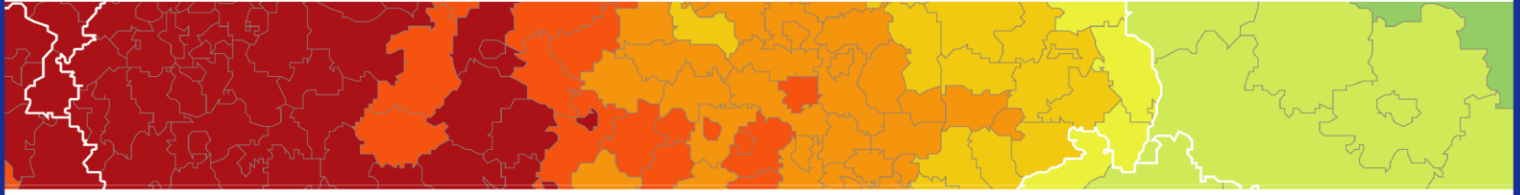


Inspire policy making by territorial evidence



ReSSI – Regional strategies for sustainable and inclusive territorial development – Regional interplay and EU dialogue

Targeted Analysis

Annex 5 – Piedmont Region Case Study

Version 30/11/2017

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ReSSI

Regional strategies for sustainable
and inclusive territorial development
– Regional interplay and EU
dialogue

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Abbreviations

AIT	Areas of Territorial Integration (Ambiti di Integrazione Territoriale)
ANCI	National Association of Italian Municipalities (Associazione Nazionale Comuni Italiani)
ASL	Azienda Sanitaria Locale
CLLD	Community-Led Local Development
EAFRD	European Agricultural Fund for Rural Area
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ESF	European Social Fund
EU	European Union
EUSALP	European Union Strategy for Alpine Region
ITI	Integrated Territorial Investment
ISTAT	Italian National Institute of Statistics
LAG	Local Action Group
LEADER	Liason Entre Actions de Development de l'Economique Rurale
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics
PFA	Project Framework Agreement
PPR	Landscape Regional Plan (Piano Paesaggistico Regionale)
PTCP	Territorial Plan of Province Coordination (Piano Territoriale di Coordinamento Provinciale)
RDP	Rural Development Programmes
ROP	Regional Operational Programmes
UNCEM	National Union of Mountain Towns and Communities (Unione Nazionale Comuni Comunità Enti Montani)
UPI	Union of the Italian Provinces (Unione Province Italiane)
SIE	European Structural and Investment Funds
SNAI	National Strategy for Inner Areas (Strategia Nazionale Aree Interne)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
EC	European Commission
ESPON	European Territorial Observatory Network
EU	European Union
NUTS	Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics

1 Introduction

This document presents the ReSSI case studies located in the Piedmont Region territory and is structured as follows:

Section 2 introduces the Piedmont-specific research questions and the methodological approach adopted in the case studies.

Section 3 contextualises the two case studies – the *Corona Verde* programme and *the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) in Valle Ossola* respectively. This section also presents an overview of the new Italian governance context, followed by an overview of challenges and opportunities arising for the Piedmont Region and the case study areas, particularly in relation to the 2008 financial crisis and subsequent austerity policies in Europe.

Section 4 analyses the two case studies. In each case, the international, national and local drivers are described; the actors and institutions involved are mapped; the types of prevalent knowledge and knowledge flows are analysed; and the main challenges and bottlenecks are identified. This section also provides an overall analysis and evaluation of the implemented projects.

The present document is the result of a set of participant interviews, fieldwork and data analysis.

2 Piedmont-specific research questions

The context of territorial governance in Italy has recently undergone important changes, resulting in implications for the national spatial development framework.

In 2014, the Delrio Reform (Law 56/2014)¹ has led to the institution of 10 (now 14) 'metropolitan cities' in place of former 'provinces' that included a large core city and its surrounding municipalities² (Figure 2.1). This reform also led to revised competences and drastically reduced the budget for those surviving 93 provinces. It also resulted in the promotion of inter-municipality co-operation platforms³, primarily intended to reduce the number of small and scarcely populated municipalities.

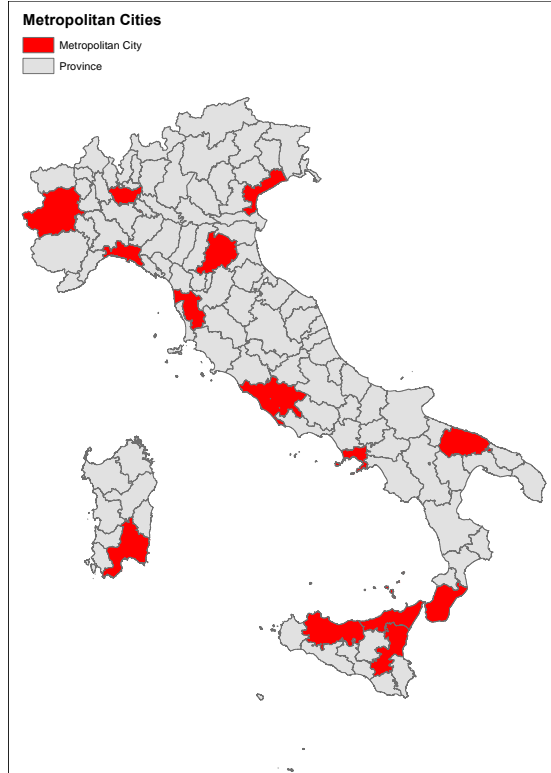
This new framework puts those regional authorities responsible for promoting development in territories featuring a metropolitan city in a rather ambiguous position. New metropolitan cities aim at providing a layer for co-ordinating territorial development in complex territories and have high degrees of autonomy and power to do so, including the possibility of interacting directly with the national level, thus bypassing the regional level. Conversely, provinces that were not replaced by metropolitan cities have lost the majority of their competences and resources, largely taken on by regional authorities, and do not seem able to act as drivers for territorial development any longer. Such changes generate several challenges in relation to the promotion and co-ordination of smart, sustainable and inclusive development by regional actors: challenges that need to be addressed, in order to avoid spatial polarization and to achieve social, economic, and territorial cohesion.

