On the Phenomenon of Depopulation of Inland Areas

Federica Russo, Alessandra Marra, Roberto Gerundo, and Antonio Nesticò(✉)

DICIV - Department of Civil Engineering, University of Salerno, Via Giovanni Paolo II, 132, 84084 Fisciano, SA, Italy
{frusso,almarra,r.gerundo,anestico}@unisa.it

Abstract. The demographic decline of inland areas is a phenomenon that, especially in recent decades, has reached significant dimensions in many European countries and the world. This phenomenon involves about 60% of the Italian territory, especially the South of Italy, which has been living for too many years in conditions of persistent emergency. The aim of this work is not only to highlight the importance of this phenomenon and its serious economic, social, demographic and environmental repercussions, but also to encourage reflection on the appropriate intervention strategies to be implemented. What seems to emerge from a critical analysis of the historical events and investments that have affected the Italian territory, and in particular the South of Italy, is a lack of attention to the knowledge of the places where it is called to intervene. In fact, rather than a shortage of funds or investment, as is often believed, the rapid advancement of the phenomenon is attributable to the absence of a well-structured investment program consistent and compatible with the activities and culture of the local population, as well as keeping pace with the dynamics of the global economy and the technological revolution. The critical analysis conducted is paradigmatic to address and outline actions and intervention strategies for other territorial contexts as well.

Keywords: Inland areas · Depopulation · Enhancement strategies · Decision models · Multi-criteria analysis

1 Introduction

In recent decades, depopulation and demographic decline have become significant, with serious economic, social, demographic and environmental consequences. This emergency involves many European countries and the entire world: according to the United Nations' Urbanization Prospects report, in 2050 the population that will move to cities and metropolises should reach 70%.

In Italy, migration is now increasingly substantial and involves all regions, particularly those in the South, which have a largely negative internal mobility rate. According

R. Gerundo and A. Nesticò—designed the research. All authors contributed to the definition of the methodology. Federica Russo prepared a draft manuscript. All authors enriched the manuscript. Roberto Gerundo and Antonio Nesticò revised the manuscript.

© The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2022
O. Gervasi et al. (Eds.): ICCSA 2022 Workshops, LNCS 13382, pp. 381–391, 2022.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-10592-0_28

to ISTAT [1], forecasts of the national demographic future are returning to a crisis situation: a demographic decline is expected from 59.6 million to 1 January 2020 to 58 million in 2030, 54.1 million in 2050 and 47.6 million in 2070.

With the aim of countering the demographic decline and promoting the development of smaller centers, in 2013 was launched in Italy a policy of National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) financed by ordinary funds of the Stability Law, available regional resources and EIS funds of regional programming. In the start-up phase, this strategy has adopted a perimeter and a hierarchy of inland areas according to their degree of "peripherality" with respect to the "poles", centers of supply of essential services, such as education, health and mobility. On the basis of distance from the nearest center of supply, in average road travel time, four area categories have been identified [2]:

– Beltway Areas, 20 min drive away;
– Intermediate Areas, up to 40 min away;
– Peripheral Areas, up to 75 min away;
– Ultra-peripheral areas, more than 75 min travel time away.

Of these, the last three categories are classified as inland areas which, in Italian territory, amount to 72 for a total of around 1,060 municipalities. The incidence of these areas is comparatively higher in southern Italy and the Islands, accounting for around 80% of municipalities and 40% of the population.

The geographical location, the distance from the main centers of supply of essential services, the increasing state of abandonment and degradation of the built heritage, contribute to determine the high social and economic fragility that characterizes these territories. Moreover, the alarming phenomenon of depopulation is accompanied by a progressive process of population aging and reduction of employment [3, 4].

The abandonment of these inland areas, as well as the exploitation of local natural resources without significant spin-offs in terms of income, employment and innovation, produce negative externalities and costs for the entire country, going against increasingly frequent problems of hydrogeological instability and degradation of the cultural and landscape heritage.

