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Second Cycle Degree (MSc) in  
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Rural development and local action groups in  
Apulia: the role of sustainable tourism

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*To Apulia, to its red soil, home of placid giants, that stretch all the way to the sea  
To the white cities, the narrow streets where old ladies sit in the silence of the afternoon  
To its people, their traditions, and their food.  
Oggne e bbène da la tèrre vène.*



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## Table of contents

Acknowledgements .....	V
Table of contents .....	1
List of figures:.....	4
List of Tables: .....	4
Acronyms .....	5
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	7
Chapter 2: Literature review.....	12
2.1 Tourist models and theories .....	12
2.1.1 Cohen Tourist roles.....	13
2.1.2 Miossec’s evolutionary theory .....	14
2.1.3 Butler model.....	16
2.2 Area classification: understanding the space to tailor suitable interventions in Italy. ..	18
2.3 EU rural development policy .....	21
2.4 Leader program and LAGs .....	27
Chapter 3: The case study: Apulia region and Valle d’Itria.....	31
3.1 The territory .....	31
3.2 Socioeconomic characteristics of the region.....	31
3.3 Historical overview of the region.....	37
3.3.1 XIX century and early XX century.....	37

3.3.2 Fascism in Apulia .....	38
3.3.3 From the end of World War II to the early 2000s .....	39
3.4 Apulia's tourism Sector: A picture.....	40
3.5 Apulia's Tourism Resources: Landscape, Festivals and Eno-gastronomic offer. ....	45
3.6 Tourism strategy, approaches, and policies in Apulia: the governance system and the tourism development plan of 2007 and 2016.....	47
3.6.1 Current governance system.....	47
3.6.2 2007-2018 plan.....	49
3.6.3 The 2016-2018 Plan: Puglia365.....	50
3.7 RDP in Apulia.....	52
3.7.1 Local Action Groups (LAGs) in Apulia: an overview .....	54
3.8 Apulian LAGs and the territory: analysing the region through LAGs.....	55
3.9 Valle d'Itria's offer and the action of LAGs and other actors.....	59
3.9.1 Food offer: Local products and Consortiums.....	61
3.9.2 Festival and events in the area.....	66
3.9.3 LAGs.....	69
Chapter 4: The interviews to some key informants .....	71
4.1 Interview structure.....	71
4.2 Opportunities and challenges of the festivals .....	72
Conclusions .....	75
References .....	78





## List of figures:

Figure 2.1 evolution of a touristic area, Source: R. Butler, 2005.....	9
Figure 2.2 Inner areas classification.....	11
Figure 2.3, Distribution of Inner areas in Italy, Source: Italian ministry of university, research, and education, 2013.....	12
Figure 3.1, 1 GDP pro capita in Apulia, Italy, North-west and the south in 2017-2018-2019 Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT, 2020.....	30
Figure 3.2 GDP Growth rate in 2018, i Apulia, Italy, the north-west and the south Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT, 2021 .....	33
Figure 3.3, Average annual income for 2018, in Apulia, Italy, Northwest and the south. Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT, 2021.....	34
Figure 3.4, Impact of underground economy on the 2018 GDP Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT, 2021 .....	35
Figure 3.5 Unemployment in 2020 Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT, 2021 .....	36
Figure 3.6, Arrivals and presences per provinces in 2018 Source: Author's elaboration on : Osservatorio Turistico Puglia,2021.....	41
Figure 3.7, Accommodation facilities in Italy and Apulia in 2019 and 2020 Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT,2021 .....	42
Figure 3.8, Hosting facilities per province in Puglia, in 2019 and 2020. Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT,2020.....	42

## List of Tables:

Table 2. 1, EARFD priorities and focus areas, source: EU Network for rural development "priorities and focus areas summary", 2021 .....	
Table 3. 1, Facilities in 2019 and 2020 per province, Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT,2021 .....	43
Table 3. 2 Apulia's tourist management organs and function.....	48

Table 3. 3Apulia’s LAGs: Land area, Total population, and population density. Source: Author’s elaboration on ISTAT 2021 .....	55
Table 3. 4, Apulia Lags with GIS distribution (wine, bread, fruit and vegetables, and oil), Accommodation facilities (hotel and extra hotels) in 2019, fund distribution, and total funds per LAG. Source: author's elaboration of ISTAT (2021).....	57
Table 3. 5Food offer in Valle d'Itria, Source: author's eaboration on Slow food database, and Mipaaf Ventunesima revisione dell'elenco dei prodotti agroalimentari tradizionali.....	61
Table 3. 6 Festivals in Valle d'Itria .....	67

## Acronyms

<b>ERDF</b>	European Regional Development Fund
<b>ESF</b>	European Social Fund
<b>GAL</b>	Local Action Groups in Italian
<b>GDP</b>	gross domestic product represents the total monetary or market
<b>ISTAT</b>	Istituto nazionale di statistica, national institute of statistics
<b>LAG</b>	Local Action Groups
<b>MD</b>	Mediterranean diet
<b>Pp</b>	Page
<b>ROP</b>	Regional Operational Programme
<b>TIR</b>	Tourist Information Offices
<b>GDP</b>	value of all the finished goods and services produced within a country’s borders in a specific period
<b>CAP</b>	Common Agricultural Policy
<b>ESI</b>	European structural and investments funds
<b>EAFRD</b>	European agricultural fund for rural development
<b>RDP</b>	Rural development programme
<b>FIPE</b>	Italian Federation Public exercises



## Chapter 1: Introduction

The aim of this dissertation is to assess rural development in the Apulia region (Southern Italy), and the way different private and public bodies contribute to the development of sustainable tourism. Among the objectives of this analysis there is as well the will to understand how much the public, both European and Italian, intervention with funds, and partnerships, can help the local communities to be independent, and in charge of the management of their own resources. This work will try to answer different questions regarding topics such as the rejuvenation of rural areas through local initiatives, and the possible positive outputs that new models of tourism, linked to traditional food products and culture, can bring to Apulia's rural areas.

The pandemics due to Covid-19 impacted the day-to-day life in ways that are still difficult to assess. Among the first matters that arose in response to the question "*how will our life change after this?*" there is tourism and the way people travel.

One of the major sectors linked to tourism is catering industry. According to the 2020 FIPE (2020) report, the trend that involved the sector was overall negative, mainly due to the pandemic, in fact the balance leans heavily on the negative: in 2020, 9.190 activities linked to the catering industry opened, however 22.250 closed, setting a negative balance of - 13.060 (FIPE,2020). Apulian activities were affected as well, with an overall number of 19.716 catering sector activities, of which 59.9% family-owned, 713 were forced to go out of business. (FIPE, 2020)

In terms of income, 2020 was the year of major losses for catering sector: € 34.569 billion were lost, corresponding to a -36% if compared to the overall sector income of 2019.

59% of Italian catering related enterprises saw their turnover decreasing by more than 50%, among them, 88.8% claim that the loss is due to covid-related restrictions, while only 31% trace it back to a decrease in tourism numbers (FIPE,2020).

Despite the financial aid provided by the national government and by the European Union (EU), 82% of those who received funds deemed them as insufficient. (FIPE,2020).

In terms of sentiment and expectations about the future, year 2021 was still perceived with pessimism, especially regarding income. However, it was the year of new expectations as well, with 57.9% of the operators in the catering industry expecting a change in consuming patterns and tourist trends. The vast majority of the persons that were interviewed by FIPE stated that they had hope for the future, and that they believed everything would be ok after the pandemic is over.

In 2020, consumers were extremely worried about their economic situation, and the first cut to their budget involved restaurants, not only because of the financial restrictions imposed by the job contraction due to the pandemic, but also due to the fear of being infected (FIPE,2020).

According to the report, Southern Italian regions were less affected by restrictions, mainly thanks to the asset of the restaurant sector, which are focused more on the day-hours (lunch time). Thus, those regions were able to minimize the impact of lockdowns and restrictions. North-eastern Italian regions, on the contrary had a sector more focused on the night life, therefore their economies suffered greatly.

Summer 2020 remarked the importance of Southern regions as attraction poles for tourist flows, and consequently the flux of consumes that these regions were able to gather during the summer (FIPE,2020). On this matter it is important to remark the change that the pandemic triggered in the tourism sector, which moved along two major axes:

- 1- There was a switch from major poles of touristic attractions, namely the big cities such as Florence, Rome, Milan; to smaller and more rural areas. In 2020 big cities (i.e., those with more than 250.000 inhabitants) attracted 24% of the overall flows, whereas in 2021, the number decreased to 17% (FIPE, 2020).
- 2- International tourist flows decreased greatly: the monthly expense of international tourist went from € 3.7 billion in 2019 to € 1.5 billion of 2020, meaning 60% less (FIPE, 2020).

According to the estimate of the FIPE report, it will take until 2023 to restore the flows back to what they used to be.

Finally, the report presents the trends to be expected, among which the most relevant involve an increased interest in local tourism and rural areas, and an increased attention by the consumers to healthy, sustainable, and local food products. (FIPE,2020)

Tourism went through a radical change, considering the difficulties that came with traveling abroad, such as quarantines, possible infections, and rising cases, many tourists decided, or in some cases were forced by the situation, to opt for local tourism. This led to two major outcomes The first one was a huge change in the type of tourists: foreign visitors largely decreased, while national travellers increased their presence.

The second major outcome was the development of several brand-new opportunities for rural areas. In fact, due to the newly arisen tourist configuration, non-mainstream tourist destinations experienced increased tourist flows and visibility.

In this case, a key role for rural tourism development can be played by local institutions, such as municipality offices and LAGs, but also by private actors, that are extremely important when

it comes to developing ideas and initiatives that can give new life to rural areas and their communities. An interesting example of initiatives that are able to rejuvenate remote areas, which are not primarily known for tourism, are festivals. Festivals can actually involve very different types of touristic flows: entertainment such as concerts, performances and art; involvement of the local population, by volunteering in different tasks of the initiative; and eno gastronomic offer, by providing local specialties to the visitors or by partnering with local producers. All these features can trigger an increased circulation of visitors and could possibly give more breath to the activities that suffered from the restrictions that came with the pandemic. When it comes to rural tourism, festivals represent a valuable tool, that, if properly used, can rejuvenate areas that would be otherwise disregarded by tourism. Clearly, in order to foster a positive development of festivals, the institutions in charge of taking care of rural areas (e.g., municipality offices and LAGs), should cooperate and nourish these initiatives, not only with financial funds, but also with ideas and logistic support.

The focus on Apulia comes from the idea of the importance of underlining how this region, with a past marked by exploitation, and too often neglected by institutions, could represent a virtuous model for sustainable tourism development, based on the valorisation of what makes the region unique: its people and their traditions.

Apulia is a place rich with contradictions, history, culture, folklore and great food and wine; those who decide to visit should be able to see all the wonders that every corner of this place can offer, in the most natural way.

Tourism in 2022 should drift away from the models of the past, that were all about transforming the touristic destination and focus more on a low-impact approach. This new asset of tourism has to be in harmony with the community and the environment of the place.

Moreover, tourism is an important tool for local communities to exit the vicious cycles of dependency from statal subsidies, to reclaim their space represents an opportunity to create a more solid and inclusive community, and subsequently more opportunities for younger generations.

The methodological framework for such an inquiry is provided by the studies on economic development of rural areas and on the importance of territorial valorisation based on traditional local food and wine products.

Following a similar approach, in this thesis are firstly presented the main economic theories on regional inequalities and economic growth, followed by a description of the socio-economic characteristics of the wine and agri-food industry. Secondly a focus is on the EU policies for rural development, supporting rural areas.

The thesis' analysis was conducted by firstly presenting the theoretical background, which includes tourist models, and theories such as Cohen tourist roles; Miossec's theory and lastly Butler model.

The section that follows presents the "'area classification'", which sets the basis for a deeper understanding of the concept of rural areas and its variegation. This part goes through the different definitions of urban poles and inner areas, in order to pinpoint the subject of the overall analysis of this thesis.

Once the area classification has been explained, the elaborate will present the development policy for rural areas in the European Union and lastly the LEADER program, which lays within the EU rural development policies.

Chapter three will present the case study of Apulia, starting with a brief description of the territory, followed by a socio-economic depiction of the region, based on the data provided by ISTAT.

The following section presents an historical overview of the region, in order to have an understanding of the peculiar nature of the area; having a clear picture of the past represent an important tool to understand the critic points of the area and to fulfil the needs of the local population.

The focus will then switch to the tourism sector, by giving data on arrivals, accommodation offer in the overall region and the impact of the tourist sector on the economy of the area. Later, Apulia's tourism resources will be presented, with the objective of presenting the rich cultural, natural, and eno-gastronomic heritage of the region.

An important section is the focus on tourism strategy in Apulia, where the two major sets of rural development plans for the region are presented, to understand how the approach to tourism evolved throughout the past fifteen years.

Section 3.7 will describe the current rural development plan in Apulia, including the way funds are allocated, the main objectives for rural areas, and the structure of the 23 LAGs of the region. Later in the analysis there will be a focus on the area between Bari and Brindisi provinces, in particular Valle d'Itria. This territory was chosen due to its peculiar richness of cultural and eno-gastronomic offer, which makes it an ideal land to implement a system of routes for sustainable and seasonally adjusted tourism. The variegated offer in terms of festivals and GIs will be described, to then proceed with the depiction of the different LAGs operating within the selected area.

In order to get to more accurate conclusions on the effectiveness of the different policies and entities acting in the area, Interviews were conducted. Three different sets of institutions were



consulted: LAGs, Consortia and Festival organizers. They were asked through a telephone interview to narrate their experience working with rural areas, but also to evaluate the impact their activities have on local communities.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

In this section, theoretical background will be presented: the analysis will start with a description of tourist models and theories, including Cohen tourist roles, Miossec theory and Butler model of a tourist area. Secondly the classification of different areas will be provided, in order to have a full understanding of the difference between urban poles and outlying areas. The following section will be composed by a description of EU's rural development plan, to show the system that provides the fundings and its objective. Once the European rural development strategy has been described, a focus on the leader program and the LAG system in general terms will be presented, with the aim of creating a clear framework to understand the proprieties and the different levels of governance involved. Finally, Apulia's rural development plan will be illustrated.

### **2.1 Tourist models and theories**

Agriculture and rural tourism share a special bond: landscape and rural environment are the core of this type of tourism and are also largely shaped by agriculture. This relationship changes over time and is not homogeneous, causing some rural areas to have a more developed touristic sector than others. Tourist models and evolutionary theories can help identifying the drivers and patterns of rural communities' development.

To understand the features of development in a specific area, it is important to define what factors contributed and the different stages of the process, therefore evolutionary theories can be considered an appropriate approach.

Literature proposes different approaches to describe the socioeconomical effects of tourism across rural areas. In particular, this section will take into consideration mainly the following models: Cohen tourist roles (1972), Miossec's evolutionary theory (1977), and Butler lifecycle model (2005).

In the 1970s, both Miossec and Butler identify a cyclical pattern in tourism development, which moves as the tourists' motivations and markets change. Evolutionary theories see tourism development as a natural change of the system.

It is useful to introduce Cohen's characterization of different tourists, as the terminology offered by the author will be useful in order to understand both Butler and Miossec's work. This will be of help to understand different tourist behaviours.

### 2.1.1 Cohen Tourist roles

Cohen states that tourism is based on a “*new and unnatural*” tendency to appreciate strange and new experiences. Humans, according to the author, are deeply linked to habits and are in general more confident with surroundings that are part of their routine, which make them feel secure. This is opposed to new surroundings and experiences, which trigger a sense of insecurity. According to the author, in a visitor’s framework, the ideal condition is met when the subjects are faced with a mixture of familiarity and novelty (Cohen, 1972).

The different combination of these two elements sets the stage for the classification of the four tourist roles:

#### 1. Organized mass-tourists

This class is the least adventurous, that relies mainly on the familiarity aspect by remaining in its environmental bubble. The organized mass-tourist tends to move in groups, and partake only in package-tours, organized by tourist agencies, which provide a fix itinerary. The mass-tourists are sceptical in terms of local food and tend to avoid a direct and prolonged exposure to the autochthonous population. This tendency leads them to spend their holiday in tourist resorts, where the exposure to local culture is filtered and controlled.

In this class the novelty is equal to zero, whereas familiarity is at its maximum

#### 2. Individual mass-tourists

This class is similar to the one explained above, what differs is that they tend to avoid the group dimension of the visit. They still rely on tourist agencies but show themselves more prone to have an active role in terms of itinerary. Here the familiarity is still very high, however the novelty element is more relevant

#### 3. Explorers

The “explorers” do not rely on tourist agencies to organize the trip, they are indeed autonomous in terms of itinerary, and look for new tracks for their experience. This class shows a greater interest in contamination with local culture, food, and tradition. The aspect of familiarity remains strong in terms of transportation and accommodation, which has to be comfortable and easy to access.

#### 4. Drifters

Here, the familiarity aspect is completely absent: “Drifters” will tend to live as locals, experiencing as much as they can the daily life of the indigenous population of the area they are visiting. This class does not have a fixed itinerary or a timetable, aiming to share shelter, food, and habits with locals. (Cohen, 1972)

### 2.1.2 Miossec's evolutionary theory

Tourism, differently from other goods and services, cannot be consumed elsewhere, meaning that it is intrinsically linked to the destination area. According to Miossec (1977), tourism is not homogeneous: it changes according to different variables such as age, profession, nationality, and income, to name the most important ones. The ensemble of these variables creates what the author defines as "Touristic budget" (Miossec 1977), each touristic budget is influenced in the choice of the destination and set of activities by two main elements: travel and accommodation costs, and the length of stay. For example, individuals with a limited revenue will travel in the neighbouring areas, for short periods of stay, in cheap accommodation facilities. On the contrary, wealthy individuals will be able to travel further away from the overcrowded destinations and to enjoy what Miossec calls "virgin territories<sup>1</sup>", for longer periods. If this set of travellers decides to stay in more touristic areas, they will be able to spend their visit in luxury accommodations.

Taking into account the two main variables for touristic budgets, the author distinguished 5 different sets of destinations:

0. Local
1. Neighbouring countries
2. Well-known attractive countries
3. New attractive countries
4. Unexplored territories/ non-Touristic areas.

These classes are not rigid, the touristic flow in these areas changes due to different aspects, for example salary in the departure centre, which is positively correlated with the flows; climate and history, if the departure centre has an historical link with the destination centre, it is more likely that the flows will be increased. Miossec (1977) refers to Cohen (1972) tourist roles and states that tourists preferring areas that have an historical link from their departure centre is mainly due to the familiarity aspect. Usually, countries that used to have colonies have major flows towards their former colonial settlements, mainly because they share, to some extent, language, and culture.