¹ The Italian government structure includes a central administration (national government) and three sub-national levels of government. Regions are the first-level administrative divisions of Italy, constituting a NUTS2 administrative level. There are 20 regions, five of which are given a broader amount of autonomy granted by special status in the Constitution. All regions have, anyway, a certain level of autonomy defined by the Constitution. The second-level of administrative divisions concerns the provincial administrations (NUTS3) while the third-level of administration refers to more than 8000 municipalities. Since the early 2000s, the government structure has been characterised by a process of decentralisation of administrative and fiscal powers that led to an increased role for the regional governments and municipalities in relation to the provincial administrations. In 2014, Law 56 prescribed the transformation of the provincial level of government into an "institutional body of second level" and the creation of the so-called "metropolitan cities" in the ten largest urban areas and in place of the former provinces. In this context, the provinces remain as administrative intermediate bodies in charge of few functions, mostly delegated from the regional and municipal levels. On the other hand, the reform allocates to metropolitan cities exclusive functions that do not depend on the regional level (OECD, 2016).

² Metropolitan cities were already mentioned in the Constitution within the national law 142/1990, but none of these were established until the recent law 56/2014. According to the 1990 law, the delimitation of the metropolitan cities had to be defined by regional governments according to the criteria of "tight integration". Quite obviously, the choice of which area should be delimited became an increasingly complicated affair. The law 56/2014 solved this problem by deciding that the metropolitan cities should coincide with, and thus replace, the territory of the existing provinces. The new law introduced ten metropolitan cities: Turin, Milan, Venice, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples, Bari, and Reggio Calabria. The two autonomous regions of Sicily and Sardinia established, with regional laws, four other metropolitan cities: Palermo, Messina, Catania and Cagliari.

³ Municipalities have a large amount of autonomy in the Italian system, with responsibilities in fields like social welfare, education, spatial planning and local policies. At the same time, the country is characterized by hyper fragmentation at the local level, with half of Italian municipalities having less than 5,000 inhabitants, thus with enormous risk of being inefficient in the provision of public services (Crivello & Staricco, 2017). In this respect, the inter-municipality cooperation had already been introduced by the law 142/90 that promoted voluntary cooperation between neighbouring municipalities. Following that reform, the legislation had several further changes including those introduced by the law 56/2014 and by each of the regional governments.

Figure 2.1: Italian Metropolitan Cities after Law 56/2014

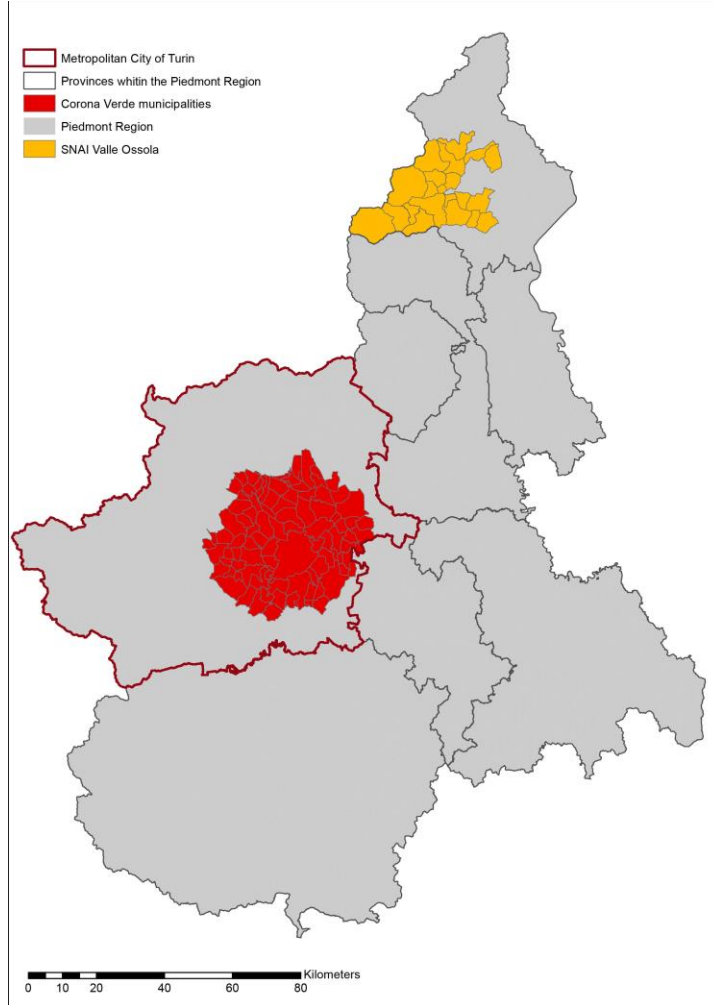


Source: authors

In addition to institutional changes, the recent economic crisis has resulted in a dramatic impact on the budgets of Italian public bodies. The lack of in-house resources forces local administrations to rely on opportunities offered by EU funding programmes or on the institution of public-private partnership, with a twofold consequence. On the one hand, the institutional capacity of public actors in creating functional and inter-institutional co-operation is increasing. On the other hand, it raises questions about the future of voluntary co-operation geographies once the funding they are based upon ends.