Although of national importance, the theme of the fragility of inland areas shows a significant difference between the dynamics of abandonment, affecting the smaller centers of northern Italy, and those involving the southern territory. It is no coincidence that the only inland areas for which there has been a counter-exodus phenomenon in recent years are all located in northern regions such as Trentino-Alto Adige, Valle d'Aosta and Lombardy [5]. In order to understand the extent of the phenomenon treated, below: Fig. 1 shows, by breakdown, the shares of municipalities and population falling in the inland areas; Table 1 shows the demographic trends of the Italian population and of the 72 inland areas identified by SNAI.

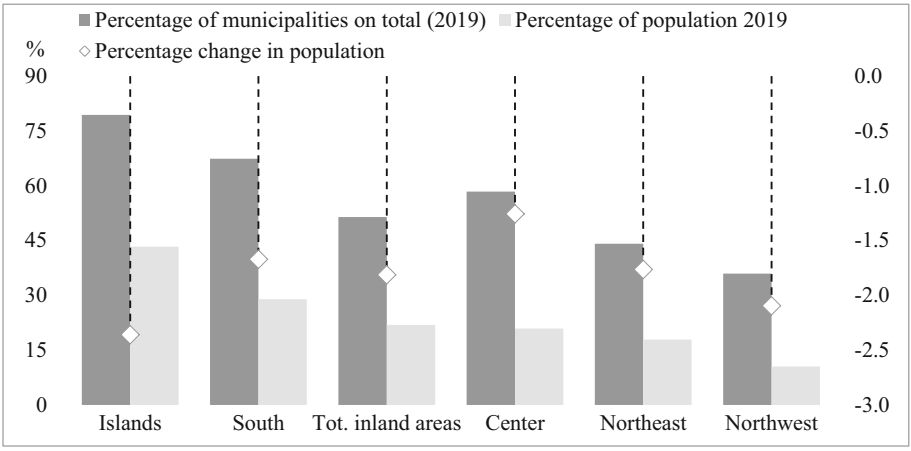

Fig. 1. Shares of municipalities and population falling in inland areas (Source: elaborations on ISTAT data-report on the territory, 2020).

Table 1. Overall demographic trends for the national territory and the 72 areas selected by SNAI (Source: Annual Report on the National Strategy for Inner Areas, 2020).

	2001	2011	2017	2020
Italy	56.995.744	59.439.792	60.589.445	59.257.566
72 areas	2.214.342	2.117.654	2.050.030	1.949.801
	Var% 2001–2011	Var% 2011–2017		Var% 2017–2020
Italy	4, 3	1, 9		−2, 2
72 areas	−4.4	−3.2		−4.9

2 Historical Evolution: Events that have Mainly Affected the Development of the Inland Areas of Southern Italy

The South has been living for too many years in conditions of persistent emergency: the expression "southern question", usually adopted, highlights the dramatic economic and social situation in the South of Italy compared to the central and northern regions. This seems to justify its history and the history of its more fragile inland areas, which, in many ways, is a history of continuous emigration in search of better living conditions [6, 7].

Already in the last decades of the 19th century, there was a significant structural differentiation of the country's productive apparatus: in the South, a purely agricultural-commercial economy contrasted with an increasingly industrialized Northern Italy. The dramatic conditions of poverty affecting the territory led to the largest mass emigration abroad in the history of Southern Italy [8].

