self and collective appropriation of the 'object probes' (i.e., the photo used by the researchers as elicitation strategy). As if the sense of belonging to Gagliano passes precisely through the capacity of recognition, to the ability to create a link between what the photo shows (external dimension) and personal memories (internal dimension). As if this capacity indicates that you are from Gagliano, that you know it, that it is also a bit yours and that you belong to it; a sort of appropriation mechanism of those photo which, mixed with personal memories, seem to come back to life, becoming living matter.

Figure 18. Two inhabitants pointing with their fingers at the people in the photo in an intimate proxemics.
Photo by Lucia Polito – 18 July 2021

The split of the walk in Via Fara created a co-produced relational space in which the connections among the inhabitants, but also – as highlighted in Chapter 6 – between the older generations of Gagliano and some young components of the interdisciplinary work group have strongly emerged. This created (at least partially) that kind of 'mobile third space' between different moving bodies, gazes and knowledges, which constituted an intergenerational place of encounter and confrontation between the contextual knowledge of the participants and the 'expert' knowledge of the interdisciplinary group, as well as between their internal and external perspective in relation to the local community.

As can be observed in the pictures and the transcripts excerpts above the inhabitants of Gagliano seemed to particularly care about telling properly to us young people their anecdotes and memories about places and people of the village of the past.

> I feel that it is a gift for me to be able to listen to their stories and observe how much attention they pay to each face they see in the photos, to try to recognise it and give it a name, thus retrieving it from oblivion. And I feel that it is also important for them as well to tell, not only to tell each other, but also to me, to us as young people, whether from Gagliano or not. We are in front of a photo and Antonio, with whom I basically had no personal relationship until that moment, as he tells me about that photo, puts his hand on my shoulder, showing me with his own body that it is me he

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wants to tell. It is my attention and my listening that he seeks at that moment. (From personal field diary)

Figure 19. Two inhabitants sharing memories with two young researchers of the interdisciplinary group.
Photo by Flavio Lattarini – 18 July 2021

After a while she leans down to take a better look at the photo that is at the bottom of the transenna and takes it in her hands, to tilt it so that she can look at it better. I bend down with her. She stays silent for a while looking at the photo in her hands. (From personal field diary)

Figure 20. One of the inhabitants bending down to take the photo in her hands.
Photo by Flavio Lattarini – 18 July 2021

7.4. Intersecting different level of analysis: a general discussion

The embodied level of analysis seems to confirm what has come out from the verbal level of analysis: in relating to the walked place, the planners and the external visitors were most interested in the present as projection into the future, whilst the inhabitants and part of the interdisciplinary group were more focused in the relationship between the present and the past. The planners, in fact, decided to cut-off the second stage of the past to avoid the collective discussion on the emigration occurred in the 1950s – 1970s, preferring to walk directly to the stages of the present where they had to present what they were doing and planning to do, confirming their orientation towards the future. On the contrary, the majority of the inhabitants remained in the second stage of the past instead of following the head of the group, confirming that their experience of the walked place was much more oriented towards the past.

Therefore, between the verbal and the embodied level of analysis a certain symmetry emerged, with respect to how the different participants experienced the walked place and the relation between the past, the present and the future.

This finding seems to retrace what has come out from another kind of similar research developed in Götemborg using the method of the walked interview: also in that occasion, the researcher observed "how urban planners, looking at the neighbourhood that was being regenerated, saw the future, *what was to come*, leaving out the existing, and how, on the contrary, the inhabitants saw the past, remembering the shops that had disappeared, the houses that had been demolished" (Giorgi et al., 2021, p. 167).

This difference in approaching different temporal dimensions may be explained by several factors, which in any case represents subjective interpretations. From the planners' point of view, it can be stressed that they may have felt the responsibility of the community walk intended as an event, with external visitors coming from outside who had another approach to the village in comparison to the inhabitants and who were interested in walking through all the different temporal stages proposed by the route.