Politics are another influencing factor, which usually are negatively correlated to touristic flows in terms of instability, meaning that to an increased political instability correspond decreased tourist flows. In this case the author underlines that tourist will behave as consumers in the

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<sup>1</sup> Namely, those areas that are untouched by mass tourism.

presence of a price increase for a substitute good, for example, if the political climate in Cuba is unstable, tourist flows will redirect towards Puerto Rico (Miossec, 1977).

Miossec's model implies that tourist areas can be classified hierarchically according to the phases of touristic development that they are experiencing:

- Phase 0 (pre-touristic)

The territory is a mere passage for other destinations, and it is completely unknown by the tourists. The locals' perception of tourism is polarized; either extremely positive or extremely negative

- Phase 1

The space is still not touristic, however some 'drifters' (Cohen, 1972) start to be interested in the area, where the main attraction is the natural and untouched aspect. Tourists have a very general idea of the space, and the locals show indifference towards visitors.

- Phase 2

As tourist flows increase, the locals will start to develop an increased interest in the sector. This translates in a multiplication of receptive infrastructures. As the area becomes more adapt to host visitors, a new set of tourists will start to be interested in the area, 'The explorers' (Cohen 1972).

- Phase 3

Miossec refers to this as 'organizing phase', mainly because at this point the tourist flows have greatly increased, to the point where each area starts to organize its space by creating a specialization of the offer. This also implies 'tourist segregation', meaning that the offer will start being differentiated both economically and, in space, according to the target.

- Phase 4

The perception of the space at this point has greatly changed, it is not a natural and untouched area anymore, drifters and explorers will change destination as they see the area as 'trivial', leaving the area to mass tourism, therefore this stage is referred to as 'saturation phase'.

Phase 4 is the most critical and according to Miossec there are a few ways to stop the saturation phase:

- a 'catastrophic event', either natural or of political nature. This would eradicate touristic flows from the area, and act like a 'reset' button for touristic flows;
- public intervention to protect the area;
- creation of new tourist approaches. New tourist approaches can be efficient; however, they must involve activities that keep the dynamism of the area intact, and that value local traditions and population

### 2.1.3 Butler model

Tourist areas are not static, they change and evolve overtime. According to Butler (2005), the major factors of evolution are changes in touristic preference and in the attractions of the overall area. Butler's model is based on the 'Product cycle concept', where the number of sales for a product starts at a low pace, increases sharply in a short time to then stabilize, and decrease in the long period.

Figure 2.1 shows the hypothetical evolution phases of a touristic area according to Butler's model

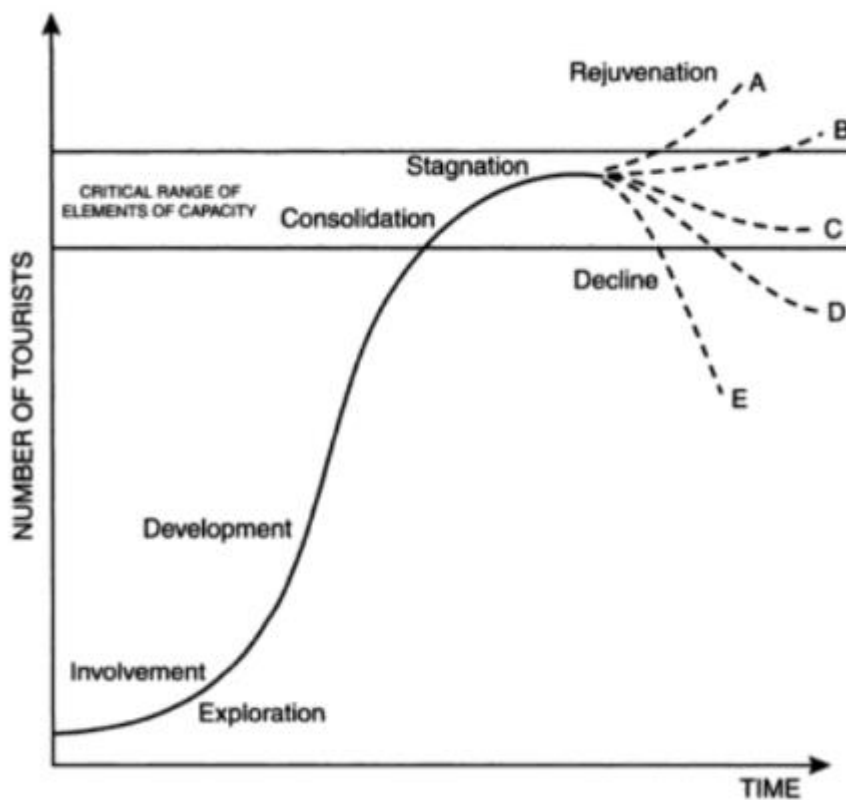


Figure 2.1 evolution of a touristic area, Source: Butler (2005)

The exploration stage sees a small number of tourists, mainly composed by explorers (Cohen, 1972). These individuals are mainly non-locals, attracted by the uniqueness of the area. In this phase the tourist facilities are scarce, and there is a high contact with the locals. During the exploration phase tourism has almost no impact on local economy.

The second stage is the involvement phase, in this moment locals start providing services targeting tourists, which have increased their numbers. As this stage develops, the area starts to be promoted by the government, by marketing operations and the development of

infrastructure. During the involvement phase, the development of a “touristic season” is to be expected (Butler, 2006).

The third stage is defined as “development phase”, and it is characterized by a well-defined tourist market area. Foreign investors are more inclined to invest in the area, expecting growing profits, this causes an increase in the touristic flows, which will be attracted by the new infrastructures and by the promotion of the area. The other side of the coin shows a decreased involvement of the locals in the sector, as well as a change in the physical appearance of the area.

The consolidation stage follows the development phase, where major franchises in the area may be found and an increased discontent of the locals.

The stagnation stage marks the moment where the carrying capacity is exceeded, the area, negatively affected by the massive flows of foreign investments, becomes an artificial attraction. Tourists perceive the destination as mainstream, causing classes such as explorers and drifters to move to different locations; simultaneously mass- tourists will start to colonize the area.

At this point there are two possible outcomes, according to Butler:

- a. Decline stage: the area is not appealing to a vast majority of tourists and becomes the destination for day trips. The decreased tourist flows cause the overall area to progressively move out of the touristic sector. Prices will decrease, allowing the local population to buy facilities and take their role in the economy back.
- b. Rejuvenation, characterized by a different approach towards the area. Rejuvenation can take place only if the attractions and the tourist flow change. In this case the key element is to take advantage of previously untapped natural resources, by fostering local private and public initiatives aimed to attract specific tourist groups. (Butler, 2006)

## **2.2 Area classification: understanding the space to tailor suitable interventions in Italy.**

In this section a description of the area classification will be provided, aiming to give tools to understand the importance of intervention and valorisation in outlying areas.

Understanding the differentiation of the space in terms of landscape, population, social dynamics, economy, and infrastructures is the first step towards a functioning development strategy.

In particular, the main reference that is adopted here is the one suggested by the National Strategy for Inner Areas. This is a tool for the national government to promote a proper development for areas that lag behind or that are isolated from urban poles.

In the national strategy for rural development (Barca et al. 2014), it is stressed the importance of three main factors:

- Healthcare
- Education
- Transportation

According to the authorities, these elements represent the most crucial aspects of the development of inner areas.

To trigger development processes, it is important to reflect on what will be the fuel that can ignite the sparkle for growth. In this scenario, tourism and food appear to be some of the main tools, especially because each inner area in Italy is able to offer different elements being landscape, cultural sites and, obviously, food. The general strategy proposed by the government has a double aim: valorisation of local resources and preservation of the rural areas, therefore it sets main focuses for sustainable development:

- Protection of land and local communities
- Natural, cultural, and sustainable tourism resources valorisation
- Local development and agri-food systems
- Local savoir-faire and craftsmanship
- Renewable energy



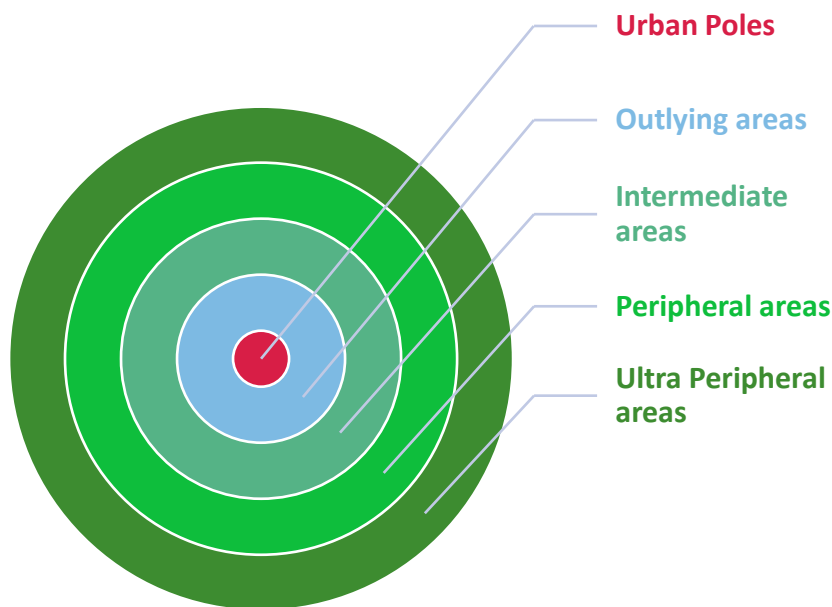


Figure 2.2 Inner areas classification, source:( Barca et al., 2014)

Figure 2.2 illustrates a classification of the geographical space according to the National strategy for inner areas, where the distance from the urban poles is one of the major discriminants. The core is represented by Urban areas, which represent relatively easily accessible conglomerates of services and infrastructures (Weeks, 2010). Urban areas are defined as such if they are able to offer a complete education cycle (from kindergarten to high school), hospitals and railways (Barca et al. 2014).

The definition of “Inner areas” includes intermediate, peripheral, and ultra-peripheral areas, and it indicates areas that are significantly distant from urban poles and crucial services<sup>2</sup> (Barca et al. 2014).

The classification of the areas starts with three major assumptions:

1. Italy is composed by a network of urban poles, that are highly differentiated and that can offer different sets of services. This makes them able to attract different people.
2. The distance of an area not only influences the quality of life, but also the level of social inclusion.

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<sup>2</sup> It is difficult to give a univocal definition of poles able to offer services: it is up to the inhabitants of the area to define what is essential; in some cases what is crucial for an area is completely useless for another. Italy constitutes a particularly difficult ground to operate a distinction on, in fact applying criteria to identify urban poles such as the number of inhabitants can create errors, insofar as some less populated poles can have a wider offer of services, in respects to other bigger poles (Ministry of University, Research and Education, 2013).

- The exchanges and relationships that can be created between urban poles and inner areas are extremely variegated (Barca et al. 2014).

Figure 2.3 shows the distribution of the different geographical spaces in Italy

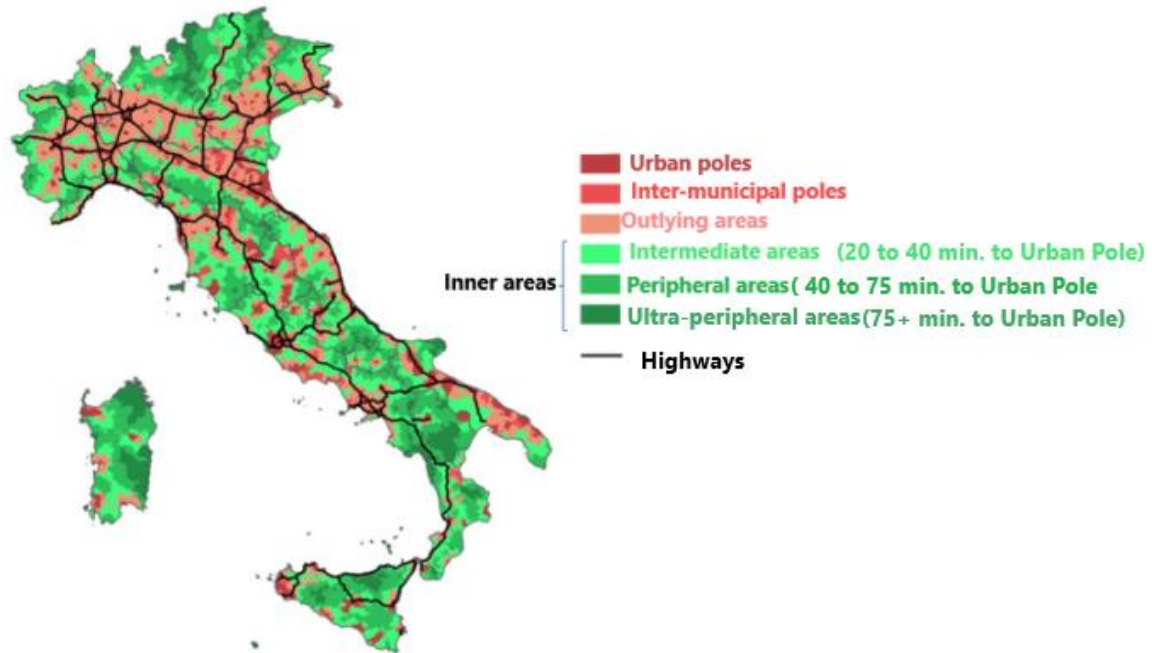


Figure 2.3, Distribution of Inner areas in Italy, Source: (Barca et al., 2014)

In terms of demographic trends, inner areas showed a significant decrease in the population in the past forty years. Urban poles are not affected by negative trends, as well as outlying areas. On the contrary, Intermediate, peripheral, and ultra-peripheral are severely touched by this phenomenon. Apulia for example, between 1971 and 2011 had an average increase in population of +3% in urban poles, which became significantly higher in outlying areas. As the distance from the closest urban pole increases, the numbers related to inner areas reached -9.5% (Barca et al. 2014). Decreased birth rates imply an older population, subsequently causing a change in land use, in fact, terrains devoted to agriculture have experienced a sharp decrease.

The economic sector in inner areas is mainly focused on the primary, which represents 73% of occupation, this percentage increases in the southern regions (Barca et al. 2014).

Inner areas imply a significant lack of essential services, preventing the inhabitants to gain access to good quality education and health services. This is crucial, because the first thing to do when it comes to rural development strategies is- as it will be addressed in the next sections- to assess the needs of the local population (Barca et al. 2014).

In this sense no top-down approach could ever work, since especially in Italy, there is no ‘‘one size fits all-policy’’, seen how differentiated the territory is, even within the same region.

### **2.3 EU rural development policy**

Market failures justify public intervention in rural areas. In the European framework, the major policies created to solve the issues linked to rurality are the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), which includes rural development policies. The main objectives are to overcome market failures and ensure the provision of public goods to rural areas. When referring to public goods, both the basic public services (health, justice, education) (OECD,2015) and those services able to stimulate development are included.

Agriculture does not represent the economical backbone of rural areas anymore (OECD, 2015): it does largely contribute to shaping the landscape; however, it represents the main source of income for less than 10% of the rural workforce. Despite this data, public resources directed towards agriculture are not aimed to trigger rural development, mainly because they are focused on specific demographics, such as farmers, rather than the area as a whole (OECD,2015).

Rural areas represent an important source of unused potential, this aspect was able to trigger three major shifts in policymaking in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries:

1. Growing focus on rural amenities such as cultural and natural patrimonies
2. An increased critical view on agricultural policies
3. More decentralized regional policies

These elements represent the basis from which the new rural paradigm has emerged (OECD, 2006).

The main characteristics of the new approach revolve around a larger focus where the rural areas are the centre of the discussion, rather than sectors; another important change is the increased investments, that in this paradigm become the main tool, setting subsidies aside.

Rural development, according to the Organization for economic co-operation and development, must be focused on four main priorities, namely: infrastructure and transportation development, public service provision in rural areas, rural amenities valorisation and promotion of rural entrepreneurship (OECD, 2016).

The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is the most important EU policy aimed to help and develop the agricultural sector, as stated before its approach greatly changed throughout the years, going from a sector-based approach with little, if no regards, for the rural areas as unique

ecosystems; to a territorial approach, able to pay more attention to the peculiarities of the different areas.

The budget for CAP comes in part from the EU budget, which sources its funds from:

- Traditional resources (custom duties on extra-EU goods and sugar taxes)
- VAT-Based (each member state must deposit a tax-based quota)
- GNI-Based (Gross National Income-based quota), which also represents the major source
- Minor revenues

These resources of the EU budget are spent according to six different headings:

1. Smart Growth (economic, social, territorial cohesion)
2. National resources management, which includes Rural Development policies and the CAP
3. Security
4. Foreign policy
5. Administration
6. Special instruments

The Common agricultural policy that is taken into consideration in this dissertation, is the one resulted after the reforms of Agenda 2000, that established two pillars on which the Agricultural policies were based: market policies (i.e., Pillar One) and rural development policies (i.e., Pillar Two).

The financial resources for rural development come from the European structural and investment funds (ESI), which represent more than half of the overall European funds (EU Commission, 2021). The ESI funds are a set of structural funds, focusing on 5 major sectors:

- Research and innovation
- Digital technologies
- Supporting low-carbon economy
- Sustainable management of natural resources
- Small businesses

One of the five ESI funds is the European agricultural fund for rural development (EAFRD), which supports the Pillar Two of the CAP, hence focusing on solving the challenges presented by rural areas (EU council, 2021).

The Rural Development Policy (RDP) as the Pillar Two of the CAP is not a centralized policy: each member state implements its own rural development programme, which is a set of documents defining the needs of the rural population in different areas; and the strategies to

follow. Central governments can decide to delegate the elaboration of the plans to subnational actors, namely the regions. In the case of Italy, there are 23 rural development plans.

The different RDPs are co-funded by the national governments, regional authorities, and Europe, which contributes through the EAFRD.

When defining the RDP, each regional authority must select up to three among the six priorities of the EAFRD, which are themselves divided into eighteen focus areas. In the table below are illustrated the six priorities and the eighteen focus areas.

This division assures a greater autonomy to the regions, moreover it favours a more precise action.