It was only after the Second World War that there was a vigorous economic recovery that reduced the gap between South and North manifested until then. The years after the Second World War, in fact, were marked by policies aimed at bridging the infrastructure gap between the South and the rest of Italy. In particular, referred to as the "golden age", it was the period between 1951 and 1973 that marked an economic convergence between the two Italian macro-areas [9]. In 1950, in fact, under the De Gasperi VI government, the "Cassa del Mezzogiorno" was founded, a public authority that, with an extraordinary intervention, stimulated economic growth for over twenty years. Nevertheless, if until the middle of the twentieth century the Italian territory had been affected by movements from the city to the countryside, which proceeded slowly, since the Second World War such migrations grew on two different scales: a local scale, on which the population of smaller urban centers moved to larger regional centers, and an inter-regional scale, on which the industrialized urban centers of the North welcomed the population of rural southern areas, especially in the years of the so called "economic boom" [10]. In fact, the consolidation of northern urban centers was matched by a dramatic depopulation of many southern areas, with the consequent abandonment of land and the associated agricultural, pastoral and land maintenance practices. According to the records of ISTAT, the resident population in municipalities with less than 10,000 inhabitants continued to decrease, going from 45% in 1951 to 35% in 1971.

The long season of action of the Cassa del Mezzogiorno ended with D.lgs. no. 415 of 1992, converted into law no. 488 of the same year, concretely functioning only since 1996: a policy that provided for calls for projects in the sectors of industry, craftsmanship, commerce, tourism and the environment, extended not only to the South, but also to other "depressed" or disadvantaged areas of the country.The advent of this "new planning" and the lack of adequate policies for the needs of further development of the southern territories contributed to further penalizing the South, also weakening the entire country already in crisis [11].

A tragic event, moreover, further marked an already fragile territory: in 1980 a strong earthquake struck several areas between central Campania and central-northern Basilicata, with considerable damage especially in the Irpinia area. It was the most serious earthquake that struck Italy in the period following the Second World War. Although the territory did not have particular industrial characteristics before the earthquake, the reconstruction was mainly focused on the industrial revival. So, as for the earthquake of 1962 in the same areas, the State spent large sums of money with very bad results: the rain of contributions was an irrepressible temptation for many and the overestimation of investments, in relation to entrepreneurial skills, led to the failure of the initiatives. The industrialization programs were, in fact, incompatible with the activities that had been carried out for centuries in that territory and far removed from the culture of the local population.

In 1986 there was a strong demographic decline that had not occurred in Italy since 1918: migration flows, both internal and external, had been greatly attenuated, since it was no longer strictly necessary to migrate to obtain satisfactory living conditions, but there was a substantial reduction in the birth rate, which was rapidly brought to values close to or below those of mortality [12].

In that period, further unfavorable events marked the country's economy, such as the devaluation of the lira in 1992 and Italy's consequent exit from the European Monetary System (EMS), generating fluctuations and affecting levels of competitiveness with foreign countries and, consequently, exports.

A reversal in investment policies also coincided with the years of judicial investigations, known as Tangentopoli, into a widespread system of political corruption [13].

Investments in the South were rapidly reduced and the differences between regions began to widen, especially in transport infrastructures and to the advantage of the Northern regions: different infrastructural policies, less centrally coordinated, gradually took the place of those that had guided the infrastructural development of the past decades.

In 1993, the administrative instability in which almost all municipalities found themselves, especially in the South, inevitably led to a law (Law 81/1993) that introduced direct election of the mayor by the citizens. The objective, in fact, was to adopt a majority electoral system, privileging the purpose of governability to the detriment of representation.

In the 2000s, the Italian economy entered a phase of substantial stagnation: Italy was the European country that grew the less in economic terms with a decidedly more critical situation in the South, except for a slight recovery in the levels of economic activity that marked the South in the period between 2015 and 2018: the increase in the GDP growth rate was fueled by the recovery of investments and exports.

With the Great Recession that began in 2008, Italy's demographic balance has worsened: the country, having become less attractive, has seen a reduction in immigration and an increase in the emigration of young people. So for small municipalities that, while for the first decade of the 2000s have seen a slight growth of their residents, between 2011 and 2018 have been marked by an alarming demographic decline: in 2018, the South has lost 65 thousand inhabitants, more than half of whom resided in Campania and Sicily.

Moreover, with the Covid-19 pandemic, the economy and society throughout Italy were hit by an unprecedented shock in the midst of an already gradual departure from the growth rates that characterized the European average [14].