In this light, under scrutiny within the framework of the ESPON ReSSI project, the Regione Piemonte cases reflect upon the different roles that the regional authority (the main administrative level where EU funding are allocated in the Italian context) can play in the promotion of smart, sustainable and inclusive development, in the context of territories where different levels of institutional capacity and attitudes characterise local authorities. First, we analyse the development and the future perspectives of the so-called Corona Verde programme, located within the administrative boundaries of the Turin metropolitan city. Second, we explore the implementation of the National Strategy for the Inner Areas (SNAI) in Valle Ossola, a more peripheral, non-metropolitan, territory (Figure 2.2). The two cases are united by the aim to valorise existing ecological assets and resources, in so doing turning the latter into the main driver for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth.

Figure 2.2: Case studies of Piedmont Region.



Source: authors

2.1 Methodological approach

The methodological approach is based on data from different sources, including document review, institutional mapping, and semi-structured interviews with stakeholders.

Sources are constituted mainly of policy documents and academic literature. Policy documents were used to identify trends in macro-regional and regional development policies, and in individual planning and governance approaches used in the cases under study. Academic literature, on the other hand, has provided synthetic and historical overviews of the case studies and has suggested interpretations of the drivers and impacts which informed the research framework. Due to the different timing and nature of the case studies, policy documents and academic literature has played a different role according to the case. For the Corona Verde programme, a vast body of scientific literature exists, especially in the field of landscape planning, providing important historical overviews and contextualising the project in the broader context of global environmental preservation and valorisation. On the other hand, the SNAI programme for Valle Ossola began in 2016 and is on-going, so rarely figures in

academic literature. For this case the national and regional policy documents, as well as the guidelines and drafts of the local strategic document, have been the main information source.

Institutional maps are used to characterise the actors and the relationships amongst them in each project, but also to provide a starting point for understanding the ‘means’ (funding / resources) and the ‘knowledge flows’.

Finally, analysis of the case studies uses semi-structured interviews with stakeholders to obtain deeper knowledge of the projects and to explore interviewees’ perceptions. Table 2.1 lists the individuals interviewed in the context of this research.

Table 2.1: Interview participants

Organization	Position	Project	Role of the organisation in the project
Piedmont Region Authority	Official of Strategic planning and green economy Division Official of Territorial and Landscape planning Official of Competitiveness Department	Corona Verde	Promoter, coordination; implementation, funding; management; mediation; facilitation
Politecnico di Torino	Associate Professor, Regional and Urban Studies and Planning Department	Corona Verde	Advisor; responsible of the strategic document
Chieri Municipality	Councilman	Corona Verde	Leading municipality of the east sub-area of the project; implementation; management
SAT Servizi	Director of Territorial Department	Corona Verde	Public utility of the municipalities of the northern sub-area of the project; implementation; management
Piedmont Region Authority	Official of Competitiveness Department	SNAI	Funding; implementation
IRES Piemonte	Director of Territorial Studies Department Project Manager	SNAI and Corona Verde	Advisor for Regional Authority
Mountain Union of Valle Ossola	President of the Mountain Union and Mayor of one of the Municipality of the Strategy Area	SNAI	Implementation; management; Local development
Consorzio Caire	Vice President	SNAI	Advisor for Mountain Union Valle Ossola

Source: authors

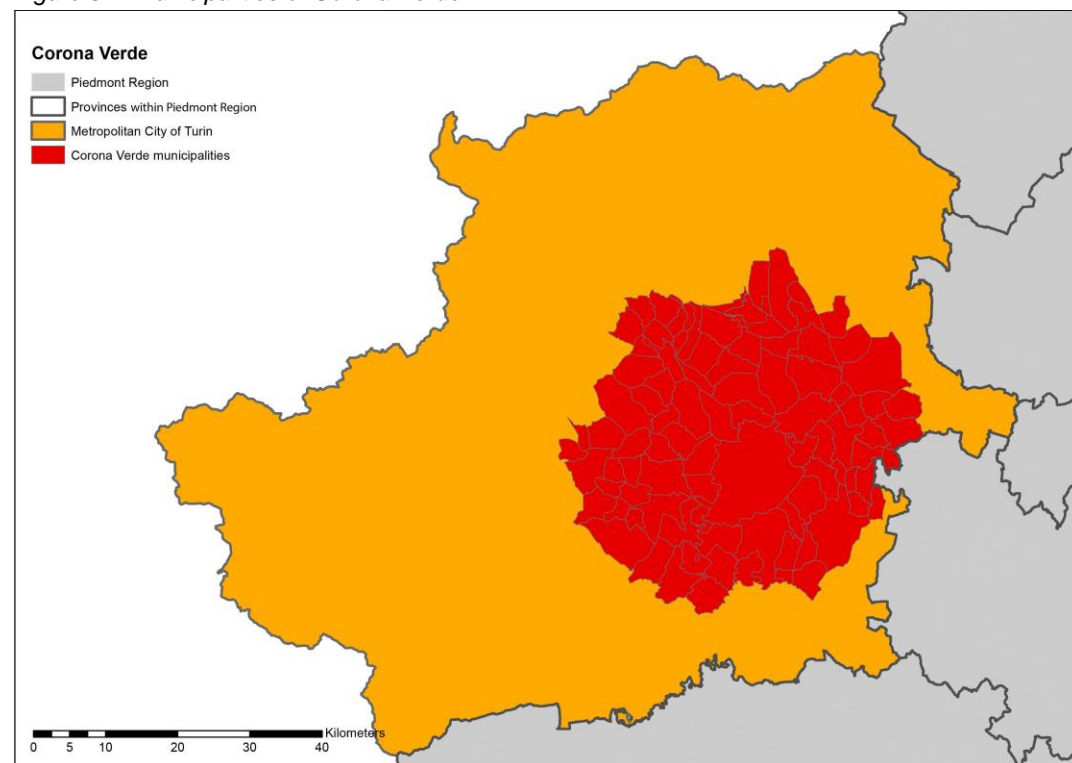
3 Stakeholders territory and governance framework