Table 2.1 EAFRD priorities and focus areas, source: EU Network for rural development "priorities and focus areas summary", 2021

EAFRD priority	Focus area
1. Knowledge Transfer and Innovation	<p>1.a fostering innovation, cooperation, and the development of the knowledge base in rural areas</p> <p>1.b: strengthening the links between agriculture, food production and forestry and research and innovation</p> <p>1.c: fostering lifelong learning and vocational training in the agricultural and forestry sectors.</p>
2. Farm Viability and Competitiveness	<p>2.a improving the economic performance of all farms and facilitating farm restructuring and modernisation</p> <p>2.b facilitating the entry of adequately skilled farmers into the agricultural sector and generational renewal</p>
3. Food Chain Organisation and Risk Management	<p>3.a improving competitiveness of primary producers by better integrating them into the agri-food chain.</p> <p>3.b: supporting farm risk prevention and management</p>
4. Restoring, Preserving and Enhancing Ecosystems	<p>4.a restoring, preserving and enhancing biodiversity</p> <p>4.b improving water management</p> <p>4.c preventing soil erosion and improving soil management.</p>
5. Resource-efficient, Climate-resilient Economy	<p>5.a: increasing efficiency in water use by agriculture.</p> <p>5.b: increasing efficiency in energy use in agriculture and food processing</p> <p>5.c: facilitating the supply and use of renewable sources of energy.</p> <p>5d: reducing greenhouse gas and ammonia emissions from agriculture.</p> <p>5.e: fostering carbon conservation and sequestration in agriculture and forestry</p>
6. Social Inclusion and Economic Development	<p>6.a: facilitating diversification, creation, and development of small enterprises, as well as job creation.</p> <p>6.b: fostering local development in rural areas.</p> <p>6.c: enhancing the accessibility, use and quality of information and communication technologies in rural areas</p>

Once the proprieties and the focus areas have been established, the funds can be accessed: the budget is allocated into different Measures or intervention areas, whose aim is to achieve the priority goals. There are many different measures, such as M01, financing knowledge transfer, M02 which funds advisory services. Among all these intervention areas the one that will be analysed in the further section is M19, which represents the fund for the LEADER<sup>3</sup>programme. The amount to be destined to every measure is defined according to a seven-year programming period. In this elaborate, the importance of priority six (Social Inclusion and Economic Development) will be underlined many times, mainly because it is the central priority for Apulia's RDP.

The process of creating a rural development plan for a region is articulated.

The first thing to be done is to assess the regional situation, by analysing the context of the area, which must be done using the context indicators given by the EU in the monitoring section of CAP 2014-2020 (EU commission, 2019); the region has to understand the needs as well. Priorities and focus areas are the key tool to put what is required into a framework; at last, there is the strategy definition, where the measures are planned and included into the RDP.

The co-funding rate of EAFRD is diversified, according to the type of region:

In 2014 Italy was divided into three major areas based on the average GDP per person (Figure 2.4): high-development regions (dark blue), which includes mostly northern regions; transitioning regions (light blue); and underdeveloped regions (white), with a GDP per person lower than 75%, which is the EU average (Eurostat, 2021).

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<sup>3</sup> Liason entre actions de développement rural.



- Figure 2.4, Classification of the Italian peninsula based on development level. Source: Italian ministry of economy and finances, 2014, available at: [https://www.rgs.mef.gov.it/VERSIONE1/e\\_government/amministrazioni\\_pubbliche/igrue/Attivita/Monitoraggio/programmi\\_strutturali/pormeno/index.html?Prov=ATTIVITA](https://www.rgs.mef.gov.it/VERSIONE1/e_government/amministrazioni_pubbliche/igrue/Attivita/Monitoraggio/programmi_strutturali/pormeno/index.html?Prov=ATTIVITA)

Each region receives different amount of EAFRD funds, according to its classification: in the case of developed regions, 43.1% is the contribution of EAFRD, for transitioning regions it contributes with 48% and less developed regions receive 60.5%. It would be profitable to compare two regions: on one hand Abruzzo, a transitioning region, that receives € 275.509.780, to be divided in roughly 3 major axes of objectives: sustainability, cohesive development, and technological innovation (Regione Abruzzo, 2015).

On the other hand, an underdeveloped region, in this case study, Apulia, has been provided € 4.450.600, the majority of these comes from European funds, and less than one million euros is directly given by the Italian government (Ministry of Economy and finances 2021).



## 2.4 Leader program and LAGs

The LEADER program '*Liaison Entrée Actions de Développement de là Economie Rural*' is defined as a "bottom-up approach" (EU network for rural development, 2021), therefore its core principle is to foster endogenous development.

The program is implemented differently in each member state, underneath the Rural Development Plans, for example Italy allocates 1.97 million to this programme.

Through this approach it is possible to trigger development patterns based on locally available resources, allowing rural areas to flourish (Long; Van der Ploeg, 1994).

Endogenous development can be achieved by mobilizing local actors, both public and private; and by favouring a reactive and cohesive social fabric.

Bottom-up approaches such as LEADER, should focus on different aspects, for example creating a strategic development plan, that takes into account as much as possible all the direct and indirect factors that affect the area, moreover a collective governance should be favoured, involving all the actors from the national level to the local entities, which have to cover a greater role.

One option to develop efficient policies in rural areas is to apply niche policies, focused on specific areas. LEADER program represents therefore a valuable and efficient option to be implemented.

First introduced in the 1980s, it represented a new element in the rural development panorama, mainly because it stressed the importance of two main issues: a bottom-up approach (the general view of RDP used to be mainly top-bottom) and area-focused policy development. These two elements had to encourage the inhabitants of rural areas to be the architects of the future of their own land (EU commission, 2006). The LEADER program focuses on seven key principles:

- Area- based local development strategies
- Networking
- Cooperation
- Innovation
- Integrated and multisectoral actions
- Local public-private partnerships: Local Action Groups (LAGs)
- Bottom-up elaboration and implementation of strategies

LEADER implies a multi-level governance system. In particular, Figure 2.2 shows a schematic view of all the actors involved

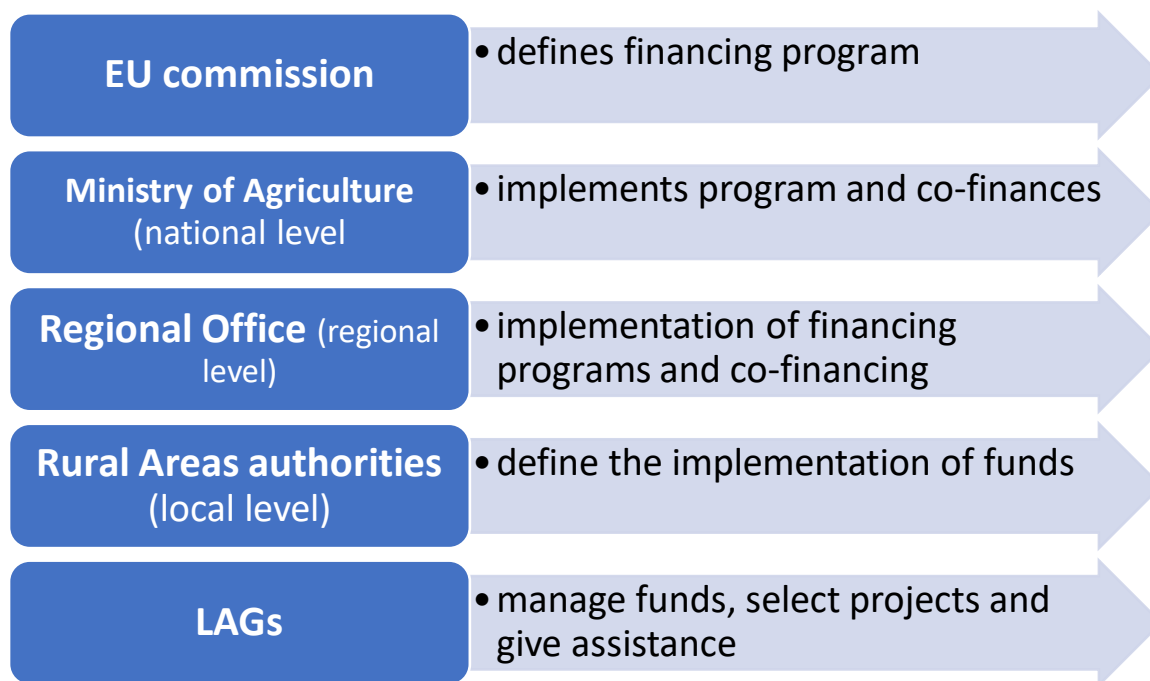


Figure 2.5 multi-level tier governance system of LEADER program

LEADER is based on territorial and community development, which shall be favoured by partnerships between public and private actors: LAGs represent one of the key features of the program (EU commission, 2006), and are aimed to create cooperation between different entities in rural areas (National Rural Network,2016). LAGs' Jurisdiction is stated in Reg. (CE) n. 1698/2005, Art. 62, which affirms that LAGs are responsible for the promotion of an integrated development strategy for rural areas (art 62.1a), must be able to implement the development strategy efficiently (art.62.1 c) and that LAGs are in charge of selecting the initiatives to be funded (art. 62.4) (Reg. (CE) n. 1698/2005).

In general, LAGs are open to individuals and representatives of associations and businesses within the LAG area.

In terms of governance structure, once the national laws are satisfied, the LAGs can organize themselves autonomously, according to their constitution. Some have a very direct decision-making process, some others, like in the Apulian case have a more intricate system, composed by boards, committees, and assemblies (EU network for rural development,2020).

In the elaboration of their strategy, LAGs must choose up to three thematic sectors among the following:

- Development and innovation of fliers and local production systems
- Development of green energy's filière
- Sustainable tourism
- Landscape, soil and biodiversity preservation and protection

- Valorisation and management of natural resources
- Valorisation of cultural heritage and artistic patrimony linked to the territory
- Access to essential public transportation
- Social inclusion of marginalized groups
- Urban requalification, with the creation of inclusive spaces for the community
- Building strong networks within the community

In the EU, there are 2.800 LAGs, Italy has 205 in the national territory, where Apulia has 23 LAGs operating. In Italy, 74% of the total municipalities are included by different LAGs, of these 95% are mountain areas, 78% are very small (up to 5000 inhabitants) and 63% are situated in inner areas (Rete rurale nazionale, 2016).

Figure 2.6 sums up the institutional structure surrounding LAGs and LEADER program.

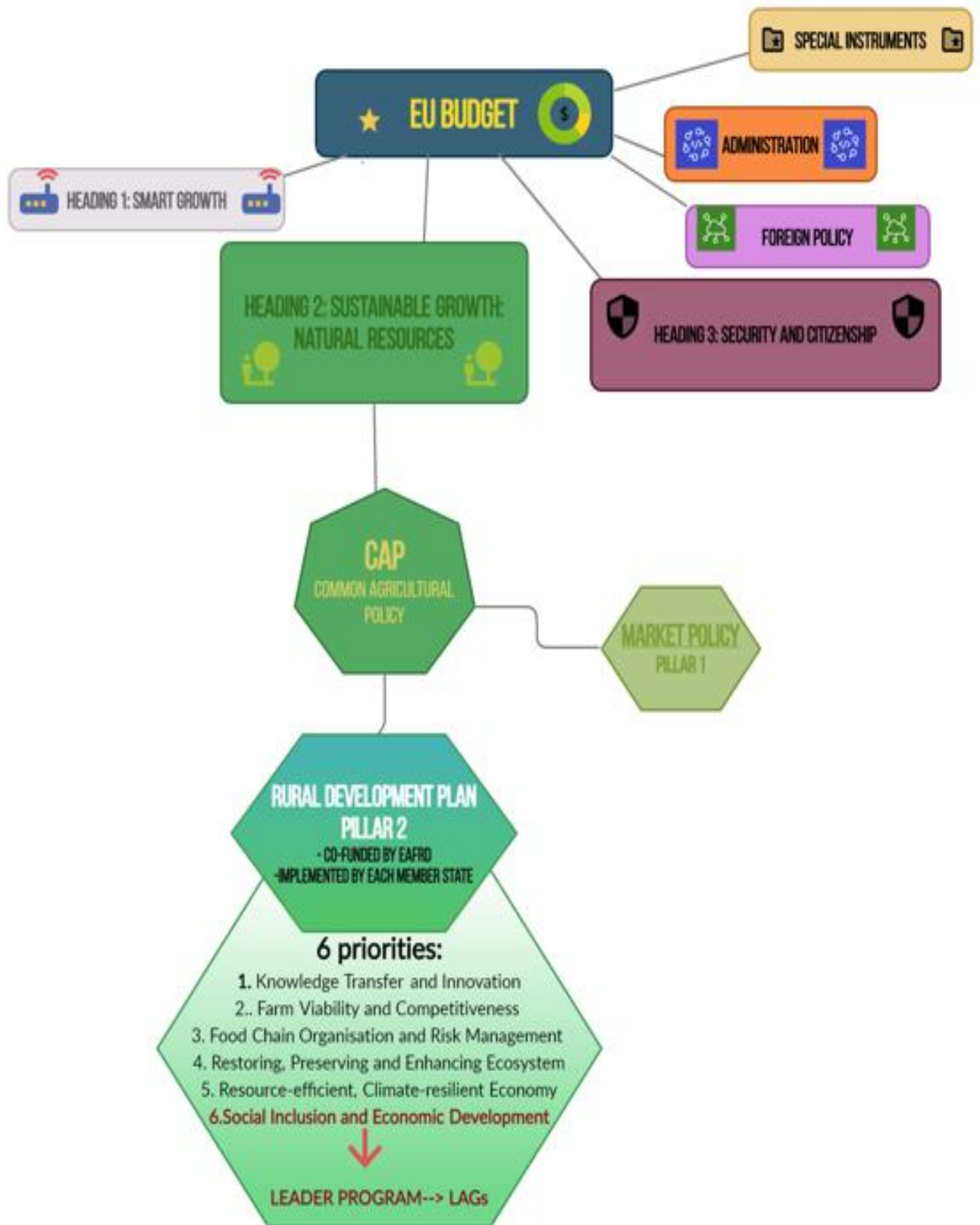


Figure 2.6: structure of Eu Funding and RDP. Source: Author's elaboration

### **Chapter 3: The case study: Apulia region and Valle d'Itria**

In this chapter, Apulia region will be presented by describing the territory, the socioeconomic and the demographic data. Subsequently the historical background of the region will be described, in order to understand the roots of the area

Later in this thesis, the overall tourist offer, and strategy will be presented, followed by a more detailed focus on the LAG system.

Finally, Valle d'Itria will be proposed as a focus area to test LAG's action and effectiveness, through data analysis and interviews.

#### **3.1 The territory**

Apulia is situated in southeast Italy and has a surface area of 19 363 km<sup>2</sup> ; the landscape is partly flat and partly hilly. It has the longest coastline of any Italian region, and borders on the Adriatic Sea to the east, the Ionian Sea to the south, and the neighbouring regions of Molise to the north, Basilicata, and Campania to the west. The region has 3,926,931 (ISTAT,2021) inhabitants and its population density of 201 per km<sup>2</sup> (ISTAT,2021) makes it the 6th most densely populated region of Italy.

The region is divided into 6 provinces: Foggia, Barletta-Andria-Trani (BAT), Bari, Taranto, Brindisi, Lecce, and it has a total of 257 municipalities (ISTAT,2021).

#### **3.2 Socioeconomic characteristics of the region**

To get an understanding of the area, it is important to give some data in terms of occupation, GDP, growth rate and income, as one will observe further on in the thesis, deeply influence the demographics of the region.

Great levels of unemployment, especially among young people, alongside with the other indicators to be found in this section, create an unsuitable environment, able to deeply impact the demographics of the region. Based on this correlation, in this section, the socioeconomic data will be presented before the demographic data.

The region will be put into perspective with the national level, The north-west which is the most developed area of the country, and the south.

According to the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT), Apulia can be classified as a less-developed region. Its GDP levels lie below the national average, as seen in Figure 3.1 and 3.2.

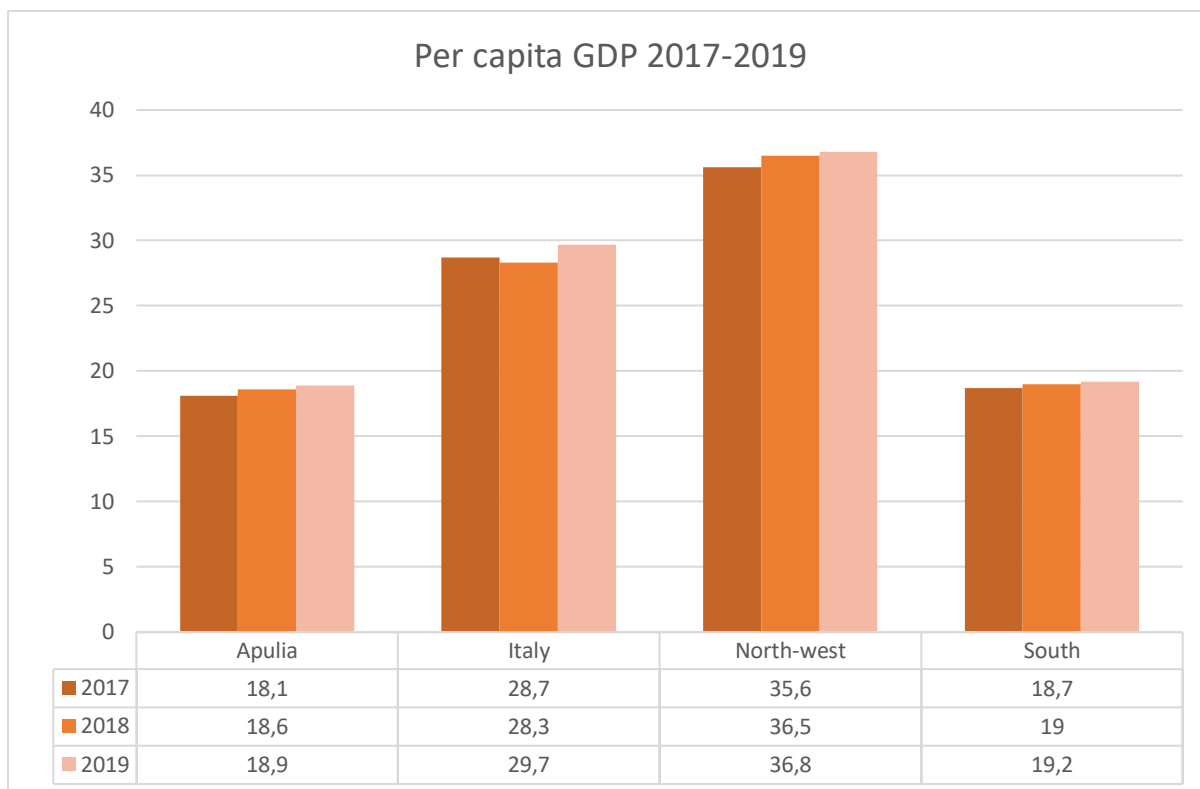


Figure 3.1 GDP pro capita in Apulia, Italy, North-west and the south in 2017-2018-2019 Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT, 2021