Therefore, in the last twenty years of substantial stagnation for the Italian economy, the geography of territorial differences has become even more complicated: alongside the divide between North and South, the divergence between centers and peripheries, between urban and inland areas, has increased throughout the country.

3 The Economic Structure of the Inland Areas of Southern Italy

What seems to emerge from an overview of the historical events and investments that have affected the national territory, and in particular the South, is a lack of attention to the knowledge of the places where one is called to intervene: without an adequate and thorough analysis of the territory it is difficult to enhance the identity fabric and, at the same time, preserve the historical, architectural and environmental characteristics of the place [15]. These are territories where, generally, most of the craftsmanship, excellent agri-food production and unique natural resources such as forests, woods, waterways and crops are concentrated. All factors that can develop sustainable "economies" still

unexplored with high added value, able to produce well-being and protection of the territory. Places "on a human scale", with healthy air, where the ancient knowledge and traditions, preserved and handed down for generations, characterize the identity and represent a treasure of history and memory [16].

Their economic structure is characterized by a strong specialization in the primary sector: 73% of the municipalities belonging to these areas is specialized in the first sector unlike the Poles where the share drops to 43%. And yet, in the last thirty years, the share of Utilized Agricultural Area (UAA) on the total area in Italy has recorded a sharp decline, especially in inland areas.

Although the primary sector prevails, differences can still be observed on a regional basis: the areas selected in Southern Italy present a more widespread agricultural specialization compared to those in the Center-North; the inland areas of the regions of Lombardy, Piedmont, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Liguria present above-average percentages of specialization in the secondary sector (equal to 20%); in the inland areas of the regions of Valle d'Aosta, Calabria, Campania, Lazio and Trentino-Alto Adige, above-average values can be observed in the service sector (7%) [2].

Furthermore, considering the ability to export as one of the main possibilities for the economic growth of a country, the difficulties still encountered by the South are undoubtedly one of the main factors in the gap that has, over time, distinguished it from Northern Italy. Exports from southern regions, in fact, represent only half the average of national exports and this data has been substantially stagnant for more than 10 years. In particular, the South has more marked comparative advantages in the agro-food sector, in the beverages and wine sector, and in the motor vehicle sector [17].

In addition, in the Annual Report of the Bank of Italy (2021), the available infrastructure measures point to a delay of Italy compared to the main European countries and, within the same territory, an unfavorable gap for Southern Italy. This evidence appears sharper when it is based on indicators of a physical nature, more nuanced when it is based on indicators of geographical accessibility and travel time [13]. And yet, the resources available for public works in the past decades have been modest, even if the timescales for realization have often been made long by regulations: much was accomplished in the years preceding the 2008–2009 crisis [18].

Certainly tangible progress has been made in the field of rail transport: in the last thirty years, the speed and frequency of trains on the main north-south route of the country have increased considerably, especially in the last decade thanks to high-speed rail on this axis.

Between 2009 and 2019, however, there was a reduction in public investment spending, including transfers to private entities that carry out public works or utilities, from 4.6% to 2.9% of GDP. This period has led to a consequent increase in the quantitative and qualitative gap in infrastructures, especially road infrastructures, compared with other European countries, particularly burdening those areas of the country that were already lagging behind. To date, the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (PNRR) has allocated 62 billion euros to mobility, of which more than 34 billion for the development and modernization of the rail network, particularly in the southern regions.