3.1 Introduction to the case studies

3.1.1 Corona Verde

The first case is located within the metropolitan city of Turin, a very complex and heterogeneous territory that comprises 316 municipalities including a metropolitan dense core, countryside areas and a number of mountain territories along the French border. The 'Corona Verde' (Green Crown) programme concerns 93 of these municipalities, geographically located around Turin Municipality (Figure 3.1). Overall, the area (more than 2500km²) is characterised by the coexistence of natural resources, important cultural heritage elements, agricultural activities as well as densely urbanised areas and industrial brownfields.

Figure 3.1: Municipalities of Corona Verde



Source: authors

The initial idea of Corona Verde was born at the end of the 1990s in a broader context of changes both on an international and local level. On one hand, the EU debate was dominated by an innovative approach to environmental preservation and valorisation issues. On the other, the local level was characterized by a general reflection on the future of the metropolitan area for reinventing its economic development and shaping a new identity as the industrial one was clearly weakening.

In this light, Corona Verde aimed at creating a network of ecological corridors to connect the regional park system located in Turin metropolitan area (Royal Parks, River Po e Collina Torinese Park) and the twelve XVII century residences of the Royal House of Savoy – the so-called 'Crown of delights'⁴ that surrounds Turin and belong to the UNESCO World Heritage List since 1997. Since its establishment in the early 2000s, the project evolved into a network of green infrastructures and ecosystem services (i.e. ecological corridors, greenways, and rural areas, all around the existing UNESCO sites), which were able to include the majority of the green open spaces located within Turin's first belt of neighbouring municipalities.

Specifically, it is possible to recognise three phases of the project, which differ in terms of issues at stake, dedicated funds, inter-institutional cooperation capacity and strategic vision (Cassatella, 2013).

The project officially started in 2000 as a collection of projects that involved 24 municipalities, and it was mostly financed through EU structural funds (programming period 2000-2006). In its first phase the project contributed to the consolidation of a new development vision for Turin and its metropolitan area, based on environmental quality and quality of life, also in line with the main objectives of the first strategic plan for the city that was approved in 2000 (Torino Internazionale, 2000).

Since then, it has evolved over the last 15 years into a strategic project based on voluntary inter-institutional cooperation that now involves 93 municipalities, aiming at creating an alternative development vision pivoted around quality of life and the environment. During its life cycle, the project promoted an incremental bottom-up preservation and valorisation of the metropolitan city landscape, constituting a source of inspiration for the development of environmental policies at the same time.

Due to the growing recognition of the strategic value that the issues at stake could play for regional development, the project was once again funded under the programming period 2007-2013 through a dedicated axis of the Piedmont Regional Operative Programme (ROP). In order to enhance its internal coherence and impacts, in 2007 the Regional Authority commissioned the development of a Corona Verde masterplan to a group of experts. The masterplan is not meant to have a direct impact on the intended use of land, but to outline a comprehensive set of policy proposals, with basic options and guidelines. The masterplan divided the Corona Verde area into six smaller areas, each of which should have been provided with its own detailed masterplan. Unfortunately, the six areas' specific masterplans were not finalised and therefore their potential could not be fully achieved.

However, the whole Corona Verde programme became part of a wider regional development strategy, contributing to the development of the regional ecological network as well as the protection and valorisation of river and hill belts and other contexts of natural, landscape and

⁴ <http://www.residenzereali.it/index.php/en/>

historical-cultural value (Cassatella & Bagliani, 2012). The Corona Verde approach and methodology also inspired, and contributed to, the development of the specific strategic project of the Regional Landscape Plan (Piano Paesaggistico Regionale or PPR) – the first landscape planning tool approved by the Regional Council in October 2017, that in turn implemented the European Landscape Convention⁵. The Regional Landscape Plan adopted the Corona Verde programme, in so doing strengthening its importance at the regional scale.

Since its inception, the project involved a functional territory composed of a variable number of municipalities, a *soft* geography that changed shape according to the objectives and the increasing success of the project. As a consequence, the number of actors involved has also increased. To begin with, the project was initiated by the Department of Environment of the Piedmont Region, in cooperation with the Park Authority of the River Po. During this process, several actors were progressively involved in the cooperation due to the increasing success and visibility of Corona Verde, as well as to the incremental addition of new objectives. Specifically, during the first phase, 24 municipalities were involved in the project together with the Province of Turin that provided technical support. The second phase saw an enlargement of the project area, to include as many as 93 municipalities and 38 stakeholders of different types (public entities, trade, professional and cultural associations).