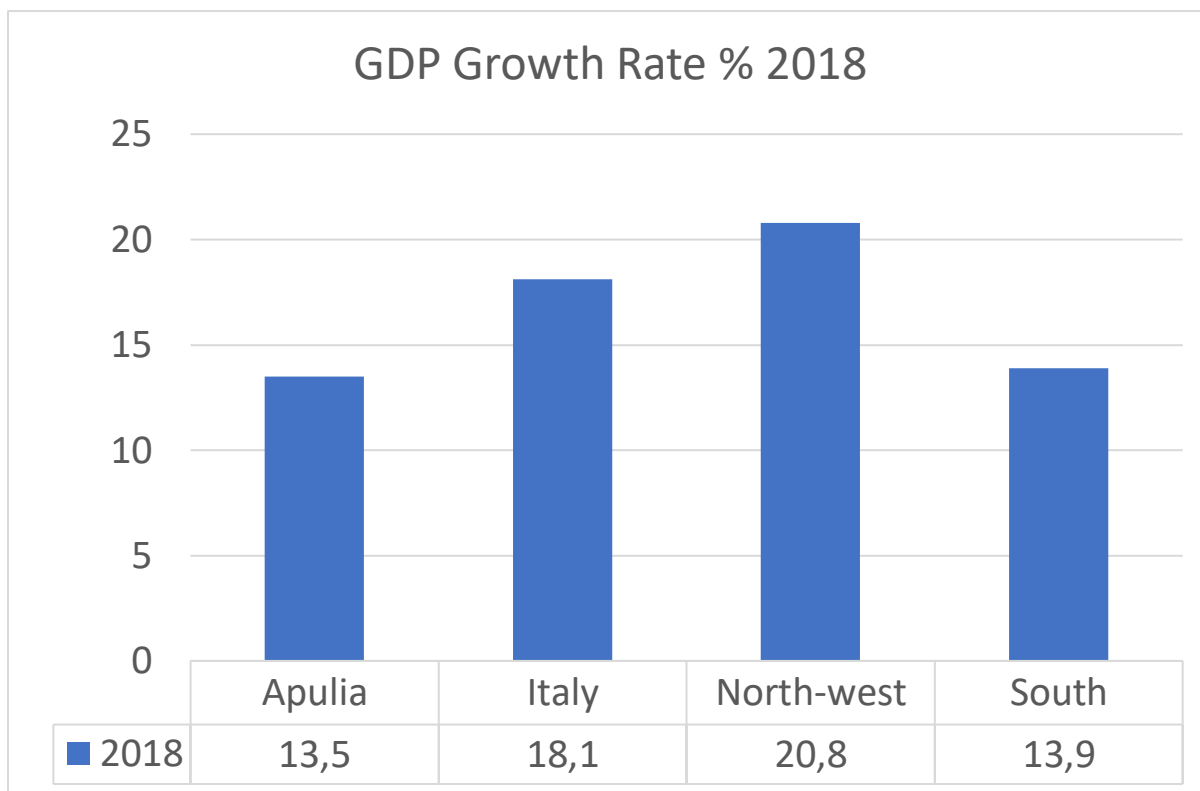


Figure 3.1 GDP Growth rate in 2018, i Apulia, Italy, the north-west and the south Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT, 2021

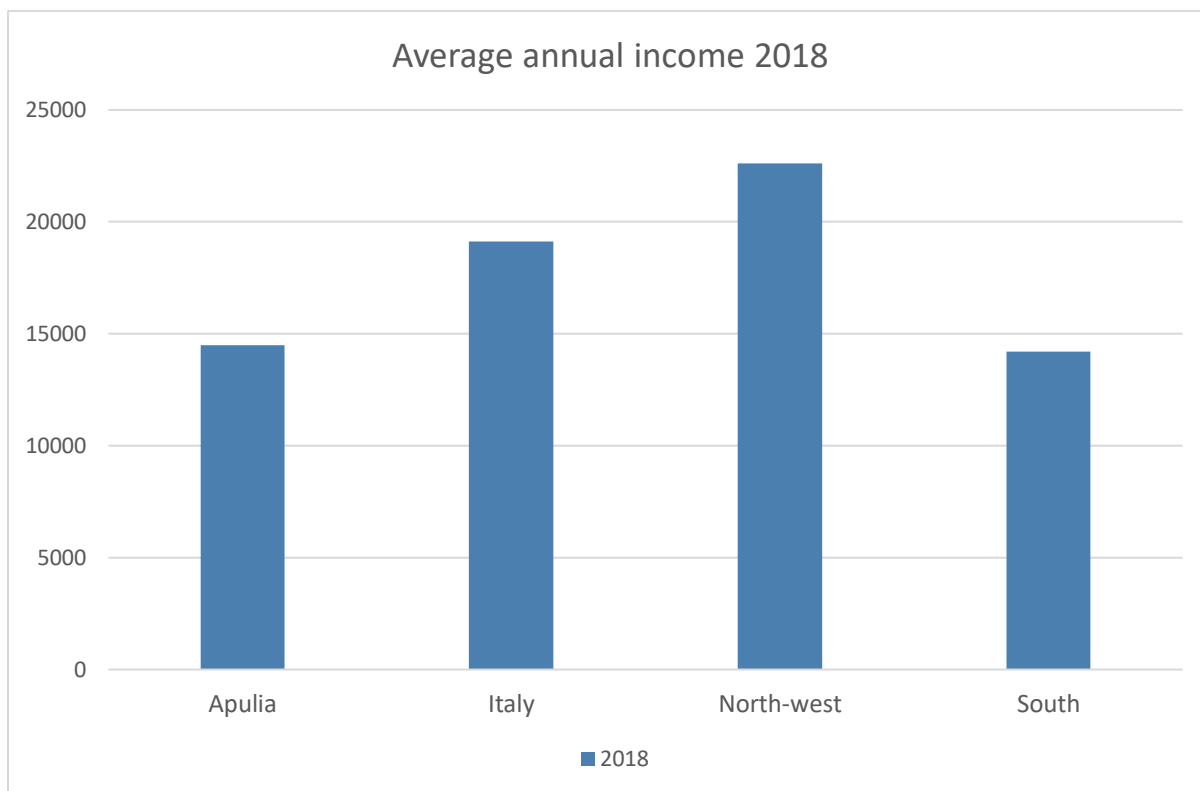


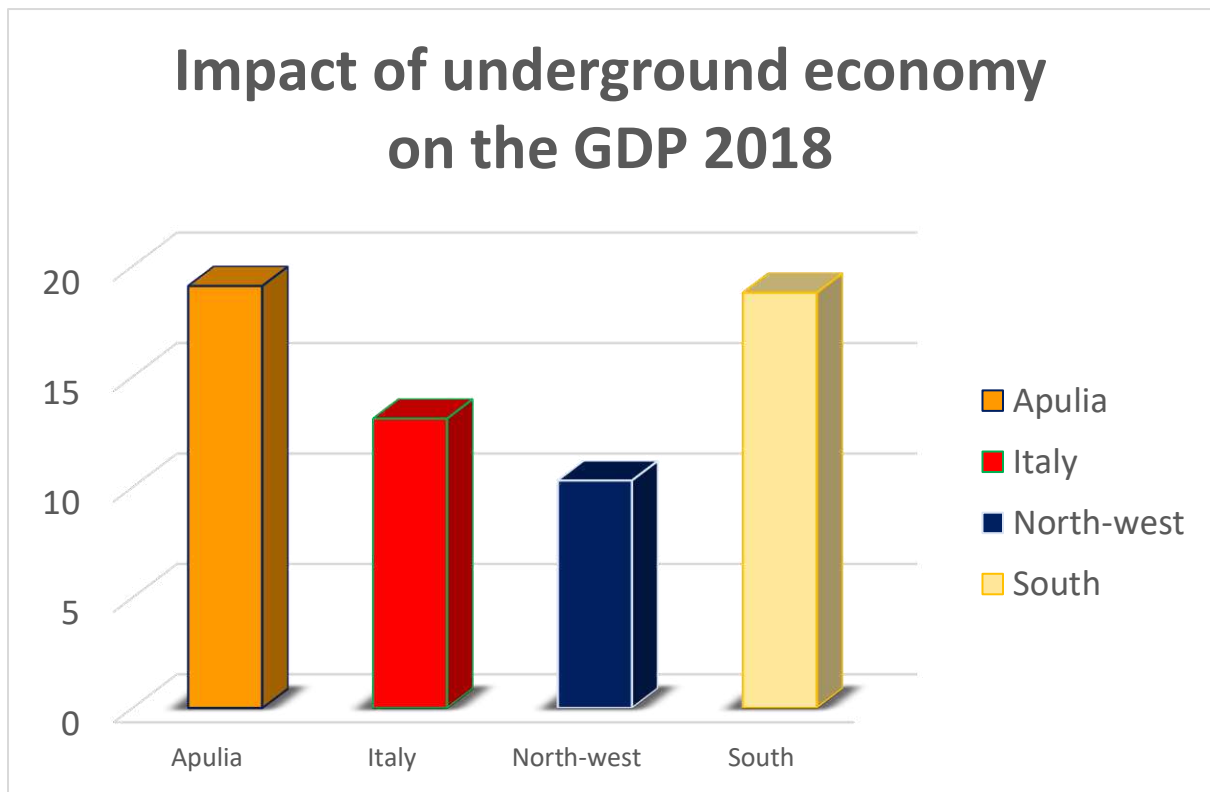
Figure 3.2, Average annual income for 2018, in Apulia, Italy, Northwest and the south. Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT, 2021

The region has been consistently under the national average annual income, and it appears also to be under the average values of the southern regions with GDP levels as low as 18.6 points against the 19 of the south average, as table 3.1 shows. This depicts a particularly worrying situation, seen that the ‘‘Mezzogiorno’’<sup>4</sup> region has always been characterized by a slower development rate and GDP levels (Lepore, 2020).

Comparing Apulia with north-west Italy -which represents one of the most developed areas of the nation- the difference results in an even more visible factor: the growth rate is 20.8% in the North-west, whereas Apulia can barely reach the southern average with a mere 13,5%.

<sup>4</sup> Mezzogiorno is a term used in the Italian language to refer to the Southern regions of Italy including Abruzzo, Molise, Apulia, Basilicata, Calabria, Sicily, Campania and Sardinia.





*Figure 3.3, Impact of underground economy on the 2018 GDP Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT, 2021*

Another interesting piece of information can be sourced by looking at Figure 3.4, which shows the impact of the underground economy on the GDP, again, comparing the data from north-west Italy and Apulia underlines the difference between a developed area with high income, numerous investments, tourism, and a region in desperate need of reforms, such as Apulia. The region alone exceeds the average of the south, and not for the better.

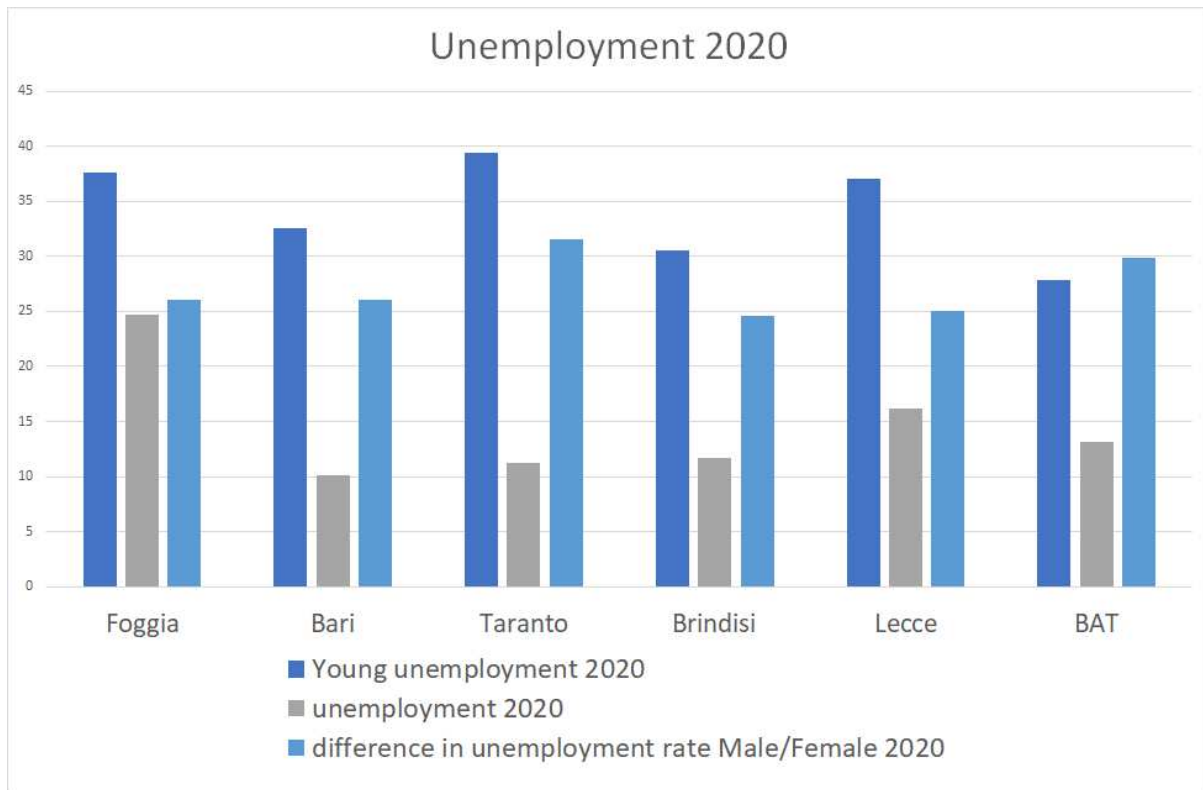


Figure 3.4 Unemployment in 2020 Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT, 2021

If the average unemployment rate in Italy is around 9.2% (ISTAT, 2021), Apulia has a major unemployment problem: the regional unemployment rate is 12.4%, with the young unemployment rate reaching peaks of almost 40% in the province of Taranto.

The general unemployment rate is slightly better in areas such as Bari province, nevertheless there are some alarming situations, such as the one in Foggia province, that lays 16 points above the national average unemployment rate.

The SVIMEZ<sup>5</sup> report of 2018 gives a very serious depiction of the demographic trends: in 2065 the population in Apulia is expected to decrease by one million people (SVIMEZ 2018), this phenomenon will also be strongly linked to the loss of young people, especially with high education levels. According to the SVIMEZ report, in 2017 19,700 graduates left the region and never came back. Phenomena like these set a dangerous trend in terms of regional growth: young graduates, and in general younger generations, represent the strength that can tear down and rebuild a dilapidated system, without them these areas are doomed to become nothing but a desert.

<sup>5</sup> SVIMEZ (Associazione per lo sviluppo dell'Industria nel Mezzogiorno) is a non lucrative association that aims to study the mezzogiorno regions, in order to promote innovative development strategies.

### 3.3 Historical overview of the region

To fully comprehend the dynamics of the area and the impact tourism has had throughout the years, it is very important to give the reader an historical overview of the region.

#### 3.3.1 XIX century and early XX century

In the second half of the XIX century, only 1.7% of the Apulian population was employed in the tertiary sector, while today, the tourist sector alone accounts for 15% of the total employed population. In the same period, 31.7% of the inhabitants were working in agriculture (mainly farmers) and 44.7% were unemployed (Assante,1974). Those data can give the reader an idea on the extent of the situation of the region. In this scenario a major role was played by the mutual aid societies, which acted as a support network and favoured emancipation for the grass-root classes, by 1904 these meeting points were 109 in the whole Apulian territory (Macina,2010).

By the end of the century, the agricultural sector had a major crisis, which was followed by a complete absence of the relatively young Italian government. This institutional vacuum gave more space to the landowners to gain increased autonomy and power over the population.

It is at this point that the divide between city and countryside starts to become more and more noticeable: Bari was the major pole in the region and a considerable amount of investments were made in the city, which, however, was in the middle of an infrastructural desert (Di Ciommo,1984).

All the other provinces and important cities such Foggia, Taranto, Brindisi, and Lecce were left behind. Lecce was especially backwatered; according to the literature, this was due to an active resistance to the higher class in Bari, which had no intention to give up its primacy in the region (Denitto 1922). The city of Taranto on the other hand, was mainly focused on becoming a heavy metallurgic industry pole.

Despite the difficult situation of Apulia, it was clear that the region had an immense unexpressed potential, this is underlined in the works of the philosopher Garrin, which describes the region as a land rich in tradition and resources, with a resilient population, that only awaits the chance to express all it has to offer.

Apulia had many problems that persist to this day, such as the plague of the ‘*Capuanta*’<sup>6</sup>, a phenomenon of illegal intermediation and exploitation of workers in the- agricultural sector.

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<sup>6</sup> In Italian, Caporalato

At the time it was mainly linked to the figure of the ‘‘*Olivare*’’, the women in charge of harvesting olives, today it is based on the exploitation of irregular migrants.

Another phenomenon that deeply influenced the past of Apulia is *Brigantaggio*<sup>7</sup>, which consisted in the activity of organized crime. This, however, shall not be regarded with a Hobbesian point of view on the evil nature of men: brigandage in the Mezzogiorno is the result of a deep discomfort of the population. Lucarelli (1968) underlines how in the mid XIX century this phenomenon was extremely common in the region. On this, the contribution of Massari can be of great help, by underlining how the roots of brigandage are to be located in the extremely poor living conditions of the farmers in the area, according to the author, in the 1800s the life of the criminal was more appealing than the one of a peasant (Massari 1863).

After the first world war, the situation got worse in the region, and the development of the fascist movement accentuated the already critical conditions of the area.

### **3.3.2 Fascism in Apulia**

Fascism had its way of developing in the social tissue: this organization grew alongside the strongest institutions, in order to lay on already solid ground. In the case of Apulia, fascism was intertwined with the agricultural societies, which were mainly composed of landowners.

The fascist movement in Apulia was also able to rely on the ‘‘*Mazzieri*’’, the armed wing of the agricultural ruling class, which eventually became what will be known as fascist squads.

In the elections of 1921 Apulia officially fell under the control of the fascists, before the infamous march on Rome (1922), which will mark the fascist totalitarian era.

This period represents one of Apulia’s rock bottoms: according to di Vittorio fascism scuttled especially the farmers, which represented the fragile backbone of the region (Di Vittorio 1972).

The damages caused in this historical moment reflected not only on the working classes but on cities as well: due to the poor economic and infrastructural plan’s management fascism was able to weaken both the industrial and agricultural sector (Macina,2010).