Another fundamental aspect concerns education and personal training in which, from a comparison with Europe, Italy lags behind, with a particularly marked disadvantage for

the south of Italy, strongly marked by the phenomenon of early school leaving. The latter is linked to employment in low-skilled and low-paid jobs, less favorable career prospects, higher risks of unemployment, poverty and poor health. According to data provided by SNAI [2]: in the inland areas 83% of municipalities have an elementary school compared to the Poles where the share rises to 90%; 61% have at least a secondary school of the first degree, while in the Poles the share is about 71%; in 20% of municipalities it is possible to achieve a secondary level of education, unlike the Poles where this value is equal to 24%. In these territories, characterized for decades by a vicious circle of abandonment and demobilization of the school, in many cases schools have become a luxury, held on the edge of the last student enrolled. The situation is aggravated by the precariousness of the teaching staff, which in turn is the result of the marginal conditions in which the territory finds itself. For those who remain, these factors create the conditions for lower school performance and more intense school dropout [15]. In this regard, the PNRR has allocated almost 21 billion for the strengthening of the supply of educational services from kindergartens to universities and 13 billion for the financing of research projects.

For several years, moreover, critical issues have emerged regarding assistance in these territories, made even more evident with the Covid-19 pandemic: these are problems concerning, for example, hospitalization rates of the elderly population higher than regional averages, excessive recourse to hospitalization for conditions treatable by territorial services, long distances from the main services, long waits for emergency vehicles in cases of health emergencies. In relation to health services, the data reported by SNAI (2020), show that in the 72 selected areas the availability of hospital beds per 100,000 inhabitants is 245, compared to the Poles where the value rises to 451. In addition, considering the distances in terms of travel time from the healthcare facilities, in the inland areas the minimum distance from the nearest hospital is 18 min while the maximum is 38 min, the latter mainly for the inland areas of Southern Italy. Finally, the data relative to the quota of the elderly treated in integrated home care and the number of beds in residential structures for the elderly are very similar between the Poles and the internal areas, registering, however, significant differences between the Center-North and the South and the Islands. In this regard, the PNRR has provided funding of 19.7 billion euros for proximity networks, intermediate facilities and telemedicine for territorial health care and for innovation, research and digitalization of the National Health Service.

4 The National Strategy for Inner Areas

Attention to this sensitive issue of depopulation is not only recent. There are numerous direct and indirect actions, more or less structured, for the revitalization of these abandoned territories [19].

Mainly, the problems of public service management and cost rationalization were addressed, both with national and regional incentives: forms of inter-municipal collaboration whose outcome has been limited because they have produced significant effects mainly on the optimization of the costs of public services without directly affecting the causes of depopulation [20].

Further initiatives, increasingly frequent, are implemented by municipalities that aim to gain attractiveness, betting on the recovery of economic functions, mainly in tourism.

But the most structured intervention implemented is that provided by the National Strategy of Inner Areas (SNAI), a policy that in 2013 was promoted by the Agency for Territorial Cohesion. As anticipated, through the 2014–2020 partnership agreement, 72 pilot areas were identified in which to begin testing the strategy through the activation of public funds and the convergence of the actions of all levels of government, especially in associated form. For the following areas, the SNAI pursues different objectives: in the short term, the aim is to adjust the quantity and quality of essential services of health, school and mobility and to promote development projects for the enhancement of natural and cultural heritage, also focusing on local production chains; in the long term, the aim is to reverse the current alarming demographic trends of the inland areas of the country, both in terms of number of residents and in terms of composition by age and birth rate.

The strategy is based on the assumption that these inland areas suffer from economic and functional marginality, with a low level of access to essential services at reasonable times and costs [21–23]. Another weak point is the underutilization of the impressive territorial capital they have: artisan and agricultural know-how, tourist attractions, natural and historical-artistic capital.

What the SNAI is implementing is an approach known as "place-based" or "place-oriented development", which distances itself from traditional interventions aimed at income support, which in the past have yielded unsatisfactory results, and now focuses on promoting development. With this approach, the aim is to improve contextual conditions capable of "freeing" the potential of smaller centers, so far unused, promoting policies for contexts to the detriment of traditional policies for individual subjects, such as companies: the reasons for the failure of many investments, in fact, are not to be found within the individual company or the individual production sector, but in the conditions of the external context. In this way, public intervention does not aim to generate income and employment directly, but, by acting on the characteristics of the context, aims to improve the attractiveness of places to additional mobile resources, such as capital, labor and new population.