The initial ambition of the promoters was the involvement of a wide as possible range of stakeholders, including public, private, and trade and professional associations, but this objective has been only partially achieved. This is mostly due to the nature of the funding instruments supporting the project, because only public bodies were eligible to receive resources from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) that constituted the main source of funding for Corona Verde. This relegated private actors to a rather passive role, despite their interest, which negatively affected the success of Corona Verde in relation to the peri-urban agricultural spaces and their multi-functionality potential. Furthermore, it was also difficult to horizontally integrate the actions of the various departments of the Regional Authority, and in particular the Department of Environment, the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (responsible for the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development, EAFRD) and the Department of Competitiveness (responsible for the ERDF ROP).

During the present programming period, 2014-2020, Corona Verde no longer benefits from a ROP dedicated axis. The actors involved in the project are required to look for and integrate alternative sources of funding in order to promote and realise interventions to maintain the momentum of the strategy. In this context, the main challenge for the Piedmont Region is to redefine the governance structure and its role within the Corona Verde process as facilitator for the aggregation of actors, as well as distributor of information concerning funding opportunities, which could be a potential role for the new-born Turin Metropolitan City and the planning and development instruments for it is responsible and is expected to produce.

⁵ <https://rm.coe.int/1680080621>

Nevertheless, the projects within Corona Verde have led to tangible and intangible outcomes. It is estimated that most of the tangible outcomes concern the creation of 112 km of cycling paths and recreational equipment, the ecological restoration of riverbanks, green corridors and infrastructures that have been realized through 30 projects of the first phase and 14 projects of the second. Related to these, a wide communication plan has been set out to strengthen the identity of Corona Verde. A small number of actions also covered the improvement of peri-urban agriculture and the integration of urban and rural landscapes (likely in response to the difficult involvement of private actors, as stated above). The benefits of Corona Verde include also biodiversity, conservation and mitigation of hydrological risk. Table 3.1 provides some detail about the project.

Table 3.1 Corona Verde in numbers

93 Municipalities
165.000 hectares
1.800.000 inhabitants
1.500 public goods
12 royal House of Savoy
110 tourist accommodations
200 cultural and environmental goods
50 farms with direct sale
25 bike and repair shops

Source: Piedmont Region

The most innovative impacts, according to many experts and observers⁶, concern: the governance structure that consolidated throughout the lifetime of the project; the empowerment of some local actors; the integration of landscape and urban planning; the new awareness in local communities of the benefits provided by open spaces, and; the resulting attention in local agendas to sustainable mobility issues and quality of the environment. Corona Verde contributed to the creation of a new vision for the Turin metropolitan area, improving the institutional capacity of the local level to cooperate as well as helping to develop a coherent regional landscape preservation and valorisation strategy.

Whilst Corona Verde arose as a voluntary programme, it had a profound indirect effect on local governments and on their spatial planning tools. In some cases, the statutory municipal plans were modified in order to realise or accelerate the realisation of green infrastructures, and the project also had influence in orienting the future vision of the municipalities and their projects. Changes in plans mostly concerned intended use, expropriation or urban

⁶ All interviewees confirmed the governance system of Corona Verde as an element of innovation of the policies for the area.

compensation. The City of Turin, for example, changed the intended use of some brownfield sites along its rivers.

3.1.2 National Strategy for the Inner Area (SNAI) of Valle Ossola

The second case concerns the implementation, in a peripheral area of the Piedmont Region, of a nationally-driven local development programme that started in 2014 in parallel with the EU programming period 2014-2020: the so-called *Strategia Nazionale Aree Interne* (National Strategy for Inner Areas) or SNAI programme.

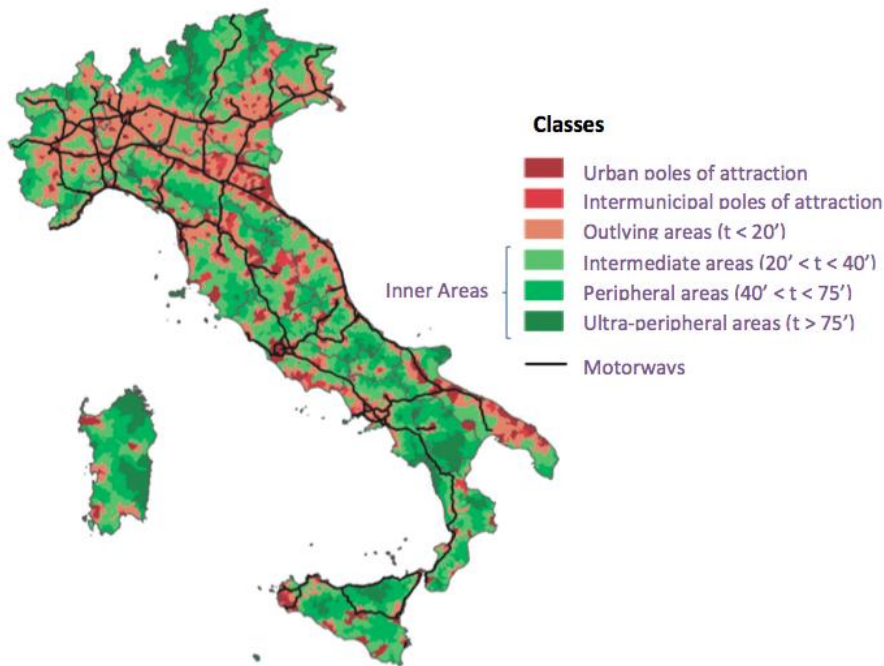
The SNAI programme is a new national strategy applicable to every region in Italy. At national level, it is considered strategically relevant to foster national economic and social development, improving quality of life and economic well-being of people living in relatively isolated and sparsely populated areas. This is aimed to be achieved on the basis of a new perspective of the concept of 'service accessibility' to overcome the urban/rural dichotomy.