Moreover, it may also be that the planners perceive and understand the present and the future as something in their own hands, in which they are protagonists, in contrast with a past that is already done and to which they feel it does not belong very much to them. This last point may in part explain also the contrary attitude of the inhabitants: they may have been more focused on the past precisely because they felt that it was what belonged to them most within

the community walk, since – as we already highlighted in Chapter 6 – they were not involved in the research design and in the organization of the walk.

In the specific case of Gagliano Aterno, the importance attributed to the past by the inhabitants may also be related to the need of reconstructing their own past as a form of re-appropriation after the earthquake of 2009 affected the town and its surrounding area. The earthquake may be considered a material example of a close-by past which is at the same time still there in the present: as it has been highlighted, the public reconstruction only started in 2021, 12 years later the major earthquake of L'Aquila occurred; therefore, the earthquake effects on the village were visible and strongly present, surely not only a matter of past.

If, as highlighted by the mayor and the main researcher – it is necessary to work both on the material reconstruction and on the immaterial regeneration of the village and its population, therefore it is stressed that the immaterial dimension connecting the past, the present and the future, should be better addressed.

Chapter 8 – Connecting the dots…

Our main aim in approaching the research topic in the context of this research project was to explore, describe, evoke, provoke and unsettle (Leavy, 2017). In fact, one of the specificities of adopting creative methods in social research is the general broadness of the research question. In our case, as it is in creative methods, the investigation is characterized by a kind of explorative approach, which is not centred in providing answer to strictly defined questions, but rather it focuses on a process aimed at generating inventive, even in the sense of provocative, questions and stimulating latent social realities through its action, thus bringing to light further questions and alternative perspectives (cf. Giorgi et al., 2021).

In this conclusive chapter, I will return to the research questions I posed at the beginning of this work to connect the results emerged from the micro level of the specific case study analysed to the broader post-development theoretical framework tackled in Chapter 1, by leveraging some interpretations on public pedagogy and education (Biesta 2013, 2014; Sandlin, 2017).

In this way, the importance of tuning the epistemological and methodological levels in order to provoke a disruptive change in (local) development studies will be stressed, and useful insights will be outlined for all those who aspire to embrace a truly transformative perspective in processes that start from the 'small' and 'the bottom' and provide better policies for so-called 'marginal' territories.

8.1. Results: the past and the 'capacity to aspire'

The possibility of the past to inform the present is an important aspect emerged through the community walk and this seems to pass properly through the embodied dimension that connects 'who we were' with 'who we are' through corporal affective memories. As Jedlowski (2002, pp. 50-51) puts it,

> the recovery of the past is not thought of as a historical reconstruction of events, but as the occurrence of the encounter between past and present, so as to open up a temporality whereby memory is not only a cultural baggage that a group or a society carries with it, but the profound trace of its own history and thus of its own identity.

The interpretation of childhood as the life period in which the attachment to the village develops seems to confirm the role of embodiment in creating such sense of belonging between people and the native place; a sense of belonging which is articulated precisely in the connection between the different temporal dimensions and therefore transmitted through intergenerational relationships.

The relational space co-produced by the inhabitants and by part of the interdisciplinary group along via Fara could constitute a kind of 'mobile third space' properly because in it the articulation between the embodiment dimension, the sense of belonging and the intergenerational relationship has been enacted, creating an authentic collective moment of confrontation and creation of a shared memory through narration. Benjamin, in fact, describes the construction of a shared memory,

> as the act of the old man who […] narrates experiences to his children and grandchildren. It is not difficult to see depicted in this picture, […] the fundamental constitution of the community in which the past passes into the present, the older generation meets the younger one in a moment that seems suspended, where tradition and experience meet the openness to the future of those who have still to grow up. What has been stops being a historical chronicle and bursts into the present, stops it in an instant from which a new time arises, which is nourished by the experiences narrated, which makes them its own: the space of a community that shares a memory is founded.

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And this is how history originates. Precisely this, according to Benjamin, no longer happens today. (Campo, 2010, pp. 119-134)

The construction of a community made of both inhabitants and non-inhabitants seems therefore to pass firstly through the construction of a shared memory.