In this sense, SNAI focuses on services defined as preconditions for local development: health, education and vocational training, mobility [24, 25].

It is possible to continue living in inland areas if one has a job, but also access to health care, an adequate school for one's children and access to the main communication networks. In contemporary society, an insufficient quantity and quality of these essential services is a decisive obstacle for any local economic development strategy: if the territory does not offer, to an adequate extent, these essential services, any local development project will not generate the amount of effects expected due to lack of prerequisites. What is proposed, therefore, is an inseparable synergy between services and development.

A mistake often made over the years has been to aim at the regeneration of an area through a mere sum of interventions made on individual buildings and in response to critical issues concerning individual aspects, such as structural restoration, energy, etc.: the attention, directed more to the care of the built environment than to the preconditions necessary for economic development, has led to a waste of resources that, in practice, have not been able to reverse the process of marginalization of the inland areas [26].

In order to remedy the ineffectiveness of previous political seasons and past development projects, the SNAI has also provided new incentives for reflection on the interconnections between local development policies and spatial areas of reference. The need to rebalance essential services, intertwined with the local dimension of development, is linked to a broader reorganization of territories and new models of governance based on multi-level institutional cooperation (national, regional, local) and on the direct involvement of local actors in the construction of strategic and shared visions [27, 28].

Concluding Reflections

The topic of repopulation and enhancement of ancient rural villages is still a research field full of unknowns and strongly linked to a strategic management of the territory.

The critical analysis conducted for the Italian territory, with particular attention to the South, is paradigmatic to address and outline actions and strategies for intervention for other territorial contexts.

In response to a season of "institutional reforms blind to the places" [29], it is necessary to resort to appropriate strategies that have a different sensitivity to assets that represent a real cultural heritage, identity and memory.

It will be necessary to come to terms with the dynamics of the global economy, with technological revolutions, with advanced digitalization, with the speed of the changes that characterize our time and the influence that these dynamics may have on the transformations of settlements. For the recovery and the valorization of the minor centers it will be, therefore, necessary to integrate the potential of the technological innovation with the existing local resources, material and immaterial. The use of digital technologies and new cutting-edge systems could reduce the existing economic and social gap between the inland areas, the cities and the widespread territory.

In this direction, the lack of organicity of interventions, too often sporadic and isolated and almost never traceable to a well-structured investment program, requires precise criteria able to prefigure a specific protocol of technical and economic evaluation, useful for the correct selection of effective investment projects [30].

To this end, it is useful to provide stakeholders, both public and private, with models of decision support through the application of algorithms of analysis, evaluation and selection of the most effective proposals: according to multiple criteria-financial, but also environmental, social and cultural-to be chosen in the light of the fundamental principles of sustainable development, these algorithms allow to formulate judgments of convenience on options of intervention extremely relevant in the processes of allocation of resources and therefore in terms of Economic Policy [31].

In this sense, multi-criteria analysis schemes (Multiple Criteria Decision Making-MCDA) can constitute a reference methodology, since they are able to support the decision maker in solving complex problems, which pose heterogeneous and conflicting issues [32, 33].

Due to the multidimensional nature that characterizes the enhancement strategies for inland areas, even the Spatial Multicriteria Decision Making (SMDC) can be a useful tool in the decision-making process. In fact, the explicit consideration of the spatial dimension of decision-making problems, made possible by the combined analysis of spatial data and economic, social and environmental information, is the added value of the SMDC approach. The integration of MCDA and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) can

support the resolution of problems such as, for example, the identification of areas with greater imbalances between economic prosperity, social equity and environmental protection, and therefore require priority interventions.