The term 'inner areas' define territories characterised by small, sparsely populated municipalities that do not have adequate offers of, or access to, essential services (mostly education, health, and mobility) and are characterised by important environmental (water, agricultural systems, forests, natural and anthropic landscape) and cultural (archaeological and historical settlements, abbeys, museums, etc.) resources.

The Strategy adopts a complex methodology for the identification of 'inner areas', based on a dual evaluation that involves both the national level and the relevant regions. First, the national level mapped functional areas based on their *remoteness*, according to the distance (intended as travel time) from the nearest '*service centre*' – the latter offering an exhaustive range of secondary schools, at least a first level hospital department and at least a medium or small railway station offering a medium-level service (Lucatelli et al., 2013). Through this mapping procedure, four clusters of municipalities were identified: outlying areas; intermediate areas; peripheral areas and ultra-peripheral areas⁷. Those areas that are located between 20 and 75 minutes from a service centre were identified as 'inner areas' (Figure 3.2).

⁷ The classes were calculated based on tertile distribution of the distance in minutes from the nearest hub.

Figure 3.2: Classification of Italian remoteness.



Source: Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education and State Railways data processed by UVAL-UVER

The identification of the degrees of remoteness was followed by the examination of the characteristics and dynamics of demographic and socio-economic structure, and then filtered using the territorial knowledge developed within each regional authority. The central role played by regional authorities during this second step of the inner areas' selection process was meant to build a link between SNAI's overall national priorities and each region's peculiar development strategy, as well as to ensure that each region's specific territorial knowledge was taken into account.

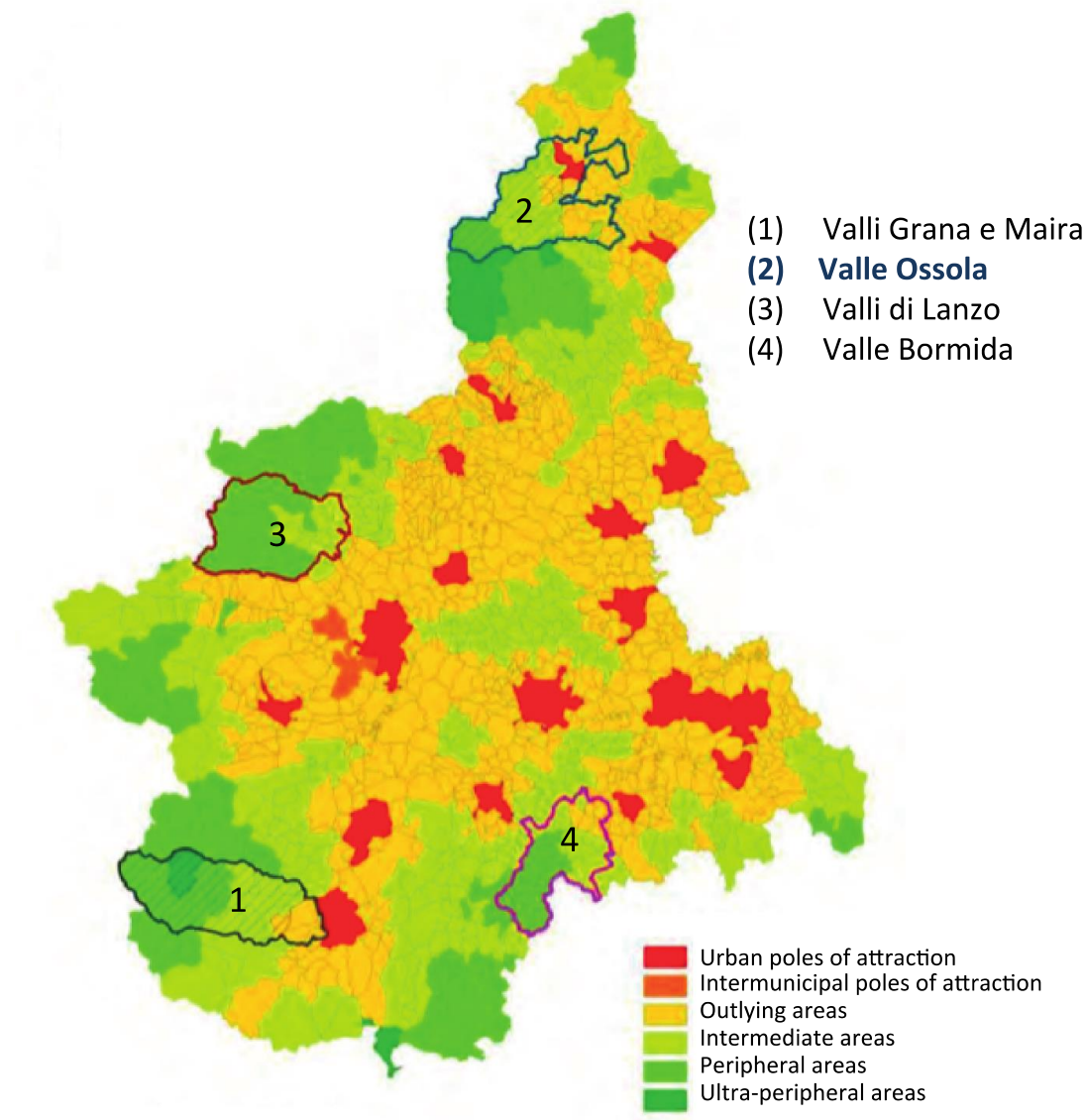
As a result of the above project, each Region identified two to four project areas to be targeted by SNAI and attributed them to different priority levels. The Strategy involves 55 project areas including 855 municipalities (10% of Italian municipalities). From the initial screening of the whole country, 20 areas were selected as pilot projects, whereas the remaining areas were supposed to start at a second stage.