During the second post-war period the economic situation was not showing any advancements: in terms of the first sector, agriculture was still linked to the *Latifundia* system, which placed the region 100 years back in respects to the rest of the nation.

The industrial sector in the sixties was mainly focused on massive industrialization. The aim in these years was to create what was called the ‘‘industry triangle’’ of Brindisi, Taranto, and Bari.

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<sup>7</sup> Brigandage

### 3.3.3 From the end of World War II to the early 2000s

The 1960s represent a time of reckless building of huge industries, which were unable to maintain themselves without a state intervention. Assistentialism was and remains a critical issue for the region, as well as a development that does not have a holistic vision, the literature describes the approach of the time as “wanting everything and wanting it immediately”.

The tertiary sector had an important growth between 1962 and 1971, the primary problem is that it was not able to absorb the important mass of unemployed people, being *de facto* inefficient for the long-term development. In this very moment a subtle phenomenon takes place, that will be crucial for the future of the region: the agricultural elites that used to detain all the power and authority found themselves in need of changing their position, so they switched from an agricultural elite to a statal bourgeoisie (Deiana,1979). What matter then, was not the amount of land owned, but overseeing the redistribution of government’s funds.

This passage is crucial to understand two key concepts: firstly, the role of bureaucracy and its issues, secondly the importance to have a responsible development that must be strictly checked by different entities. Public and private actors could represent both the salvation and the despair of the area, according to the capacity of breaking the vicious circle of assistentialism and fraudulent administration of the funds.

The timespan going from 1952 to 1971 represents, according to some scholars, the golden era of the southern regions of Italy. This is partly true; in fact, it is during those twenty years that the fund for the Mezzogiorno was instituted. The overall area had a growth of 4.2%, whereas the northern regions were at 3.2% (Lepore,2020). This growth, however, experienced a sudden arrest in 1973 with the OPEC crisis and a changed international panorama.

These are only two major destabilizing events that led to a phase of poor political choices, causing a major depression in the area, which at the time had just started to be more stable (Sapelli,1997). The crisis settled a negative trend for the area, in 1992 the GDP was 55,3% less than the northern regions (Bianchi et al., 2011).

The backwardness of the Mezzogiorno kept being an issue, and the excessive assistentialism of the central government, which, in a nutshell, aimed to allocate funds without a real plan, created tension within the Italian population, leading to the establishment of extremist parties such as Lega Nord, which is the by-product of the general feeling in the north that the southern regions were just “a weight” for the economy.

The general feeling of anger and disappointment led the government to adopt a policy of complete silence on the southern territory's problematics (Colarizi et al., 2004).

The trend started to slightly change for the better in 2005, with the election of Nichi Vendola as regional governor. From the first days of his mandate, it appears clear that Culture will be the leading issue in the future development of the region.

Thanks to different measures involving many actors, both private and public, the region was able to rehabilitate its image (Bonomi,2015).

### **3.4 Apulia's tourism Sector: A picture**

Today, Apulia is the eight most visited region in Italy (Osservatorio turistico Puglia, 2021). This ranking is led by Tuscany and Veneto, which have an established touristic sector, however, Apulia has been following a positive growing trend for over 12 years: in June 2019 the arrivals were +45% more than in 2019 (Osservatorio turistico Regione Puglia, 2021).

The tourism sector in Apulia is the main source of income for 135,000 people, i.e., 15.4% of the total employed. Around 52.000 companies work within the tourism sector, which is around 38% of the overall number (Banca d'Italia,2019).

The tourist sector has therefore a huge impact on the overall economy of the region, its value in 2019 was around € 9 billion (Osservatorio turistico Regione Puglia, 2021).

It is important to observe the data available regarding the actual capacity of the region to host the increasing flows of tourists.

This section will analyse the arrivals in the region, the accommodation facilities, the different types of tourists according to previous research and the average period of stay.

According to the regional tourism observatory of Apulia, in 2019 there was an increment of 5,2% in arrivals: 4.2Million arrivals more than 2018.

The international arrivals increased by 11,2% with a total number of 1.2 million international visitors. About the local tourists, the growth was barely noticeable, with a mere 0.1% increase in respects to 2018, this however must be put into perspective with the total number of national visitors, which in 2020 was 11 million.

Between 2015 and 2019 the international influx grew by 60%, moreover the overnight stays grew by 44%. In this regard, the internationalisation rate rose by 7 points compared to 2015, indicating a growing interest of international tourists towards the region.

The total arrivals, including both Italian tourists and international visitors, had a 23% increase, on the same positive trend, the lodgings augmented by 15% (Osservatorio turistico Puglia, 2021).

The average stay in the region is 3.7 nights, which is aligned with the national average of 3.5 (ISTAT, 2020).

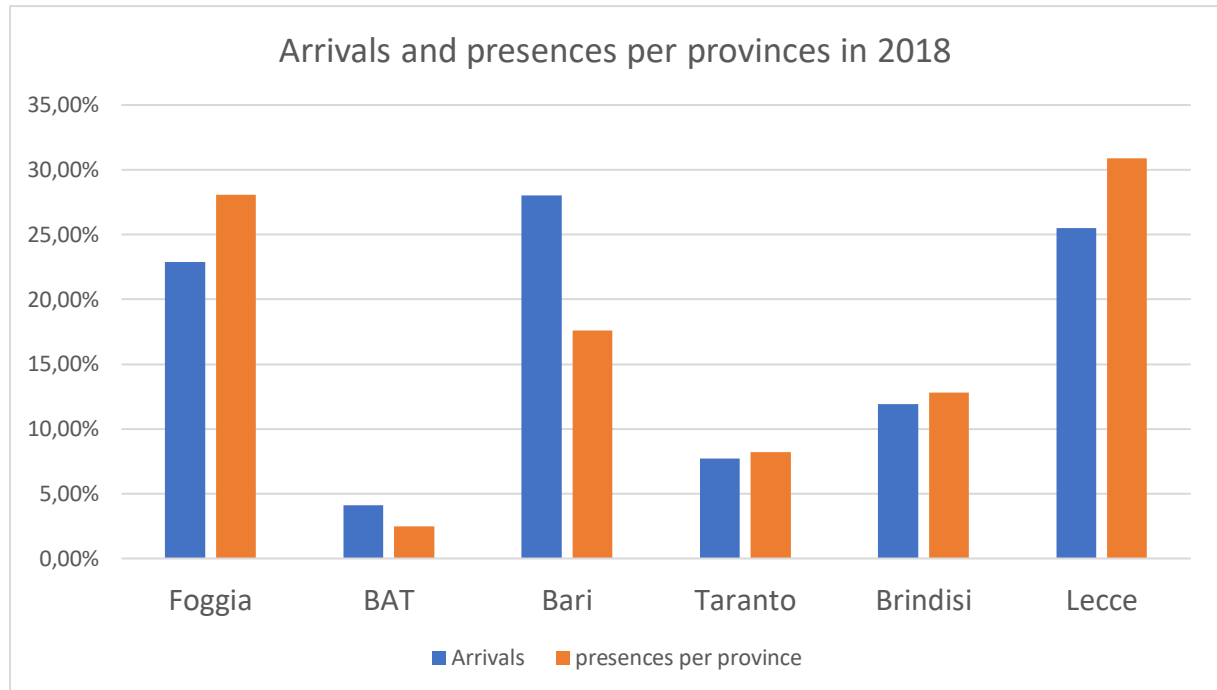


Figure 3.5, Arrivals and presences per provinces in 2018 Source: Author's elaboration on : Osservatorio Turistico Puglia, 2021

As shown in Figure 3.6, Foggia and Lecce represent the two major poles in the region, with percentages of 28% and 31% of presences, however, Bari remains the one with most arrivals, 28%. This indicates that while Bari province does benefit from the transit of tourists, BAT, Taranto and Brindisi are relatively neglected by the tourist flows.

According to the report presented by The Apulia Regional tourism observatory, the number of facilities did not really change throughout the years, with an increase of 3% from 2015 to 2019; what is rapidly increasing is the number of structures that differs from the traditional hotels, for example online platforms for vacation houses such as Airbnb (Banca d'Italia, 2019). In 2019, they were 46% more than in 2015. In this framework the report of the regional observatory presents some unsurprising data: Foggia and Lecce are the provinces with the highest rate of accommodation facilities, respectively 36% and 32%.

The total number of accommodation facilities in Italy in 2019 was 32.730, for a total of 2.260.490 beds, with a negative variation from 2019-2020 around 1.5%. Out of the total accommodation facilities number, Apulia represents 27%.

In the region, between 2019 and 2020, there has been a positive variation of 9% more facilities, with an average of 32 bedding accommodations per building in 2020 (ISTAT,2020).

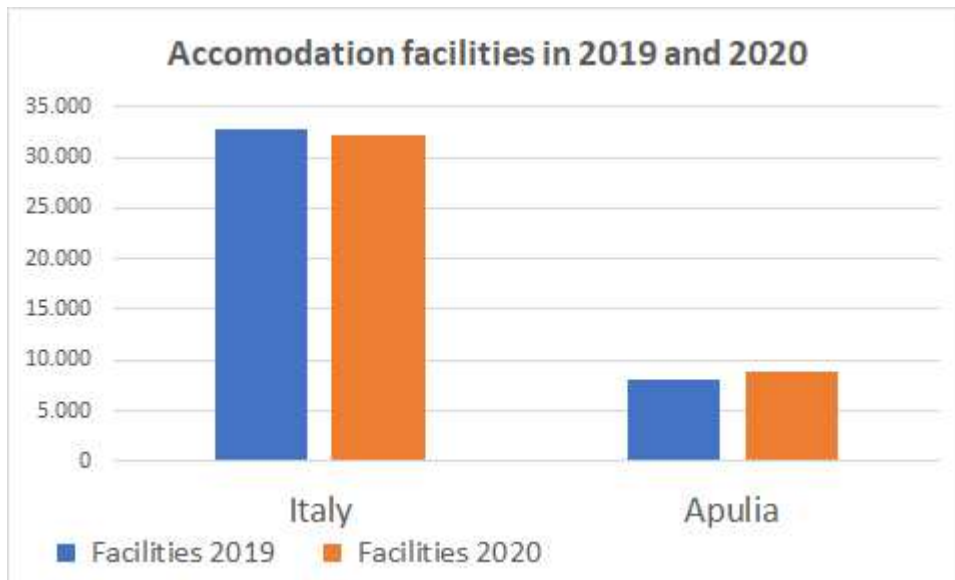


Figure 3.6, Accommodation facilities in Italy and Apulia in 2019 and 2020 Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT,2021

It is possible to observe the situation in more details by looking at the province data:

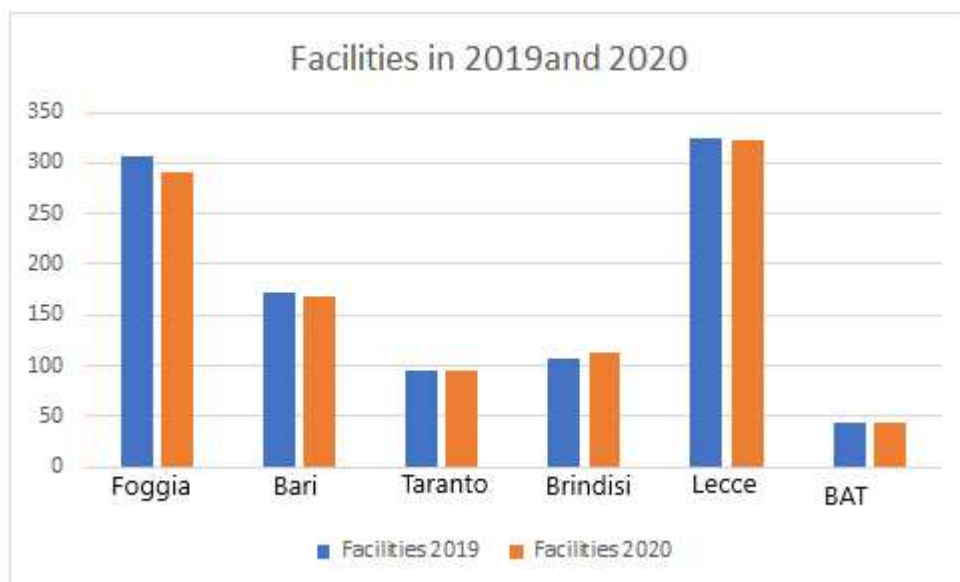


Figure 3.7, Hosting facilities per province in Puglia, in 2019 and 2020. Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT,2020



Table 3. 1, Facilities in 2019 and 2020 per province, Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT,2021

PROVINCE	Facilities 2019	Facilities 2020	Variation % Facilities 2019-2020
Foggia	307	290	-5,54%
Bari	172	169	-1,74%
Taranto	96	95	1,03%
Brindisi	108	112	3,70%
Lecce	324	322	-0,62%
BAT	44	44	0,00%

The province of Foggia was the one with the biggest loss of accommodation facilities, with 17 structures closing in a year, on the other hand it is encouraging the data available for the province of Brindisi, which had a considerable increase in structures.

Later in this thesis those data will be further analysed with a perspective on the capacity per LAG, but for now this information is sufficient to the aims of this preliminary analysis.

The period of stay starts around May, the Italian tourist flow peaks in August, where the presences reach 33,4%, and decrease sharply; by the end of the month the number gets to 13,1%. On the contrary international flows have a more constant trend, starting from April, peaking in July, and decreasing by early October.

There is an interesting trend in the data: numbers of tourists visiting the region in October is slowly but steadily increasing: in 2020, 432,526 persons visited Apulia (Osservatorio turistico Puglia,2021): this can be a possible base to work with, to start a tourist seasonal-adjustment process. This possibility is further confirmed by different studies: the report of 2019 on Apulia's tourist sector by the university Ca' Foscari underlines that, since December 2016, the tourist flows have increased in the month of December as well, getting to 3.2%, while in 2016 it was 0.3% (Camatti et al., 2019)

According to the previous literature, the average visitor in Apulia has a specific profile; The region is mainly visited by Italians, which represent 95.3% of the total visitors, among them

19.3% is from Lombardy and another 13.3% is from Campania. 53% of the sampled population declares they have been to Apulia at least once in the past 3 years.

Around 50% of the people show a certain fidelization towards the region and state their will to come back (Camatti et al., 2019).

The destinations chosen are mainly seaside (50.3%), architectural sites of interest (46%) and Cultural sites (33.2%). The majority of the sample decided to stay in a specific place, while 28% was more oriented towards being based in a specific place and traveling around to explore what the surroundings have to offer.

The major difference in terms of tourists' profile is the age: 77.5% is represented by families with kids below 15 years of age, whereas only 21.7% are young travellers with friends (Camatti et al., 2019).

Ca' Foscari University's report identifies four major clusters of Tourists in Apulia (Camatti et al., 2019):

- The cluster of the "*the entertainment tourists*", which has a short period of stay (3,7 nights average) and that is usually stationed in Valle d'itria: Ostuni, Alberobello and Fasano. This cluster gives a specific importance to the oenological offer; however, their basket is limited, ranging between € 500 and € 2000.
- The cluster "*generalist tourist*": 49% is represented by people aged 55 or over, this cluster has a different approach, giving an added value at landscape ad excursions, they are also the ones that spend more money in respects to the other clusters: between € 2,000 and 3,000 for an average stay of 4.7 nights; the destination is usually the Gargano area or south Salento.
- The third cluster "*enogastronomic and territory-oriented tourist*", which gives a crucial importance to food, wine, and territory. It is the most relevant one to the purpose of the analysis. This cluster has a much-variegated age span, varying from 35 to 65 years old, the interesting data is that 60% is female, moreover this cluster is composed by people that have visited the region at least twice in the timespan 2016-2018, meaning they are used to visiting the area. This cluster usually decided to spend their vacation in the area of Vieste, Gargano, Otranto Gallipoli, Leuca and south Salento; for an average of 4.4 nights. In terms of expenses, as the cluster itself is highly variegated, the money expenditure follows the same trend with an average expense of € 1.000 to € 4.000.
- The cluster of "*traditionalist tourist*", these tourists are aged between 35-54 years, they are the ones that spend more time in the region (5.9 nights), however, many of

them also declares that it is their first experience in the region. This cluster is mainly attracted by the traditional aspects of tourism such as the seaside.

### **3.5 Apulia's Tourism Resources: Landscape, Festivals and Eno-gastronomic offer.**

If the situation is not ideal in terms of economic and employment parameters, Apulia is a true paradise when it comes to cultural and natural resources. The region is home to 3 major UNESCO sites: the ‘‘ Foresta Umbra’ and ‘‘ Borgo Monte Sant’Angelo’’ both in the northern part of the region (i.e., Foggia province), and the city of Alberobello, in the Bari Province, famous for its Trulli.

In terms of coastal tourism, Apulia has over 800km of coast, 3 marine reserves, 250 beaches, and many sea caves. The region has also 30 protected areas (which include National parks of Gargano and High Murgia), as well as 2 orange flags-<sup>8</sup>certified areas: the Itria Valley and Torre Guaceto.

Apulia is also renowned for its rich tradition of festivals, one of the most famous is the ‘‘taranta night’’, in Melpignano (Lecce). This festival alone attracts around 200,000 visitors per year to celebrate the traditional dance of Pizzica. Other interesting initiatives are the Carnival of Putignano and the Itria Valley festival.

The region is one of the most interesting in terms of cultural festivals, linked to the tradition and that can attract different types of tourists, several examples could be brought, one of them is for sure the Locus festival, that takes place in the city of Locorotondo (BA).

The project was created in 2005 and it is now on its 17th edition, what is peculiar of this event is that, thanks to the international approach, it is able to attract different visitors from all over the world, and it does it mainly through concerts. At the same time, it puts a stress on the historical, cultural and Eno gastronomic dimension of the area where it takes place.

Locus Festival is sponsored not only by several local businesses that can gain visibility, but also by institutions such as the office of ‘‘Regione Puglia’’ and the European Union. Among its partners there is also the national museum of the Egnazia site and the Regional Museum directive of Apulia. The only institution that is absent is the Local Group of action. In this case Locorotondo is under the jurisdiction of the LAG ‘‘Valle d'Itria’’, which does not appear in any of the official documents of partnership presented by the festival. This absence does represent an issue, especially having regard to the fact that Locus Festival has a

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<sup>8</sup> Orange flag is an eco-tourist award to small towns and villages across Italy. It is awarded by the *Italian Touring Club* to towns and villages with a population of less than 15,000 people that make particular efforts towards welcoming tourism in a carefully maintained environment, and promote local industry and crafts

multidimensional approach in terms of food, wine, culture, and territory, and that it represents an important opportunity for the area as a whole, not only for the municipality of Locorotondo. Despite LAGs are not primarily focused on tourism, a partnership between the local group of action and the festival organizers, in this case, could favour rural development, by creating differentiation of income in agriculture, and possibly valorisation of the rural areas surrounding the city of Locorotondo.