If we related this finding with the discourse of the planners about the importance of constructing shared aspirations towards the future between inhabitants and non-inhabitants as a way to transform the social reality, it seems then that the conditions of possibility of this kind of shared construction have not been taken seriously into account in the context of the community walk, since the past has been considered just a stage that could be cut-off.

If we deepen the question of constructing shared aspirations referring to the work of Appadurai (2004), two relevant criticalities emerge in relation to the community walk: one related to the configuration of the relationship between past, present and future, and the other related to the inherent collective dimension of the 'capacity to aspire'.

With respect to the first criticality, it has been stressed that the intertwining between the ri-elaboration of the past and the prefiguration of the future are fundamental in building aspirations, defined as "that bridges which subjects construct between the present and the future" (De Leonardis and Deriu, 2012, p. XIII). Therefore, "even those cultural dimensions pertaining to the past, to memory, must be taken into account in the symbolic construction of the future, and in the formulation of aspirations" (*ivi*, p. XIV). Even if the planners' focus toward the future is genuinely moved by the aim of changing the social reality of Gagliano as marginal place and experimenting a more ecological way of inhabiting the future – thus intertwining materiality and imagination – however, they underestimate both the role of the relationship between past, present and future in the construction of aspirations as the collective dimension of such construction.

Here comes the second criticality: "the entanglements between the materiality of conditions and the imaginative prefiguration of future are given as a collective, common experience: aspirations, Appadurai shows, are inherently collective" (*ivi*, p. XV). This means that in constructing aspirations – or better for aspirations to take form – is fundamental the capacity to 'voice' (Hirschman, 1970), which means the capacity of individuals to express their voice within a collective (De Leonardis and Deriu, 2012). The capacity to 'voice' therefore is related to "the political dimension of the configuration of the future" (De Leonardis and Deriu, 2012, p. XII).

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If we go back to the issues highlighted in Chapter 6 in relation to the power relations and the role of the research, it seems that enacting a pedagogy *for* the public generally tend to exclude people from the possibility to participate in the collective discussion about the future, undermining their capacity to 'voice' and therefore the possibility of aspirations to take form. As has been stressed, "there is a relationship between having aspirations and being able to express them […]. Where there is no room for the expression of aspirations, aspirations do not emerge" (*ivi*, p. XIX).

In fact, it is properly through 'voice' that people may ri-elaborate their relationship with the future as well as their relationship with the past; and it is properly in the intertwining between the re-elaboration of the past and the prefiguration of the future that new possibilities and trajectories for the social life can be opened up.

Within this context, however, it has to be stressed that this reasoning on the future and the possibility of having voice within political processes is absolutely taken into account by the mayor and the main researcher of 'Ritornanti al futuro'; indeed, it is one of the cornerstones of their discourses and political position. However, they only enforce this discourse on a macro level – in relation to the 'voice' of marginal and inner areas within the national context – but not in relation to their willingness to build shared aspirations between inhabitants and non-inhabitants on a micro level. This, in any case, should not be seen as a conscious will to hold power, but rather should be placed within a tradition of thought that sees leaders as initiators of processes that are then gradually understood and followed by the masses. However, in this conception there is only limited space to co-construct the prefiguration of future through a collective negotiation, since the proposed configuration is already considered the right path to follow.

On the contrary, as it has been stressed by De Leonardis and Deriu (2012, p. XX),

> the elaboration and representation of this different relationship with the future – of this cosmology, if you like – expresses the capacity to aspire in its political meaning, as a field of possibility to be pursued together, collectively. It is political not so much in the goals to be pursued as in the paths it opens up.