In the case of the Piedmont, the Regional Authority decided to use SNAI not only to overcome the urban/rural dichotomy mentioned in the national documents, but also to intervene on some of its most remote mountain territories, in so doing integrating it with the Regional Strategy for Mountain Development⁸. Thus, all the four areas selected for SNAI are located in the mountainous areas of: Valli Maira and Grana (pilot area), Valle Ossola, Valli di Lanzo and Valle Bormida (Figure 3.3). The selection of the areas began from the national data on remoteness and then also included other factors to ensure an even geographical distribution

⁸ The geography of Piedmont is 43.3% mountainous and since 2000 the regional authority has promoted a number of policies to stimulate development strategies in mountainous areas.

of the areas in the regional territory, as well as to target territories where a fair capacity of cooperation among actors was already acknowledged previously.

Figure 3.3: Areas selected for SNAI by Piedmont Region.



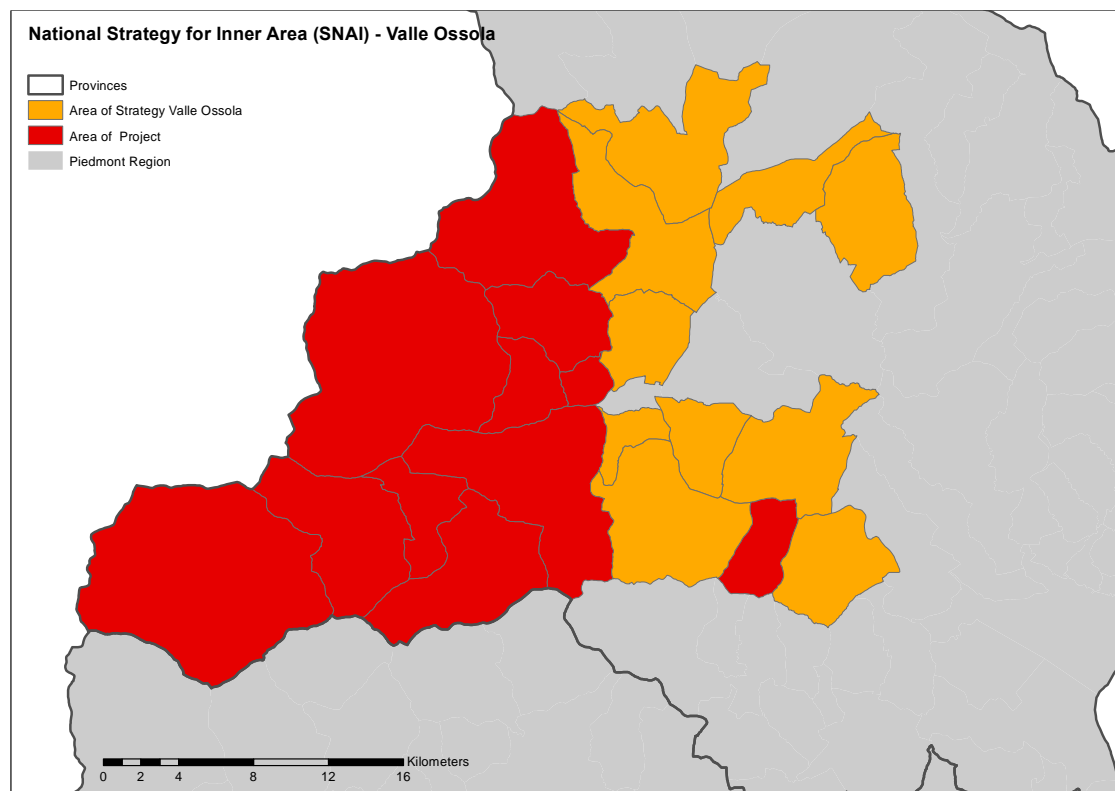
Source: IRES Piemonte

Among these four areas, the one analysed in the context of the ReSSI project is Valle Ossola, which saw SNAI related activities begin at the end of 2016, immediately after the pilot area of Valli Maira and Grana. The interest of Regione Piemonte for Valle Ossola concerns the inter-municipality public services management that the area already has, and its intention to work on the promotion of a green community.

The Ossola Valley is situated in the northernmost part of Piedmont and is part of the Province of Verbano-Cusio-Ossola, along the Swiss border. Within Ossola Valley, the SNAI strategy

area involves a territory of 20 municipalities and as many as 33,000 inhabitants, but also partially overlaps with the Mountain Union⁹ of Valle Ossola¹⁰ that includes 10 municipalities, accounting for around 5,000 inhabitants (Figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4: Project area and Strategy area of SNAI Valle Ossola.



Source: authors

In the past, the area was characterised by a strong manufacturing specialisation related, amongst others, to energy production. The gradual industrial dismantling of the last decades of the 20th century, as well as the recent financial crisis, strongly affected the area with negative consequences on the economy and the employment rate. In contrast to other inner areas of the region, the agricultural sector is also scarcely developed, and the area includes environmental assets of national and international importance (Valle Grande Park) that are

⁹ In 2012 Mountain Unions replaced the former Mountain Communities (abolished by Regional Law 11/2012). They are unions of two or more municipalities meant to protect and promote the development of mountain areas, as well as to manage (in associated form) municipal functions and services (Regional Law 3/2014). Features of the Mountain Unions are defined by each Regional Authority. In Piedmont the Mountain Unions are voluntary unions of municipalities involving at least 3,000 inhabitants and are not legally obliged to be contiguous.