Festivals are not the only attraction, aside from the seaside, the region is studded with historical sites: the total number of archaeological sites is 5956, there are also 8394 sites of interest in terms of architecture (including churches, urban and rural architecture sites), in respects to museums, archaeological parks and monuments the total number is 101, for a total of 14.451 sites of cultural offer (Regione Puglia, 2021).

The last major tourist attraction is represented by the Eno gastronomic offer of the region: the official registered GIs are 49 (eAmbrosia, 2021) in which a large majority of them is represented by wines, this number however does not take into account the countless varieties of traditional dishes and local specialities, such as *Orecchiette con le Cime di rapa*, *Fave e Fogghje* (puree of fava beans served with chicories), *Panzerotti*, just to cite the most famous dishes of the Apulian tradition.

In terms of the traditional diet, Apulia provides a perfect example of a Mediterranean diet. It is mainly plant, cereal and olive oil based, most of the materials are locally sourced and meat consumption is extremely limited.

This aspect should not be underestimated, for it could lead to a double benefit: on one side it could promote sustainable tourism, which must always be intertwined with responsible and healthy food and wine consumption, on the other, as stated by R. Capone, it is crucial to preserve traditional products in the framework of the Mediterranean Diet to optimize both the health benefits and the enhancement and preservation of agro-biodiversity (Maiani et al., 2016).

### **3.6 Tourism strategy, approaches, and policies in Apulia: the governance system and the tourism development plan of 2007 and 2016.**

#### **3.6.1 Current governance system**

The current governance system in Apulia is composed of different entities: (a) the Region; (b) Tourism Promotion Offices (APT); (c) Provinces; (d) Town/City Councils.

The region entrusts the regional office for tourism, which has the function of making sure that Apulia has a coordinated and unified image nationwide and abroad, this does not concern only tourism. This entity must program the growth of tourism by using promotional tools and improving the tourism facility system, especially in terms of the administration of financial resources from the EU (ERDF, European regional development fund) and Italian state (FAS, National Fund for Underused Areas).

Tourism Promotion Agencies are stationed in all the administrative centres of the region (Foggia, Bari, Taranto, Brindisi, Lecce, BAT). These organisms have autonomous administration. Each one must promote its local area, alongside with the availability in terms of hospitality and accessibility, this implies that they can decide to operate by themselves or under the instruction of the Region.

The Tourism Promotion Agency oversees carrying out technical-operational consultancy work to arrange for promotional programmes proposed by other public and private subjects. It has to keep up with regional programming and must collect and process statistical data about tourist numbers and accommodation facilities on behalf of the Region.

The provinces act as a regulation tool for the markets by monitoring the operators in the tourism sector, they also are expected to manage the activities related to this sector. Provinces must as well train operators and share in programming the development of tourism in the area.

The Town and City Councils are in charge of tourist reception services, moreover they can define and carry out initiatives to promote the area. The tourist reception activities consist mainly in the establishment and management of tourist Information Offices (TIR).

The Region has promoted the establishment of two distinct types of local tourism systems: the territorial tourism systems (TTS), and the product tourism systems (PTS).

The Territorial tourism systems bring together public and private actors of a significant size, like professional associations and chambers of commerce. Their objective is to enhance the local resources for tourism, by improving infrastructures and enhancing promotion and hospitality.

The product tourism systems are associations of public and private subjects with the objective of strengthening the competitiveness of the regional network of tourism services and improving the quality of the personnel working in tourism (MacCallum, 2011).

In the past years there has been an important plan to reform the tourism governance system, one of the major trends is to give crucial tasks to private operators, non-profit organisations, and other private actors, such as taking part in programming and in projects to improve and strengthen the tourism facilities in Apulia. Trade unions and business organisations have been involved in the process of formulating the regulations, to reach wide agreement (MacCallum, 2011).

Table 3.2 sums up the different administrative *institutions*, acting within *the tourist sector*.

Table 3.2 Apulia's tourist management organs and function

Organ	Functions	Where
Region	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unify and coordinate the regional image, nationwide and internationally</li> <li>- Programming tourist growth</li> <li>- Improve tourism facilities</li> <li>- Control of funding administration</li> </ul>	Bari
Tourism promotion office	<p>They have autonomous administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Promote local area</li> <li>- Oversee consultancy for promotional projects proposed by other entities</li> <li>- Collect and process statistical data concerning tourist flows and accommodation facilities</li> </ul>	In the administrative centres (Foggia, BAT, Bari, Taranto, Brindisi, Lecce)
Province	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Monitor the operations in the tourist sector</li> <li>- Train operators in the tourist sector</li> </ul>	In the administrative centres (Foggia, BAT, Bari, Taranto, Brindisi, Lecce)
Town/city council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Management of tourist reception facilities</li> <li>- Define the operations to promote the areas</li> </ul>	In every municipality

### 3.6.2 2007-2018 plan

In this framework it can be interesting to compare two different touristic development plans, one of 2007-2018 and the other of 2016-2025, to understand how the approach changed:

The strategy, according to the 2007 report, is defined as revolutionary in respects to any previous approach, as a matter of fact it assumes a long-term point of view. A key element that must be considered is that the previous strategy dates to the mid-1980s.

The international dimension of tourism starts gaining more importance, another important element that is underlined that has been also presented in this paper with more recent data, is the presence of new tourists, older in age, but willing to spend more money on vacation (Regione Puglia,2007).

It appears in the official document, that a lot of the issues that have been presented in this paper, such as a high differentiation in the tourist profiling, had just started to grow in relevance. An interesting trend that is highlighted in the document is that tourism in 2007 was starting to adopt a “*slow*” approach, with an increased link with the territory, however the main attraction in 2007 was still the seaside, able to attract 9% of the whole national tourist flows. In terms of sustainable and green tourism, according to the analysis conducted by the regional authorities in 2007, only 9 tourists out of 100 declared to be attracted by rural areas, moreover, less than 3% of the tourists were attracted by the cultural sites of the region.

The main issues that were detected by the report consisted in:

- a seasonal tourism, concentrated in the months of July and August.
- a low rate of internationalization; scarce organization and unqualified figures in the tourist sector.
- Culture and art were mainly seen as marginal in respect to balneary attractions.
- A scarce characterization of the local product, there was an insufficient narrative around the typical products, the so-called “*genius loci*” was not identified and there was no regional characterization.

The major opportunities were detected in the possibility to offer typical hospitality in Trulli and Masserie, as well as the large Eno gastronomic offer, the cultural patrimony, and the proximity between the coast and the rural areas.

In 2007 he authorities understood that, in order to maximize the potential of the area, it was essential to seasonally adjust the touristic flows, to avoid oversaturation of the territory in the months of July and August. Not only that but also giving a new touristic identity to the region

was labelled as critical. As a solution to these necessities, the idea of slow tourism was put forward.

To start this rejuvenation process, the region proposed two strategies, one focused on the short term and the other on the long run.

The short-term strategy orbited around two major points: a) the study of the territory, in terms of offer and needs, b) the will to fund and sustain the projects that were already putting in place virtuous projects.

The long-run strategy was mainly structured to attract an increased number of international tourists, by creating a suitable offer. This would have been done by offering a narrative on the local products, creating a greener offer, and by putting stress on the characterization and identification of the *genius loci*. (Regione Puglia 2007)

### **3.6.3 The 2016-2018 Plan: Puglia365.**

The 2016-2025 plan is called “Puglia 365”, and it is aimed to create sustainable tourism development in the region. The development strategy is in the framework of the government procedures for the nation’s development touristic plans 2014-2020. Apulia was designated to be the receiver of € 60million, the main condition was to create integrated governance in the area, capable of enriching, valorising, and diversifying the touristic offer in the territory.

The core of “Puglia 365” is the valorisation of the cultural-archaeological patrimony, rural development, and the local Eno gastronomic excellences (Regione Puglia,2015).

This plan differs from the one of 2007 by several elements, such as an increased faith in the positive development of the region, according to the data gathered by Observatory Pugliapromozione 63.9% of the interviewed declared to be expecting an increased development in the future years (Osservatorio Pugliapromozione,2016). Apulia in Italian used to be referred to as “le Puglie”, which can be roughly translated as “ the Apulias”, this relatively archaic name can help to understand how diversified the region is, and how this implies a strategy that is able to answer to different needs, therefore the new type of tourism that is described in the strategy of Puglia 365, must be based mainly on the interrelations that take place within the region, both between the institutions, but also between the different spaces, infrastructures and within the social fabric as well. One of the objectives is to have tourism integrated within the population and to have a reciprocal exchange between the autochthonous population and the visitors (Regione Puglia,2015).

This approach could be farsighted: Miossec theory (1977) and Butler model (1980) remark some relevant factors: oversaturation and poor management of a touristic destination can lead



to hostile behaviours from the locals, as well as phenomena such as Souvenirization and Museification<sup>9</sup>, which represent very dangerous trends.

The 2016-2025 program underlines the necessity of re-organizing the touristic agencies, by having the president in close contact not only with the region itself, but with a scientific committee as well. The reform plan also includes an office for research, an office specifically for tendering procedures, and another for innovation.

The strategy that the program aims to adopt is based on different elements, first is sustainability, which must be intended in terms of the Nijkamp model (Regione Puglia, 2015), where sustainability must be a holistic concept, including environmental, social, inter-generational and economical sustainability. In this context it is crucial to take into consideration the carrying capacity of each area, to avoid any oversteering.

The second element that is pinpointed in the strategy of internationalization rate, which is expected to reach 30% by 2025, with a yearly growth of 8.5%. The agency also aims to decrease by 43-45% the tourist saturation in the months of July and August by re allocating those percentages throughout the whole year, once again the importance of seasonal adjustment is underlined.

Puglia 365's strategy also stresses the importance of territorial diversity in the internal areas, and one of its goals will be to give importance to areas such as Valle d'Itria and Murge.

To reach all the objectives, the strategy must at all times be the one of endogenous development, sustainable and responsible (Regione Puglia,2015).

The relevant point of the strategy for 2025 touristic development is the focus on the territory. According to the report, the territory represents one of the biggest challenges, due to its high fragmentation. To this must be added the lack of public transport, which makes it very difficult to reach some rural areas. The aim for the territory is to make it as distinctive as possible, to do so the experts underline the critical role of local governance and the importance of favouring public-private partnerships, to create strong rural systems for local development.

In the strategy it is also stressed out an important cooperation between the agricultural office of the region and the Tourism Office; in this part of the strategy, LAGs become crucial: the intent of Puglia 365 is to create a bridge between LAGs and the rural development plan 2014-

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<sup>9</sup> Museification and Souvenirization are two phenomena described in Miosecc's theory, that imply respectively a lack of evolution of specific areas of attraction, eg. Alberobello, and a permanent alteration of craftsmanship of an area, where the artifacts stop following the traditions, and start following the consumerist needs of the tourist

2020 and the tourism development strategy, in order to create joint activities aimed to promote tourism in the rural areas, allowing a greater rural development.

### **3.7 RDP in Apulia**

In order to develop its RDP, Apulia started by assessing the general situation of the area, therefore in the very beginning of the strategy document description of different elements is to be found:

- Territory
- Demographics
- Education and workforce
- Productive system
- Labour market
- Infrastructures

Once the general condition of the region has been described, the different priorities are stated: for research purposes this work will focus mainly on the aspects concerning priority 6: Social Inclusion and Economic Development.

According to the data presented in the RDP strategy for Apulia, poverty in the region is way higher than the national average, respectively 28.2% for Apulia and 12.7% is the national average.

Another issue underlined is the social infrastructure system, which in the region sees a scarce expense per capita, € 63, in respects to the national average of € 117.8.

Seasonal adjustment appears to be a critical issue for the region, the authorities underline the importance to relieve the carrying capacity of the coastal area, by focusing touristic flows in different periods and in cultural-artistic sites of interest.

The RDP strategy report, presents a SWOT analysis, stating the different strengths and weaknesses of Apulia region. Among the strong points that can favour the achievement of the priority goals, there are:

- High number of natural, cultural, historical, and artistic resources in for rural tourism
- Great diversification of rural tourism
- Good cooperation rate between local stakeholders in rural areas

The SWOT analysis underlines some weak points as well, that must be taken into consideration, among them the most relevant are:

- Low networking with institutions

- Low business creation rate
- Weak social inclusion system

In order to reach the objectives of priority 6, whose total funds is equal to € 203,849,586, the region decides to focus on two focus areas:

- 6b (trigger rural development), this focus area will be funded by measure 7, aimed at renewing rural areas; and measure 19, which finances the LEADER program. The total funds allocated towards 6b is of €183,849,586.

The regional authorities stress the importance of 4 objectives in this framework, being: socio-economic development in rural communities, social inclusion of immigrant communities working in the agricultural sector, increasing employment opportunities for younger generation to avoid depopulation, and strengthening local cooperation networks through LAGs.

- 6c (accessibility for rural areas), financed by measure 7, for € 20,000,000.

This program marks a possible positive change for Apulia: according to Trigilia (2011), the high dependence of the area from national funds is one of the major reasons why the whole Mezzogiorno area is still underdeveloped. The author underlines how in the past the funds were not allocated with the objective of creating a set of collective goods for competitiveness, such as a network of infrastructures and cooperation between universities, private entities, and the public sector, but instead, they always ended up in the pockets of private actors, which seldom were able to implement a collective vision.

This approach originated a phenomenon called “ *cathedrals in the desert*”(Trigilia,2011), indicating large and expensive infrastructures built in unsuitable areas, and with no positive effects on the local communities that host them.

A differentiated and highly regulated system of fundings could represent a valuable opportunity for the region: it could possibly enable the creation of the networks that were lacking in the previous years, that led to an inhomogeneous development, in this framework the Local Action Group (LAG) could act as a catalyst for a sustainable and conscious rural development, in harmony with the different actors present in the area.

In opposition to the optimistic view presented above, the SVIMEZ report is deeply critical towards the implementation of these funds. Its sceptical point of view is presented by comparing the expense numbers in 2019, which were not even close to what should have been invested by that time, in this respect in the report is stated that this is very likely that the investments would restagnate or at least that a big part of the funds will be lost due to the

inefficient expense plan. This due to the incapability of the regional actors, that are not capable of using resources in an efficient way (SVIMEZ,2018).

According to the data presented in 2020, it appears that the criticalities underlined by the SVIMEZ report of 2018 still represent a big issue: by the end of the program in 2020, only 67.9% of the total funds were invested. This means that in the best-case scenario a considerable part of the projects was delayed or cancelled.

### **3.7.1 Local Action Groups (LAGs) in Apulia: an overview**

Within the RDP framework, LAGs play an important role, as already mentioned. To be eligible for the institution of LAGs in Apulia, an area must satisfy at least two of the following prerequisites (Regione Puglia, 2002):

- Rate of employment in agriculture higher than the national average.
- High contribution of the agricultural GDP in the total GDP of the region.
- Demographic variation lower than the national average.
- Higher unemployment rate than the national data.
- Per capita GDP lower than the national average.

LAGs in Apulia rely mainly on two sub measures:

- Measure 19.2, which is titled “*support for the implementation of operations under the SLTP strategy (Strategy of Participatory Development Plan)*”, this sub-measure requires the strategy to be innovative, capable of creating local employment, to be able to trigger environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable productions, and finally to create services aimed at social inclusion
- Measure 19.4 is called “*support for management and animation costs*”, it is aimed at supporting all the management activities related to the implementation of the local development strategy. Some examples of these expenses are animation costs (organisation of conferences, seminars and other public events), cost of the information/promotional plan on the activities carried out, personnel costs, specialist advice, and training costs. (Regione Puglia,2021)

The governance system of LAGs usually depends on the scale of their budget. Some are bigger and with a more complicated structure, some others are very simple organizations.

### 3.8 Apulian LAGs and the territory: analysing the region through LAGs

As remarked before, the total of Apulian Lags is 23. In the following section, they will be presented in the following Tables, which include land area of the municipalities included in the lag, population density and total inhabitants.

Table 3. 3Apulia's LAGs: Land area, Total population, and population density. Source: Author's elaboration on ISTAT 2021

	Land Area (Km2)	Total Population	Population Density
<b>LAG 1 Daunia Rurale</b>	1067.7	97,247	91
<b>LAG 2 Gargano</b>	1916.2	128,914	67
<b>LAG 3 Meridaunia</b>	2286.5	90,512	39
<b>LAG 4 Daunofantino</b>	771.3	195,095	195
<b>LAG 5 Tavoliere</b>	831.4	96,896	116
<b>LAG 6 Murgia</b>	1244.3	115,872	93
<b>LAG 7 Le città di Castel del Monte</b>	572.2	148,119	258
<b>LAG 8 Ponte Lama</b>	231.6	170,886	738
<b>LAG 9 Novo fior d'olivi</b>	498.7	177,483	356
<b>LAG 10 Terre di Murgia</b>	832.5	142,131	171
<b>LAG 11 Sudest Barese</b>	652.4	249,725	383
<b>LAG 12 Terra dei Trulli</b>	833.1	172,243	207
<b>LAG 13 Luoghi del mito</b>	1047.7	127,312	121
<b>LAG 14 Valle d'Itria</b>	532.7	114,212	214
<b>LAG 15 Magna grecia</b>	407.0	118,225	290
<b>LAG 16 Gal Salento</b>	724.6	142,455	196
<b>LAG 17 Terra dei messapi</b>	565.2	119,553	211
<b>LAG 18 Terre del primitivo</b>	647.9	121,988	188
<b>LAG 19 Terra d'Arneo</b>	671.8	168,034	250
<b>LAG 20 Valle della Cupa</b>	304.3	132,822	436
<b>LAG 21 Isola salento</b>	125.6	26,394	210
<b>LAG 22 porta Levante</b>	855.1	186,571	218
<b>LAG 23 Capo di Leuca</b>	601.1	189,630	7901

The LAG with the largest number of municipalities is '*Porta Levante*' (22). In terms of surface, the biggest LAGs are almost all located in the northern part of the region: the largest is LAG 3 '*Meridaunia*' with 2286,5503 Km<sup>2</sup>, while the second is LAG '*Gargano*' (2) with 1916,2548 Km, and the third is LAG '*Murgia*' (6) with 1244,3684 Km<sup>2</sup>.