Therefore, what is meant to be emphasised within the scope of this thesis is that social reality at micro level, and the relationships that take form within it, needs to be considered as part of what has to be changed in a transformative perspective. This implies focusing not only

on the goals to be achieved but rather on the processes that are carried out and that illuminate the intertwining between the personal, the social, the public and the political, making ourselves – and the practices we carry out – part of what is to be transformed. Indeed, as pointed out in Chapter 6, not taking seriously the power relations that emerge within processes that aspire to transform social reality or to co-produce knowledge, risks compromising the real transformative scope, as well as the deeper meaning, of such processes.

To sum up, within the specific context of the community walk, the planners seem to underestimate the relational dimension between past, present and future. In fact, even if they talked about the past as something that should inspire the future, they do not seem to take seriously the intertwining between the re-elaboration of the past and the prefiguration of the future; they treated the past as separate from the other dimensions, as a stage that can just be cut off.

However, the attempt to cut-off the second stage of the past in some way failed. Some of the participants, in fact, by deciding not to move along the pre-established route, not to walk towards the stages of the present and of the future, not to respect the planned timing, but instead deciding to remain along via Fara walking at their own pace, operated a re-appropriation of that space-time that should have been dedicated to them, thus breaking the attitude of fruition and making themselves protagonists of the process.

This opened up the possibility for us to learn 'from the margins' in a post-development perspective.

8.2. Results: learning 'from the margins'

8.2.1. The rhythm of the walk

The route of the community walk was channelled along a pre-established path, in which also the stages were already decided by the researchers and the mayor, as I previously highlighted in Chapter 7.

This in theory gave to the planned walk a precise 'rhythm', since rhythm is properly "composed of repeated moments of movement and rest" (Cresswell, 2011, p. 165). In the conceptualization of Henri Lefebvre (2004), rhythmanalysis may also be used to interpret the social world: in his view, "everywhere there is a rhythm, there is measure, which is to say law,

calculated and expected obligation, a project" (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 8); therefore, "rhythm is part of any social order" (Cresswell, 2011, p. 165). In a complementary way, then, rhythm plays also a significant role in the contestation of social order. This interpretation of rhythm well connects with the indication of Cresswell (*ibidem*) according to whom "producing order and predictability is not simply a matter of fixing in space but of channelling motion".

Following this suggestion allow us to frame the experience of the community walk, and in particular the friction represented by the split in the walk, as an experience of contestation of a given order, which was established through the predisposition of a specific route to be followed and of a precise rhythm to be adopted.

In fact, the split in the walk, due to the inhabitants' decision of remaining in the second stage of the past instead of following the planned rhythm and route of the walk, may be interpreted as an interruption of the established rhythm, therefore as a kind of dissensus (Rancière, 2003) in relation to a given order. In fact, if we refer back to the understanding of social order as a configuration where "everyone has a particular place, role and identity" (Biesta, 2013, p. 3), but not for that reason "everyone is included in the ruling of the order" (*ibidem*), then that moment in which the split happened may be seen as an interruption of the social order in the name of equality.

8.2.2. Interruption as agency

According to Rancière, the core of democratic politics is properly the interruption of a particular order in which everyone has a place and its reconfiguration "into one in which new ways of being and acting exist and new identities come into play" (Biesta, 2013, p. 4). The decision of not to move along the pre-established route, not to follow the rhythm of the 'head' of the walk, therefore may be interpret as an act "that reconfigure the space where parties… have been defined" (Rancière, 2003, p. 30). Not moving along the pre-established route and the enactment of unplanned rhythms makes also visible that which was meant to be invisible – the past and the research participants as 'agents' – and "makes heard a discourse where once there was only a place for noise" (*ibidem*) – the 'voice' of the inhabitants (see Chapter 7). Thus, this act creates a relational 'mobile third space' of encounter between older inhabitants and younger researchers who, through the collective reconstruction of a shared memory, become both part of the same 'community', redefining their identity within such process.

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The interruption and the reconfiguration of the given order intended as the proper moment of democratic politics passes through a process of dis-identification of the subjects in relation to the social order in which they are tried to be involved. This dis-identification is, in other words, a subjectivation process which constitutes the 'birth' of democratic agency (Rancière, 2003). Therefore, we may say that the participants who remained in the second stage of the past became subjects, demonstrated their agency, properly in their refusal to follow the established route and rhythm, in their refusal to 'participate' in an established order in which they are 'included as excluded' (*ibidem*).