References

1. ISTAT: Report. Previsioni della popolazione residente e delle famiglie (2021). https://www.istat.it/it/files/2021/11/Report-Previsioni-Demografiche.pdf. Accessed 18 Feb 2022
2. Lezzi, B: Relazione annuale sulla strategia nazionale per le aree interne. http://territori.formez.it/content/attuazione-snai-presentata-cipe-ministra-lezzi-relazione-2018. Accessed 16 Feb 2022
3. Reynaud, C., Miccoli, S.: Depopulation and the aging population: the relationship in Italian municipalities. Sustainability **10**(4), 1004 (2018)
4. Bevilacqua, P.: L'Italia dell'«osso». Uno sguardo di lungo periodo. In: Riabitare l'Italia. Le aree interne tra abbandoni e riconquiste, pp. 111–122. Donzelli Editore, Roma (2018)
5. ANCI-IFEL: Atlante dei Piccoli Comuni. https://www.anci.it/atlante-dei-piccoli-comuni/. Accessed 16 Feb 2022
6. Pescosolido, G.: La questione meridionale in breve. Centocinquant'anni di storia. Donzelli Editore, Roma (2017)
7. Barbagallo, F.: La questione italiana. Il Nord e il Sud dal 1860 a oggi. Laterza, Roma (2017)
8. Lepore, A.: Il divario Nord-Sud dalle origini a oggi. Evoluzione storica e profili economici. In: Elementi di diritto pubblico dell'economia, pp. 347–367. Cedam, Padova (2012)
9. Bianchi, L., Miotti, D., Padovani, R., Pellegrini, G., Provenzano, G.: 150 anni di crescita, 150 anni di divari: sviluppo, trasformazioni, politiche. Riv. Economica del Mezzogiorno **25**(3), 449–515 (2011)
10. Celant, A., Dematteis, G., Fubini, A., Scaramellini, G.: Caratteri generali e dinamica recente del fenomeno urbano in Italia. In: Dematteis, G. (ed.), Il fenomeno urbano in Italia: interpretazioni, prospettive, politiche, pp. 13–54. Franco Angeli, Milano (1999)
11. AA.VV.: La nuova programmazione e il Mezzogiorno. Orientamenti per l'azione di governo. Donzelli Editore, Roma (1998)
12. ISTAT: L'evoluzione demografica in Italia dall'Unità a oggi (2018). www.istat.atavist.com. Accessed 06 Apr 2022
13. Di Giacinto, V., Micucci, G., Montanaro, P.: Coordinamento della spesa pubblica e spillover spaziali delle infrastrutture di trasporto: evidenze per l'Italia. In: Le infrastrutture in Italia: dotazione, programmazione, realizzazione (7), pp. 63–96. Banca d'Italia, Seminari e convegni, Roma (2011)
14. SVIMEZ: Rapporto SVIMEZ 2020 sull'Economia del Mezzogiorno. L'economia e la società del Mezzogiorno. Il Mulino, Bologna (2020)
15. De Pascale, G., Fiore, P.: Analisi e riflessioni sui centri minori in Irpinia: il caso studio di Pietrastornina. In: Fiore, P., D'Andria, E. (eds.) Small Towns from Problem to Resource. Sustainable strategies for the valorization of building, landscape and cultural heritage in inland areas, pp. 273–283. Franco Angeli, Milano (2019)
16. Coletta, T.: I centri storici minori abbandonati della Campania. Conservazione, recupero e valorizzazione. Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, Napoli (2010)
17. Agenzia ICE: Rapporto ICE 2020–2021. L'Italia nell'economia internazionale. https://www.ice.it/it/studi-e-rapporti/rapporto-ice-2020. Accessed 28 Jan 2022
18. ISTAT: Rapporto annuale ISTAT 2021. La situazione del Paese. https://www.istat.it/storage/rapporto-annuale/2021/Rapporto_Annuale_2021.pdf. Accessed 06 Apr 2022