In terms of population, the largest population belongs to LAG '*Sudest Barese*' (11), which counts 249725 inhabitants (around 382 inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>). The second most inhabited LAG is '*Capo di Leuca*' (23), that counts a total of 189630 citizens (315 inhabitants/Km<sup>2</sup>). The third most populous LAG is '*Porta Levante*' (22), with 186570 inhabitants (218/km<sup>2</sup>)

	GIs						Tourist accomodation		Funds		
	Wine	Dairy	Fruit/Veg	Bread	Oil	Tot	Hotel_beds_2019	extra_hotel_beds_2019	Measure 19.2 (€)	Measure 19.4(€)	Total Funds
<b>LAG 1 Daunia Rurale</b>	2	1	0	1	1	5	435	340	4,200,000.00	1,050,000.00	5,250,000.00
<b>LAG 2 Gargano</b>	2	1	0	0	1	4	24,141	63,881	6,950,000.00	1,325,000.00	8,275,000.00
<b>LAG 3 Meridaunia</b>	3	0	0	0	1	4	773	1115	8,500,000	4,231,000	12,731,000
<b>LAG 4 Daunofantino</b>	5	1	1	0	1	8	2133	4464	6,630,000	1,150,000	7,780,000
<b>LAG 5 Tavoliere</b>	3	0	1	0	0	4	235	291	3,461,000	847,000	4,308,000
<b>LAG 6 Murgia</b>	7	1	1	1	1	11	433	984	4,500,000	900,000	5,400,000
<b>LAG 7 Le città di Castel del Monte</b>	6	0	1	0	1	8	716	948	4,000,000	1,000,000	5,000,000
<b>LAG 8 Ponte Lama</b>	6	0	0	0	1	7	1,091	2,128	6,550,000	1,667,000	8,217,000
<b>LAG 9 Novo fior d'olivi</b>	5	1	0	0	0	6	1,323	1,211	3,440,000	860,000	4,300,000
<b>LAG 10 Terre di Murgia</b>	6	0	0	0	1	7	517	1,037	4,600,000	1,150,000	5,750,000
<b>LAG 11 Sudest Barese</b>	1	1	0	0	0	2	2,829	3,224	5,620,000	1,534,000	7,154,000
<b>LAG 12 Terra dei Trulli</b>	2	0	0	0	0	2	6,027	6,511	4,150,000	1,050,000	5,200,000
<b>LAG 13 Luoghi del mito</b>	3	0	1	0	1	5	8,129	2,120	3,440,000	860,000	4,300,000
<b>LAG 14 Valle d'Itria</b>	6	0	0	0	2	8	5,052	5,789	4,000,000	1,000,000	5,000,000
<b>LAG 15 Magna grecia</b>	6	0	1	0	1	8	969	2,277	3,440,000	860,000	4,300,000
<b>LAG 16 Gal Salento</b>	5	0	1	0	1	7	10,814	15,103	5,550,000	1,500,000	7,050,000
<b>LAG 17 Terra dei messapi</b>	4	0	1	0	1	6	515	844	4,000,000	1,000,000	5,000,000
<b>LAG 18 Terre del primitivo</b>	5	0	0	0	1	6	1,328	3,594	5,300,000	1,320,000	6,620,000
<b>LAG 19 Terra d'Arneo</b>	10	0	0	0	0	10	6,296	17,078	6,450,000	1,656,000	8,106,000
<b>LAG 20 Valle della Cupa</b>	3	0	0	0	0	3	338	1,796	5,000,000	1,250,000	6,250,000
<b>LAG 21 Isola salento</b>	3	0	0	0	0	3	520	925	3,350,000	670,000	4,020,000
<b>LAG 22 porta Levante</b>	8	0	0	0	0	8	14,238	17,331	6,550,000	1,767,000	8,317,000
<b>LAG 23 Capo di Leuca</b>	3	0	0	0	0	3	11,178	10,072	5,800,000	1,448,000	7,248,000

Table 3. 4. Apulia Lags with GIS distribution (wine, bread, fruit and vegetables, and oil), Accommodation facilities (hotel and extra hotels) in 2019, fund distribution, and total funds per LAG. Source: author's elaboration of ISTAT (2021)

Table 3.4 shows the presence of GIs, the accommodation capacity in 2019, and the funds distribution, for each LAG.

The first element that resonates is the difference in terms of wine offer: some LAGs, such as, ‘Terre d’Arneo’ (19) have a large selection of wine GIS (10), some others have a more limited choice, such as "*sud est barese*" (11), with only one wine GI. However, at least one wine GI is present in every LAG, whereas bread, fruit, dairy, and oil are not as constant.

When considering the hospitality capacity in 2019 (including hotel and non-hotel structures, Airbnb services, camping and other) other relevant issues emerge: the offer is built around the demand, in the case study, the most important numbers of facilities are to be found in the seaside areas and around major poles of attraction, such as Gallipoli, Otranto, Peschici, Vieste, Tremiti Islands, Polignano a mare, Alberobello and many others. These places have different attractive elements, for example Gallipoli is renowned as a seaside city, famous for the nightlife, whereas Alberobello is part of the UNESCO patrimony.

An increased distance from these poles implies a decreased tourist accommodation offer. A valuable contribution can be provided by the municipality of Alberobello (LAG 12): within the area there are 3.091 beds for tourist accommodation.

Taking this town as a starting point and moving in an average <sup>10</sup>ray of 18.4 km, it is observable that, as far as the distance from Alberobello increases, the tourists accommodation capacity decreases, showing a negative correlation between the distance from an attraction pole and accommodation availability. This assumption is corroborated by the available data regarding the towns of Noci, Putignano and Sammichele di Bari, which provide respectively, 509, 323 and 79 bed for tourist accommodation.

This is a recurring pattern in the whole region, creating a transportation network within the area could represent the key to change the whole layout, because it would allow to give more attention to different cities and to relieve the pressure on the attraction poles.

The funds received and the amounts allocated for each LAG are reported in table 3.4

As underlined in the previous section, the sub-measures are mainly 19.2 and 19.4.

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<sup>10</sup> Sammichele di Bari is 30 km far, whereas Putignano and Noci are located between 10 and 15 km from Alberobello. Therefore the distance indicated in the text is an average of the distances between the towns



LAG *'Meridaunia'* (3) is the one with the most funds (€ 12 million + € 731.000), followed by LAG *'Porta Levante'* (22) which receives € 8 million + € 317.000. The third with most resources is LAG *'Gargano'* (2) with € 8 million + € 275.000.

### **3.9 Valle d'Itria's offer and the action of LAGs and other actors.**

As described in the previous analysis, Apulia is a highly heterogeneous territory, with multiple needs that change greatly across different areas.

In order to perform an effective analysis, it is therefore crucial to focus on a specific portion of the region. In this paper the focus will be on the area between Bari and Brindisi going from Polignano a Mare to Carovigno.

The area has been chosen for its specificity: the natural features and the cultural heritage create the perfect environment to study the effectiveness of a local intervention to develop rural areas. This portion of land has witnessed a rapid increase in tourist flows in the past 5 years (Pugliapromozione, 2018), therefore, observing the initiatives of local entities such as local groups of action, consortiums and private actors could represent a valuable asset in understanding the direction of the territorial promotion, safeguard, and development.

Figure 3.9 illustrates the division of the region according to LAGs, the area representing the focus of the elaborate is covered by the following LAGs: Sudest Barese (11), Terra Dei Trulli (12) and Valle d'Itria (14).



Figure 3.9 Map of Apulian LAGs in PSR 2014-2020, Source: Lag terra dei messapi, 2015

### 3.9.1 Food offer: Local products and Consortiums

Valle d'Itria is characterized by a vast food offer, which includes wines, fruits, vegetables, oil, cured meats and traditional baked goods. Table 3.5 shows all the products recognized by the official document of the Italian government (MIPAAF, 2021), in the table are included also some Slow Food presidia.

The presence of a large traditional products offer does represent a valuable resource to promote the overall area and its local production.

Table 3. 5 Food offer in Valle d'Itria, Source: author's elaboration on Slow food database, and Mipaaf Ventunesima revisione dell'elenco dei prodotti agroalimentari tradizionali

LAG	Typical Product	Area of production	Association type	Number of products
14 Valle d'itria	Bombette	Cisternino	none	/
14 Valle d'itria	Capocollo	Martina Franca	Presidia slow food	3
11 Sudest Barese	Carote di Polignano	Polignano a mare	Presidia slow food	2
11 Sudest Barese	Cipolla rossa di Acquaviva	Acquaviva	Presidia slow food	9
16 GAL Salento	Piccola pesca torre guaceto	Carovigno	Presidia slow food	1
16 GAL Salento	Pomodoro di TorreGuaceto	Carovigno	Presidia slow food	3
/	Ricotta forte	whole area	none	/
/	Pettole	whole area	none	/
12 Terra dei trulli	Mozzarella Gioia del colle	Gioia del colle	Consorzio per la Tutela della Mozzarella di Gioia del Colle Dop	/
/	Latte di Mandorla (almond milk)	Whole area	none	/
14 Valle d'itria	Carne al fornello di Locorotondo, (grilled meats from Locorotondo) Carn o furnid du Curdun	Locorotondo	none	/
14 Valle d'itria	Involtino bianco di trippa di Locorotondo (white roll of tripe from Locorotondo), Gnumerèdde suffuchète du Curdünne	Locorotondo	none	/
14 Valle d'itria	Pancetta di Martina Franca, A Ventrèsche arrutulète	Martina Franca	none	/
14 Valle d'itria	Soppressata di Martina Franca, A sebbursète	Martina Franca	none	/

<b>12 Terra dei trulli</b>	Zampina di Sammichele di Bari	Sammichele di Bari	none	/
<b>11 Sudest Barese</b>	Carciofo di Mola	Mola di Bari	none	/
<b>11 Sudest Barese</b>	Pomodoro di Mola	Mola di Bari	none	/
<b>12 Terra dei trulli</b>	Focaccia a libro di Sammichele di Bari, Fecazze a livre	Sammichele di Bari	none	/
<b>11 Sudest Barese</b>	Carosello di Polignano	Polignano	none	/
<b>12 Terra dei trulli</b>	Carciofi di Putignano	Putignano	none	/
<b>14 Valle d'Itria</b>	Fiorone di Torre Canne, Culumbr	Fasano	none	/
	Padre peppe elixir di noce	Altamura	none	/
<b>14 Valle d'Itria, 16 GAL Salento</b>	Olio collina Brindisi	Carovigno, Ceglie Messapica, Cisternino, Fasano, Ostuni, S. Michele Salentino, San Vito dei Normanni, Villa Castelli	Consorzio collina di Brindisi	156
<b>13 Luoghi del mito</b>	Olio terre tarentine	Laterza, Mottola, Crispiano e Martina Franca, Castellaneta, Ginosa, Palagianello, Massafra, Statte e Grottaglie	Consorzio terre tarentine	91
/	Brindisi DOP	Brindisi and Mesagne	Consorzio Brindisi DOP	134
<b>14 Valle d'Itria</b>	Colline joniche DOP	Martina Franca, Alberobello	/	3
<b>12 Terra dei trulli, 11 Sudest Barese</b>	Gioia del Colle	Turi, Sammichele di Bari, Gioia del colle, Putignano, Rutigliano, Noci, Conversano, Acquaviva, Casamassima	consorzio di tutela vino DOC gioia del colle	37
<b>14 Valle d'Itria</b>	Locorotondo	Locorotondo, Cisternino, Fasano	Consorzio di tutela vino DOC Locorotondo	23
<b>14 Valle d'Itria</b>	Martina Franca	Martina Franca, Ceglie, Ostuni, Alberobello	Strada dei vini DOC Locorotondo e Martina franca	24
	Negramaro DOP terre d'Otranto	Brindisi, Taranto, Lecce	none	

A critical role in the promotion and valorisation of typical goods is played by the consortiums, at least when they do exist.

According to the Italian law, a consortium is a voluntary association composed by all the actors involved in the productive chain of a Geographical Indication (GI). Among GIs, there are PDO, PGI and TSG products (EU council, 1992).

According to REGULATION (EU) No 1151/2012, PDO (Protected Designations of Origin) and PGI (Protected Geographical Indications), are schemes implemented in order to provide assistance to producers of foodstuff linked to a specific area, to:

- a) securing fair returns for the qualities of their products.
- b) ensuring uniform protection of the names as an intellectual property right in the territory of the Union.
- c) providing clear information on the value-adding attributes of the product to consumers

PDOs have the strongest link with the territory, in fact all the distinctive qualities of the product must be deeply linked to the designed area. They are defined as agricultural products produced, processed, and prepared in a given geographical area, using a recognised know how. The product's characteristics or quality, are strictly related to the origin (human and natural factors), known as *Terroir* (EU council, 2012). *Terroir* is defined as the spirit of a place itself, its distinctive atmosphere. The interplay between natural and man-made features produces high-quality agri-food products, with unique characteristics.

PGIs follow the same principle, but they lay on a lower step in the scale: they are still closely linked to a geographical area. However, it is stated that at least one of the stages of production, processing or preparation must take place in the designated area. Therefore, just one quality attribute or reputation needs to be linked to the *terroir*.

The main difference between PDOs and PGIs is the relationship between the product and the *terroir* (EU council, 2012). While PDOs require their characteristics to be exclusively or significantly determined by the geographical environment, PGI rules are less stringent, allowing the products to possess at least one quality characteristic linked to the geographical environment.

TSG is the acronym for Traditional Specialty Guaranteed, it is a quality scheme considered as a *primus inter pares*, meaning a system of certification that may have coexisting schemes defined at a national level: TSG is the EU-defined one, but there are others that can be implemented at a national level. These products are protected union-wide (pizza napoletana, mozzarella and many others). (EU council, 2012)

Geographical indications 'main objective is the safeguard, promotion, and valorisation of the product, as well as the monitoring of the correct production procedures at all levels of the chain. They represent an important tool not only to protect the producers, but the consumers as well: they allow the prevention of informational asymmetry, and they help building trust between consumer and producer, by providing images and products linked to the tradition and to a local dimension.

The institutions in charge of protecting and promoting local products are rather scarce in the area. Actually, only ten products out of the thirty under analysis here, are under the protection of a consortium.

At the same time, it must be considered that some products might not be fit to be the core of a consortium, due to the lack of any geographical indication, or simply because the producers have no incentives to start the procedure and maintain the structure of a consortium.

The major requirements, in order to be able to create a consortium, according to the Italian Government (1999) are

1. to be representative of at least 66% of the overall producers and consumers
2. to have a statute that is in conformity with the ministry guidelines in terms of membership, votes, and internal organization (MIPAAF, 2022)

These two conditions can sometime represent an obstacle, in so far as the costs could exceed the benefits.

Nevertheless, consortium represent a valuable option for small producers to be backed by a support network in the globalized market (Giacinti, Moruzzo, 2002), which can provide support and advice.

Within the area, the most relevant consortiums are:

- Presidium capocollo di Martina Franca
- Presidium La viola di Polignano
- Consortium Locorotondo DOC

The Presidium “ Capocollo di Martina Franca” was instituted in 2007, it includes 7 producers and different public and private partners, among which are included the university of Bari and the different municipality office of Martina Franca.

The consortium has set different aims in its statute, which include:

- a. Valorisation of the cured meats tradition
- b. Development of sustainable practices of production, including animal welfare and environmental sustainability
- c. Protection of final consumer by ensuring quality
- d. Equal redistribution of income among the member producers
- e. Promotion of research for a more sustainable consumption and production
- f. Promotion of information symmetry, to trigger a more responsible meat consumption
- g. Promoting the territory and the product in Italy and around the world.

Slow Food is a political movement established in 1986 by Carlo Petrini, with the objective of protecting the right to pleasure and to a slow lifestyle by promoting and protecting local food traditions. In the year 2000 the instrument of slow food presidia was established as a political tool to protect and promote small local productions and traditions that would be otherwise be endangered, in terms of small number of production and producers. Differently from a certification system such as the ones analysed before, Slow food refuses to take the role of control organism, letting the producers as free as possible to decide the management of the production (Siniscalchi, 2013).

La viola di Polignano is the youngest presidium in the area. It has been accepted as a Slow Food Presidium only in 2011 and has been established as a consortium in 2017. The specificity of the product imposes a very limited production, mainly because of the scarce land area and the traditional agricultural practice, required to grow this specific product.

The aims of the Viola di Polignano consortium are:

- a. Preserving the traditional product
- b. Safeguarding the production system
- c. Increasing income for producers by benefiting from product narrative and the large tourist flows in the area.

The Locorotondo DOC consortium is by far the oldest among the three, it has been created in 1973, and counts 121 total producers. The business generated by this wine is fuelled by 59 Hectares of cultivated land dedicated to vines, allowing the production of 3.623 Hectolitres, with a turnover of € 0.2 million per year.

Locorotondo DOC, according to the single document stating the rules of production and he links to the territory, is a white wine obtained from the mixture of two local grape varieties: Verdeca (at least 50%) and Bianco D'Alessano (at least 30%). The production area involves the whole municipalities of Locorotondo and Cisternino, while the area of Fasano municipality is involved only partially. Both varieties used in the production of this wine benefit of the morphology of the area, which is partly hilly and shaded and partly plain and sunny, overall, the soil gives great contribution to the final product, as well as the climate.

In terms of the human factors linked to the terroir of Locorotondo DOC, according to the code of practice, the major bound is represented by the ancient history of wine making in the area: studies show that Verdeca and Bianco D'Alessano varieties were grown before the Greek colonization of the area, dating back to the Messapi era ( IX century A.C.).

The consortium, however, despite being an institution that represents a PDO product does not have an official site, nor shows any specific and documented interest in promoting the product outside the areas where it is already known. It is interesting to observe the difference in promotion between a product that is certified by European criteria and national authorities, and those product under private certification, such as those under the Slow Food presidia.

The lack of specific narratives around this wine, which is deeply linked to the area of interest, show a problematic side of certifications within the area of Valle d'Itria, out of the nine PDO/PGI products present in the area, only two of them have an official site, where one could source information on the land, product, and production, whereas the remaining 7 product have very few to insufficient information available, such as the Locorotondo PDO wine. Despite it being a local wine, with an ancient history, that could represent a relevant feature of the narrative of local excellence, that could be built around the product and the overall area, the consortium -that is one of the oldest, being 50 years old- shows apparently no effort whatsoever to promote the product, nor the area. Therefore in the area of Valle d'Itria, the producers of the PDO/PGI products are not particularly prone to promoting themselves by creating a website

### **3.9.2 Festival and events in the area**

Festivals are defined as an ensemble of performances organized in the same place once a year or more in general, a series of public events connected with a peculiar feature of the area.