This last consideration opens the question of the relationship between citizenship, democracy and learning in a post-development perspective.

8.2.3. Learning through the 'experiment of democracy'

Biesta (2013, p. 5) suggests to distinct between civic learning conceived as a socialization process in which learning is "necessary to become part of an existing socio-political order", and civic learning understood as a subjectivation process, which refers to that kind of learning involved in the engagement of what he calls the 'experiment of democracy': "whereas a socialisation conception of civic learning is about learning *for future citizenship*, the subjectification conception of civic learning is about learning *from current citizenship*, from current experiences with and engagement in the ongoing experiment of democracy" (*ibidem*).

If we relate this reasoning to the issue of 'cognitive injustice' raised by post-development scholars (see Chapter 1), it seems that a conception of learning as future-oriented assumes that citizens do not have the capacity to take part in the prefiguration of future at present time. Still they do not have the necessary knowledge and consciousness to take part in the decision-making process, which are instead responsibility of the leaders or the pedagogues, who hold that knowledge and consciousness to rule and prefigurate the desired future for all. On the contrary, a conception of learning *from current citizenship* seems to recognize citizens' capacity to take part in such processes as they are at present time, through their engagement in the 'experiment of democracy'. The last conception of learning, then, may be considered in line with the perspective of the 'Epistemologies of the South' (De Sousa Santos, 2014) addressed in Chapter 1: in fact, it implies to make visible and recognize what exist in the present and subtract it from being framed and produced as 'non-existent', namely bearer as a non credible

alternative to what exists. Considering citizens as not already prepared to take part in the political definition of the future or in the decision-making processes translates in a subtraction of the world and in a contraction of the present, thus in a waste of experience from which to learn. The conception of learning *from current citizenship*, on the contrary, seems to expand the present, enlarging the field of credible experiences from which to learn and therefore also increasing the possibilities of social experimentation in the future.

If we relate these considerations on the 'cognitive injustice' assumed in a conception of learning *for future citizenship* with the indication of Appadurai about the capacity to 'voice' (i.e., the capacity of individuals to express their voice within a collective) as fundamental in the construction of aspirations, it seems that without a serious commitment towards 'cognitive justice', aspirations cannot take form. The political dimension of the prefiguration of the future, in fact, lies properly in the definition of who is admitted in its configuration and who is excluded. A conception of learning *from current citizenship*, on the contrary, recognizing the capacity of citizens *as they are* to take part in such prefiguration through the 'experiment of democracy', seems to be the kind of learning we need to enable aspirations to take form.

Biesta (*ibidem*) uses the expression 'experiment of democracy' to underline his idea of the nature of democracy as an "ongoing and never ending experiment" which "needs to remain fundamentally open towards the possibility not only of *more* democracy but also of *different* democracy, of a different distribution of parts and places, of a reconfiguration of democratic identities and subjectivities".

The refusal to follow an established route and rhythm thus may be considered a reclaim from the inhabitants for a *different* democracy, in which the distribution of part and places recognize citizens as agents, as competent, not only as long as they fit the proposed social order but properly in relation to their capacity to take part in its definition. The claim for a *different* democracy therefore allows to frame the democratic experiment as a process of transformation which involve also *people*, for its potentiality to "engender democratic subjectivity and political agency" (Biesta, 2013, p. 6).

It is therefore through the experiment of democracy that different ways of being, knowing, interacting, inhabiting and living can be co-constructed in the direction of a 'plurivarsal' future.