19. Dal Borgo, A.G., Bergaglio, M.: Sustainable places in Italian urban settings: abandonments and returnings at the time of Agenda 2030. Geogr. Notebooks **1**(2), 15–30 (2018)
20. D'Amico, R., De Rubertis, S.: Istituzioni per lo sviluppo tra comune e regione. Unione Europea e prove di ente intermedio in Italia. Rubbettino Editore (2014)
21. Morazzoni, M., Zavettieri, G.G.: Tutela attiva e sistemi agroalimentari nelle aree interne italiane. Geogr. Notebooks **1**(2), 45–66 (2018)
22. Prezioso, M.: Aree interne e loro potenzialità nel panorama italiano e europeo. Introduzione al tema. In: De Santis, G. (ed.) L'Umbria tra marginalità e centralità, Geotema, vol. XXI, no. 3, pp. 68–75 (2017)
23. Sommella, R.: Una strategia per le aree interne italiane. In: De Santis, G. (ed.) L'Umbria tra marginalità e centralità, Geotema, vol. XXI, no. 3, pp. 76–79 (2017)
24. Borghi, E.: Piccole Italie. Le aree interne e la questione territorial. Donzelli Editore, Roma (2017)
25. Agenzia per la Coesione Territoriale: Strategia nazionale per le Aree interne: definizione, obiettivi, strumenti e governance. Accordo di Partenariato 2014–2020, (2013)
26. Gatti, M. P., Cacciaguerra, G.: La conoscenza multidisciplinare e multiscalare per la rigenerazione dei contri storici minori. In: Fiore, P., D'Andria, E. (eds.) Small Towns from Problem to Resource. Sustainable strategies for the valorization of building, landscape and cultural heritage in inland areas, pp. 327–334. Franco Angeli, Milano (2019)
27. Gerundo, R., Marra, A.: La pianificazione urbanistica nelle aree interne: alcuni casi studio in regione Campania In: Fiore, P., D'Andria, E. (eds.) Small Towns from Problem to Resource. Sustainable strategies for the valorization of building, landscape and cultural heritage in inland areas, pp. 837–846. Franco Angeli, Milano (2019)
28. Gerundo, R., Grimaldi, M., Marra, A.: La pianificazione urbanistica a supporto della Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne. Il Piano strategico-strutturale del Comune di Bagnoli Irpino nell'Area Pilota Alta Irpinia. In AA. VV. (eds, Atti della XXI Conferenza Nazionale SIU. Confini, movimenti, luoghi. Politiche e progetti per città è territori in transizione, Firenze, 7–8 giugno 2018, Roma-Milano. Planum Publisher (2019)
29. Barca, F.: In conclusione: immagini, sentimenti e strumenti eterodossi per una svolta radicale. In: Riabitare l'Italia. Le aree interne tra abbandoni e riconquiste, pp. 551–566. Donzelli, Roma (2018)
30. Nesticò, A., D'Andria, E., Fiore, P.: Centri minori e strategie di valorizzazione. In: Fiore, P., D'Andria, E. (eds.) Small Towns from Problem to Resource. Sustainable strategies for the valorization of building, landscape and cultural heritage in inland areas, pp. 1397–1404. Franco Angeli, Milano (2019)
31. Nesticò, A., Morano, P., Sica, F.: A model to support the public administration decisions for the investments selection on historic buildings. J. Cult. Heritage 2018 **33**, 201–207 (2018). https://doi.org/10.1016/j.culher.2018.03.008
32. Della Spina, L.: Rivitalizzazione delle aree interne e marginali: un approccio di valutazione multidimensionale di supporto per l'elaborazione di strategie di sviluppo. In: Fiore, P., D'Andria, E. (eds.) Small Towns...from problem to resource. Sustainable strategies for the valorization of building, landscape and cultural heritage in inland areas, pp. 1355–1364. Franco Angeli, Milano (2019)
33. Nesticò, A., Sica, F.: The sustainability of urban renewal projects: a model for economic multi-criteria analysis. J. Property Investment Finance **35**(4), 397–409 (2017)