In this thesis, festivals are observed and analysed as a tool for rural development. These events play a crucial role, as they are able to enhance and give more visibility to local attractions creating, in some cases, movement around these sites, but also they are able to trigger an overall development, involving different businesses and activities; another important contribution is in terms of image: a well-organized festival is able to radically change the image of an area, at the same time, if poorly thought and executed, it could create several problematics (Getz, 1991). Due to the increased tourist flows, these initiatives can provide an important aid for seasonal adjustment, which is a valuable tool for sustainable development (McDonnel et al.,2002). Festivals can create spaces for education, both for locals and visitors, allowing the two groups to have a positive interaction built around knowledge of the area, moreover these events represent a crucial element for fostering a feeling of community pride and cohesion (Mill & Morrison, 2002).

Festivals have experienced a growing trend in the past years, as a tool for revitalizing rural areas. Gibson et al (2010) underline that in most cases festivals are not money-making machines and that when considering the economic aspects of the festivals it is important to



consider the overall impact on the area rather than the profits. Most of the initiatives either breaks even or gains a very small profit, but they act as a catalyst for spending: a festival that attracts visitors will create a larger demand in accommodations, food, beverages, and activities, representing an important moment for the overall community.

In the area taken into consideration there are several events and festivals organized. By looking at Table 3.6 it can be underlined how seasonality still plays a major role, as a matter of fact the majority takes places in the summer.

Table 3. 6 Festivals in Valle d'Itria

LAG	Festival	Place	Dates	Theme
14 Valle d'itria	Festival Valle d'Itria	Martina Franca	17/07-5/08	Opera, Classical Music
14 Valle d'itria	Locus Festival	Locorotondo	27/07-15/08	Music, Local food and culture
12 Terra dei trulli	Farm Festival	Putignano	3-4-5/09	Art, Music
12 Terra dei trulli	Sparks	Putignano	27/08-28/08	Art, Music
12 Terra dei trulli	EX-Macello	Putignano	Permanent	Valorisation of public spaces in rural
12 Terra dei trulli	Light Festival	Alberobello	18/07-26/07	Town Valorization
12 Terra dei trulli	Folklorico Internazionale	Alberobello	7/08-8/08	Traditional dance and Music
12 Terra dei trulli	Christmas Markets	Alberobello	6/12-6/01	
14 Valle d'itria	Genera 21	Cisternino	19-22/08	local valorization of surrounding art, food, wine and music
16 GAL Salento	Ostuni Soundtrack Festival	Ostuni	17-19/07	
12 Terra dei trulli	Phest	Monopoli	6/08-1/11	Photography
14 Valle d'itria	Viva Festival	Locorotondo	05/08/2008	Music

The festivals that will be analysed in this section will be three, due to their strong link with the local territory:

- Farm Festival

This event takes place in a former slaughterhouse in the city of Putignano (BA), it revolves around art and music of independent artists, both from the local area and from abroad. An interesting feature of Farm Festival is its location: the Ex Macello (former slaughterhouse) used to be an abandoned urban space, that since 2011 has been given to an association called “IMAKE”, which is a consortium that brings together private and public bodies with the aim of increasing the involvement of local population in public spaces, moreover the association also aims to foster local initiatives created by young people. This demographic group is particularly relevant in the actions of IMAKE, which in the process of renewal of the establishment relied only on professionals such as architects, designers, and artist under 35 years of age.

The relevance of this project is represented by two main features, firstly the recovery of abandoned spaces in rural towns, secondly the high involvement of younger generations, which can bring a new perspective for tourism and activities in the area.

- Locus Festival

Locus is the result of a public-private partnership between Bass Culture and the Municipality office of Locorotondo. The initiative started in 2005 and takes place in the city of Locorotondo, it mainly involves music performances, which are able to attract tourists from all over the world. Among the objectives of Locus Festival there is the promotion of the territory and the valorisation of local traditions.

- Genera21

The idea of organizing Genera21 came from young people from Cisternino, that used to live abroad and that wanted to create a space for education art and music in their hometown.

The festival takes place in the countryside of Cisternino, with the specific aim of giving visibility to different areas that would otherwise be neglected by tourism. Genera21 involves different art and music performances scattered in different locations, in order to re-activate and create new uses and perspectives for the surroundings of Cisternino.

### 3.9.3 LAGs

#### - Sudest Barese (11)

LAG Sudest Barese was established in 2010, within the 2007-2013 rural development program. The members of the local action group are a mixture of private and public actors, including the different municipalities offices and the university of Bari. In total, private subjects are 89, whereas public entities are 22, there are also 11 professional organizations and 32 agricultural holdings. Its management board is composed by representatives of the categories mentioned above.

According to their official site, during the 3 years of action in the previous period (2007-2013), a lot has been accomplished by this institution, such as the development of eight agritourisms, two educational farms<sup>11</sup> and two social farms<sup>12</sup>, this LAG also worked to enlarge touristic offer with the implementation of 24 activities on the territory to enhance rural tourism.

In respects to the 2014-2020 program, Sudest Barese has set different goals:

- a. Favouring cooperation among local businesses, creating a project called ‘rete a Sudest’, aimed at integrating touristic offer and agriculture, by organizing for example gastronomic tours around the different producers. This project brings together 25 local operators from different areas such as: wine, oil, tour operators, local business owners and hosting facilities. Those activities are merged to create different slow-tourism packages that promote activities linked to the history and heritage of the area. This initiative suffers from some problems, such as a low historical focus and a repetitive offer throughout the different packages. However, these issues are balanced by some very interesting positive aspects of the initiative: actually, it involves all the municipalities covered by the LAG, at the same time it increases visibility to niche activities and untold stories of the area, possibly installing a positive interaction with the local population.
- b. Creating a food district of Sudest Barese, that is a cross-LAG initiative to foster investments in agriculture. This initiative is particularly relevant, mainly because it offers a new development for the agri-food sector by promoting aggregation activities, favouring local development, strengthening food security and protecting rural

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<sup>11</sup> The term Masserie is the most adequate in this case, however, for a more universal understanding of the concept, the term farm has been chosen.

<sup>12</sup> An educational farm works with schools of all levels in order to educate and promote rural traditions and more generally to stimulate interests in themes such as sustainability. Social farms aim to involve vulnerable social groups such as disabled people, immigrants and former convicts, in activities that can help with their inclusion (Cairo, 2018)

landscape and territory. The ensemble of these activities can create an environment able to give competitive advantages (based on territorial uniqueness and strengths) for local businesses.

Overall, the food district counts 109 members, of which 99 are local businesses and 10 are public administration bodies. The district has a specific strategy, which relies on four pillars: filières development, quality, innovation, and diversification. Its interventions are divided into two main branches, namely cross-cutting initiatives, such as the development of a traceability system and helping businesses to face international markets; the other set of interventions is mainly focused on the filières, by restructuring the facilities, giving professional advice on sustainability to the producers and increasing the offer on the territory.

- c. Valorisation of local agri-food filières by creating a project called “ tipica agri-food and art”. This project links the food specialties and typical products with modern art, to help the promotion of local artists and agri-food tradition of the area.

#### **- LAG Terra dei trulli (12)**

Terra dei trulli was created in 2003 and within the 2007-2013 rural development program they pursued different activities, focused primarily on promotion of the territory and diversification of the offer. This led to the establishment of ten protected sites throughout the territory, seven promotional projects and two transnational projects.

Within the 2014-2020 rural development plan the main objective were set to sustainability and slow tourism with the promotion of several projects, such as “territorio”, aimed at triggering cooperation between different LAGS to promote local oil. The LAG also had a big part in the establishment of the project “IMAKE” for the requalification of the former slaughterhouse in the city of Putignano. Another interesting initiative started by the LAG in the promotion of local agri-food products consisted in helping local producers in the process of the certification of the “zampina di Sammichele di Bari”.

#### **- LAG Valle d'Itria (14)**

This lag has been established in 2007, under the 2007-2013 rural development program, during which it mainly focused on helping and supporting agritourisms and educational farms.

During the 2014-2020 program the focus switched to three main themes:

- a. Sustainable tourism
- b. Valorisation of local biodiversity
- c. Innovation

In order to reach these goals, LAG Valle d'Itria intends to create a hosting system that is 100% sustainable, stimulate circular economy and safeguarding biodiversity; and develop local business by helping their transition to greener practices.

#### **Chapter 4: The interviews to some key informants**

Having defined this research focus, some interviews are performed in the selected area. Along the process of writing and doing research it appeared fundamental to have some sort of confrontation with the local entities, which play a key role in the overall promotion of the area. Initially the project was supposed to involve a total of eight bodies, including LAGS, Consortia, Presidia and festival organizers, therefore a mixture of public and private actors. However, what it came to be turned out differently from what was expected.

Out of several attempts, public entities such as LAGs, one consortium (Locorotondo PDO) and one presidium (Viola di Polignano) were very hard to reach due to organizational issues.

In particular, among the agents that are active in the area, those that were eager to tell their story and to narrate their activities to promote the area were in particular some private actors, such as the organizers of two festivals, LOCUS and GENERA, and the president of the presidium of the Capocollo of Martina Franca.

Their contribution was a key element to understand how the institutions act in the area, and what are the possible developments of rural promotion.

#### **4.1 Interview structure**

The interviews were conducted during the month of January 2022. The first one to be interviewed was one of the organizers of Locus Festival of Locorotondo, the second interviewed was the president of the presidium Capocollo di Martina Franca, lastly two of the organizers of the Genera Festival held in Cisternino were contacted. All the interviews were conducted according to the following procedure: the questions were delivered beforehand to the interviewed, then a phone interview was scheduled. Overall, the interview process took 30 to 40 minutes, on average.

The interviews consisted in 5 questions, involving different themes such as:

- The cooperation with public offices such as regional offices. This question was aimed at exploring the dynamics of interaction, support or dialogue between Europe, national government and local public offices and the realities of the area.

- Cooperation with LAGs: the aim was to understand if LAGs represent a valuable presence in the area in terms of counselling, aid, and dialogue
- Involvement of the population in the initiatives, as remarked several times, it is important to involve the population, so that every project or initiative is not only perceived as something that actually belongs to the community and that can bring good, but that can as well find new life year after year in the support of the younger generation, passing the torch.
- Attention to the local products, which represent a relevant feature for the promotion of an area, because of the central role played by the uniqueness of the territory and its craftsmanship.
- Cost and benefits of the activity. Clearly, this aspect had to be analysed, to understand the turnover and the funds invested in the promotion of the territory, both financially and in terms of human capital.

#### **4.2 Opportunities and challenges of the festivals**

What emerged from the interviews was an interesting and rich picture, in which the role of private entities and of single citizens seem representing a strong rejuvenation force, operating in the rural areas.

The festivals that have been taken into consideration can give an interesting point of view, given the fact that one of them (i.e., the Locus festival) has been up for eighteen years, while the other one (i.e., the Genera festival) started only in 2018. Despite their difference in age, the starting point was almost the same: a fruitful synergy with the municipality office. In both cases, the municipality offices showed an interest in giving life to the ideas of their inhabitants, hence giving a breath of fresh air to the summer touristic offer in the area. Clearly, as the representative of Locus festival underlines, the idea of festivals and the tourist configuration was very different twenty years ago, being characterized by a not so systematic organization, and relying mainly on the initiative of the individuals. On the other hand, Genera festival arose from the intent of younger generations (20- 30 years of age) to create something that could offer entertainment while also promoting their hometown, through a lucky mixture of innovative music, young volunteers and local food and wine.

This pairing has shown in both cases to be an ideal combination to attract visitors that look for something more than just ‘fast tourism’.

The main source of income that allows these festivals to take place year after year is, in the case of locus festival, the ticketing, whose revenue goes to sustain the costs of the concerts, such as the stage costs and the casher of the international artists. The other activities organized on the territory, with the aim of valorisation are funded jointly with local enterprises and involve different small associative realities of the area.

Local enterprises represent an important resource for the Genera festival, as well. Similarly, to the Locus festival, it originally received economic support from the municipality office. Only later, it became autonomous in terms of organization, in this case however, the municipality of Cisternino and the sponsors still represent an important source of financial aid.

Nevertheless, for both festivals, the most valuable partners are not local institutions, rather some private local companies that work in the food sector. It is important to underline the food and wine dimension of both festivals.

In fact, during the interviews, it emerged that offering to the visitors high-quality local agro-food products represents a key principle for both the events. In the case of Locus festival one of the oldest partners, the winery Tormaresca (part of the Antinori group), has evolved its role in the festival, where it is not only one of the funders, but it takes active part in the festival, by hosting some performances during the period of the event.

The presence of these partnership not only shines a spotlight on the producers of food products operating in the area, but it can also help in the process of educating the users to a slower tourism, more careful to the traditions and to sustainable products and habits. According to the data provided by Puglia Promozione, since its third edition, Locus festival has given a great contribution to the tourist sector, this reflected on the facilities, such as the numbers of hospitality and tourist offices increasing and the tourist offer of the overall area, which grew according to the requests of the newly gained tourist flows.

Nevertheless, none of the two festivals relies primarily on the presence of LAGs for support. Perhaps these organisms should work on their activities involving the local population, in order to be more responsive to the needs of their community.

The space surrounding the towns where they take place is a key topic for both the festivals. Actually, one of the strongest statements in the conversation with the organizers of Genera festival was when they said ‘ ‘ *we just wanted to re-appropriate and regenerate the space of our hometown, and it is from this that the name of the festival came from, we wanted to give new dimension to Cisternino and to the countryside surrounding it, one day we hope to be able to pass the torch to younger generations, in order to pursue our idea of local rejuvenation.* ’ ’

This statement is rather explicative of what the main objective is, and in the case of Genera festival, it also translates into an active participation to the organization and promotion tasks of highschoolers from the areas in the surroundings of Cisternino. Locus festival involves young generations as well, by working together with high schools to promote active participation in the life of the territory.

Another important reflection that emerged from the interview with the Locus festival's organizers is the dangerous trend of development of tourist routes and their offer. The risk, says one of the organizers, is the slow but steady *southernization* of Apulian towns. In this case, he explained that tourist flows are indeed helpful for the economy of the place, but at the same time they can be as damaging, therefore there should be some sort of vision to guide tourist development in the area, more attentive to the area and its people. What stated by the interviewed is supported by several pieces of literature, such as Miossec's (1977) evolutionary theory and Butler's (2006) model. Both of them underline the dangers of increasing tourist flows, these can in fact impact negatively both the environment, making it trivial and polluted, and the local population: the increased presence of visitors that do not belong to the place and are unaware of the unwritten rules, can exacerbate dynamics of hostility from the population of the area. In pandemic times this phenomenon reveals to be more relevant: more people concentrated in a specific town or area represent a bigger threat of contagion, causing the local population to be even more careful around travellers.



## **Conclusions**

Over the past years, there has been a growing trend for tourist flows directed towards Apulia (as well as other Southern Italian regions). European, National policies, and other institutional tools to develop the tourist sector have been available and represent an important asset to perform responsible development.

In this scenario, the attention to local agro-food products as well as to the cultural heritage of the area play a crucial role.

It is undeniable that the tourist sector was able to evolve and enabled the region to show at least partially its capacity

in terms of economic turnover, which could benefit the population.

One of the major forces that took part in the process is represented by the will of the local people of Apulia, that are aware of the potential that their land, culture, and food have. Pushed by these elements, they were able to start different realities throughout the region, able to attract more and more visitors each year.

The way to achieve a successful touristic offer is however still long and scattered with obstacles. First of all, it emerges a generalised lack of networking among local institutions that are expected to follow the same objective: namely, valorising rural areas while at the same time protecting them. The immobility of the LAGs in the area of Valle d'Itria and the scarce inclination to innovation shown by these authorities- which are financed by the state and the EU- underlines that the territory has still a long way to go to reach institution efficiency.

Local communities have an incredible power of rejuvenation, which explicitly lies within the younger generations and their will to re-appropriate their land. As it is shown by the two festivals analysed in this work, giving new life to rural amenities is possible, and can be obtained in a healthy way by performing a synergy among food, wine, and culture.

Vast tourist flows and the income that they can generate are without any doubts tempting, but what must be kept in mind at all times is that without traditions, land and eno-gastronomic heritage, every place becomes "aseptic", without vitality and peculiarities, therefore its soul disappears, and with-it communities fade away.

Re-thinking tourist development strategies is the first step to avoid unique places to lose their sparkle and become yet another tourist attraction, scattered with litter, that gets consumed without any consciousness, photographed, and in no time, forgotten.

These pandemic times, where the word "aseptic" has acquired a positive connotation, require particular attention to the safeguard of the uniqueness, when it comes to valorisation of rural areas, every variant is to be protected and nourished.

Institutions should be the first guardians of these realities, but sometimes the interest of the individual, the excessive bureaucracy and standardisation happen to be the element that suffocates uniqueness.

The first element that should be implemented, in order to promote a positive model of development, would be networking: the state and its organs should not be perceived as distant entities unable to interact, therefore, opening direct communication channels between public and private entities, would enable innovation projects to flourish.

Another feature that could be introduced is a control organism, that would have to make sure that EU funds and national finances are actually spent for the communities they are meant for. Younger generations carry a great responsibility towards their communities, and sometimes they are discouraged from developing innovative ideas, by an environment hostile to any novelty, noise, or change. Investing in the generations to come is the key element for a hopeful future, not only with financial aids, but with time and effort as well. Both depopulation and emigration from rural areas still represent real problems, which can only be solved with practical initiatives, aimed to create bridges between generations, using the old experience to develop the storm of ideas that characterizes the youth.

It would be crucial to educate tourists as well to resist the impulse to order tortellini in brodo in a restaurant of Cisternino, in other terms tourism should come with a code of practice, that underlines the importance of enjoying the authenticity of a place.

Of course, Consotia, presidia and local institutions should do everything in their power to create a narrative around their products, their lands and their communities, this can even start with the simple gesture of creating a web platform where, area by area, culture, typical foods and wine are described, perhaps with the addition of some signalling of virtuous producers, in the case of food products.

Perfectly aware that these are not revolutionary proposals, the advice in terms of policy making for the area is to start from the basis, implementing the interventions that were mentioned above, alongside with other policy measures to make sure that the communities inhabiting these areas have all the infrastructures needed, such as good internet connection, and good transportation. These measures should be implemented with a clear idea in mind, which consists in putting the local communities first, by providing more than just basic services. Once that has been put in

place, then the discussion on tourism routes can be opened, involving themes of environment, tradition, and local productions.

In conclusion, tourism development should abandon the one size fits all approach, where every offer is replicated everywhere in the world, and opt for a diversification approach, aimed to find the right match between tourist and areas.

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