8.2.4. Via Fara as 'public space'

The civic learning in the subjectivation mode takes place in 'public' space, intended non as a specific geographical location but as a dimension of social life which relates "with what is *possible* in such locations" (*ibidem*): namely, a particular quality of human and social interaction – of 'human togetherness' – which can be realized "only under the condition of *plurality*" (Biesta, 2014, p. 4). Therefore, we might consider the split of the walk as an interruption of the given order in the name of equality and plurality to engender a *public* space: those who decided to remain along via Fara, at the second stage of the walk, enacted a pedagogy in the interest of the publicness, which allows a collective learning through an "affective process of relationality and embodiment […] [which] locate the educational moment at the dialogic intersection between multiple subjectivities" (Sandlin et al., 2017, p. 6).

The inhabitants of Gagliano therefore have shown us how a public space can act as a pedagogue, shading light on "the capacity for citizen to engage as critical educators in their present, everyday lives" (Brady, 2006, p. 58), without the necessity to be inserted in an 'educational' logic, but enacting a pedagogy which works "at the *intersection* of education and politics, that is in the interest of the public 'condition of plurality'" (Sandlin et al., 2017, p. 6).

They have shown us a way in which we can learn 'from the margins'.

8.2.5. Research as 'public engagement' towards the 'pluriverse'

The interruption and the reconfiguration of parties and places happened along via Fara as a claim for a *different* democracy in relation to a given order in which inhabitants are 'included as excluded' calls into question how to carry out the 'public engagement' work as researchers in the field, "how to conceive and enact public pedagogy as an active and deliberate intervention in the 'public' domain towards creating public spheres driven by plurality" (Sandlin et al., 2017, p. 5).

Going back to the different ways of enacting a public pedagogy, what the experience of the community walk suggests us is, first of all, to reject the "solitary construct of the pedagogue in favour of a collectivist and collaborative understanding of educational activity" (Sandlin et al., 2017, p. 4): the pedagogy *for* the public, in fact, leads to an erasure of plurality and difference in the name of sameness. Moreover, this experience also suggests to take the distance from the pedagogy *of* the public, because even if it has more potential to foster plurality,

however it enacts a demand of learning from the public, therefore considering them not yet prepared to take part in the decision-making processes nor in the configuration of the future. In both the conceptions, politics is pushed out: the first "by teaching citizens how to act and be, whereas the second […] by bringing it under a regime of learning" (Biesta, 2012, p. 693). On the contrary, the pedagogy for the *publicness* allows to decouple "public pedagogy from its roots in authoritarian views of pedagogy, and perhaps most importantly, allows for the negotiation, rather than the simple transfer, of final meaning" (Sandlin et al., p. 6). In fact, as it has been highlighted (Brady, 2006), the absence of structural hierarchies within committed communities may result in public pedagogies that can effectively challenge hierarchical structures.

The non-participation of citizens unsettles the socialization logic and the regime of learning under which they are forced to be. Instead of interpreting that refusal of participating to the initiative proposed as a lack of motivation, maybe we should rather interpret that refusal as a request for a *better* democracy.

Therefore, 'the margins' taught us that, as researcher engaged in 'public pedagogy', we should be aware of this conception of learning which deprives people of their capacity to 'voice' and which undermine the possibility to co-construct generative knowledge. Learning as a project to perfect humanity reminds to the assumptions of social progress at the basis of development discourse and this undermine the potential of those projects to truly create new ways of thinking, living, inhabiting and being. On the contrary, we should engage with creating public spaces in which the plurality and the difference of the 'human togetherness' is recognized and in which the 'experiment of democracy' may be enacted.

"In lieu of a conclusion, we end with an opening, an invitation for scholars to rethink how they enact […] public pedagogies" (Sandlin et al., 2017, p. 12).

8.3. Conclusions

Within the scope of this thesis, I have tried to explore the following questions in order to open up reflections and shade light on subterraneous aspects of the way in which we as researchers and operators of local development relate to the places where we intervene:

- In which ways the adoption of a post-development perspective may innovate in a transformative way the (local) development approach?
- How can we decolonize our development approach to marginal territories?

- What can we learn 'from the margins' by applying creative and mobile research methodologies in a post-development perspective?

With respect to the first question, the thesis highlights that 'cognitive injustice' is one of the main criticalities to address in order to frame local development in a transformative perspective. This implies the need to recognize local actors' capacity to take part in the decision-making processes and in the prefiguration of future at present time and beyond their adherence to the conventional growth-based development paradigm, i.e., beyond their adherence to the monoculture of the capitalistic logic of productivity, which assumes economic growth as an unquestionable rational objective. Otherwise, the participatory processes and the co-design enacted by the local development perspective does not enable the rejection of the modernist ontology of universalism and does not open the possibility of learning 'from the margins'.

In relation to this and linked to the second question on how to decolonize our approach to marginal territories, it is stressed that to overcome the 'cognitive injustice' – which lies at the basis of the modernist ontology of universalism – it is hardly necessary to deeply question the power relations arisen in approaching such territories, both in the case of researchers acting as 'public pedagogues' as in the case local developers. This implies to take care of the connections between epistemology and methodology and to conceive oneself as part of what need to be transformed, since the logics of development intended as the current western model of existence are embedded within us.

The implications of the findings coming out from the previous questions enable us to understand how to truly learn 'from the margins'. In relation to research questions, therefore, the case-study analysed allows us to focus on different suggestions coming 'from the margins':

- The possibility and the need to frame human-nature relationship as a co-constitutive relationship which goes beyond the market logic;
- The importance of ordinary budget for the local administrations of small village and of ordinary policies addressing the marginality of such territories: the contradictions of fostering local development through extra-ordinary funds and localized best practices, in fact, lies in the fact that this logic leads territories to compete among them to access funds and imply that only 'the bests' will survive, i.e., the ones who succeed to enter the market by valorising key territorial assets;
- The crucial role of the past in orienting the present and the future;

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- The aspirations towards the future as something which only take form within a collective and through the capacity to 'voice', namely the capacity to take part in its definition;
- The capacity of citizens to engage as critical educators in the present, without the necessity to be socialized or inserted in a regime of learning;
- The role of 'public pedagogues' as fostering public spaces of plurality and difference, and recognizing the right and the ability of all to take part in the definition of the future as the firsts necessary steps to searching for different and/or new ways of thinking, living, inhabiting and being, towards a 'pluriversal' future.

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PROTOCOLLO OSSERVATIVO

N.B. non è necessario osservare tutti gli aspetti elencati. Questi sono spunti di osservazione, si può anche scegliere di concentrarsi su alcuni o, se lo si guarda in più persone, ci si può dividere le prospettive di osservazione.

FASI DI OSSERVAZIONE

Nel corso dell'osservazione ci si può segnare in modo molto schematico le cose significative, poi dovrebbe seguire una riscrittura più organica che rielabori e riassuma ciò che abbiamo osservato. Infine si condivide la propria osservazione e si stilano i punti della restituzione.

Partecipanti	- Quante persone sono presenti (orientativamente)? - Interagiscono tra loro? - Come cambia il gruppo nel corso del tempo di osservazione: le persone si disperdono? Si dividono in gruppetti più piccoli? - Che emozioni prevalenti si osservano? - I gaglianesi si comportano in maniera differente rispetto a fruitori esterni? - Se sì, cosa distingue i comportamenti, da entrambi i lati?
Tematiche	- Quali sono i contenuti salienti di cui si parla nel corso della passeggiata? A quale/i tappa/e fanno riferimento? - Ci sono interventi da parte del pubblico? - Si riesce ad estrapolare qualche discorso/osservazione dei singoli dal video? **Analisi successiva:** - È possibile riassumere i contenuti emersi in pochi punti? - I punti emersi dialogano in qualche modo con quelli delle mappe?
Spazi	- Come si muovono le persone nel corso della passeggiata? - Le tappe e i percorsi definiscono/condizionano il modo in cui i partecipanti si relazionano allo spazio e al luogo?
Momenti salienti	Individuare momenti particolarmente significativi (es. mostra fotografica, discorso del sindaco, degli anziani ecc.)

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