¹⁰ Due to the voluntary nature of the Mountain Unions and the flexibility that the Regional Law allows to the aggregation, the Valle Ossola Mountain Union was affected by several changes in the last year that could compromise the success of SNAI.

not well known due to an underdeveloped tourism sector. Bearing these elements in mind, the SNAI Valle Ossola Strategy is pivoted around the concept of 'green community' as the main driving force for economic and social growth.

The wider SNAI programme is financed by national and regional funds or EU funds from the 2014-2020 programming period, depending on the type of actions – the former for finance pre-conditions actions¹¹ and the latter for local development projects. All actions are part of a strategic document produced by the Valle Ossola area partners that presents mid to long term objectives, thus aiming at steering the development of the area for the next five to 20 years.

It should be stressed that currently the SNAI Valle Ossola process has undergone some delays due to a number of reasons, among which are the decreasing political support of the Strategy itself at national level and the lukewarm attitude towards the project shown by the Regional Authority. At the time of writing, only a preliminary version of the Strategy has been produced and the final version is only likely to be available by Spring 2018.

In comparison to the case of Corona Verde, where the role of the new metropolitan city has yet to be understood, the case of SNAI Valle Ossola is an example of cooperation in a non-metropolitan territory where the regional authority *could* play a relevant role in funding and coordinating smart, sustainable and inclusive development, as well as providing the political and technical support necessary to local authorities to improve their performance.

The general framework of SNAI foresees the involvement of several actors located at different territorial levels in a perspective of strong vertical and horizontal integration. Actors from central government include a number of ministries that contribute to the Strategy. The regional level plays a central role in the Strategy, starting from the identification of the project areas. Moreover, the Regional Authority is responsible for developing and managing both the ROP and the Rural Development Plan (RDP) which are the main tools through which the local development interventions defined by the various SNAI Strategies will be funded.

At local level, in order to be eligible for participating in the SNAI programme, municipalities are required to work jointly and to build on previous experiences of formal and/or informal cooperation. In the case of Valle Ossola, as already mentioned, the cooperation involves a core group of 10 municipalities that partially overlaps with the Mountain Union of Valle Ossola, within the larger group of 20 municipalities.

Finally, private actors and citizens are also included in the Strategy due to the participatory approach used to define the local development strategy. The methodology for the development of the strategy, specifically, foresees a number of focus groups, meetings and events focusing on different issues and involving the private sector, associations and citizens.

¹¹ Pre-conditions actions refer to the availability of an adequate level of essential services within the territory (e.g. in terms of schools, transportation, health services).

3.2 Governance context

A number of key factors can play a more or less direct role in influencing positively or negatively the promotion of territorial development: a country's administrative culture and its spatial planning tradition; the actual degree of vertical and horizontal integration, and; the level of territorial governance capacity. In this light, the analysis of the two case studies show that the exploitation of development synergies between domestic planning and development activities and EU programming activities is still hampered by the peculiar governance and spatial planning features that traditionally characterise the country. This is apparent despite the strong regionalization of EU cohesion policy management that characterizes the Italian context, and the presence (at NUTS 2 level) of strong regional governments responsible for the spatial development and planning of their respective territories. Specifically, Italy is characterised by a spatial planning system traditionally identifiable with the so-called 'urbanism' approach, characterised by 'a strong architectural flavour and concerned with urban design, townscape and building control', and by regulations 'undertaken through rigid zoning and codes' (CEC, 1997, p. 37). The latter is largely based on a 'conformative' idea of spatial planning implemented at the local level, and relegates upper scales' planning (mostly at the level of regions and provinces and, since 2014, of metropolitan cities) to more or less abstract and scarcely effective strategic activities (Janin Rivolin, 2008). Despite the very tangible boost provided to regional planning by the attribution of EU programming competences to the regional authorities, the latter still suffers a number of problems in terms of vertical and horizontal coordination between levels and sectors.

Moreover, it is important to reiterate how the Italian territorial governance system recently underwent an important set of reforms (mentioned previously) that led to a number of important institutional consequences in terms of redistribution of power, resources and competences between administrative layers: the partial abolition of the provinces as territorial authority and the institution of metropolitan cities, and the promotion of the associations and merger of small municipalities. These reforms imply highly relevant changes for the regional territorial development framework: the new metropolitan cities should play a key role in providing a layer for coordinating territorial development in complex territories presenting a strong metropolitan-level centre, but their actual capacity to do so, as well as the means through which this activity should be implemented, are still to be tested. By contrast, provinces that were not replaced by metropolitan cities remain in a rather ambiguous position: on the one hand, they see their competences and resources drastically reduced; on the other, due to the failure of the constitutional referendum held in December 2016 that should have formally abolished them, they maintain some competences for territorial coordination that are, however, difficult to perform. In addition, administrative fragmentation has not proved to be more sustainable economically or more able to face global challenges. Within this context, it is easy to understand how the Piedmont Regional Authority is required to play a twofold role concerning the promotion and coordination of the development on its territory: it is called upon to explore and fine tune its relationship with the new Metropolitan City of Turin whilst, when

acting outside the metropolitan city, it should interact directly with the municipalities as it can no longer rely on the coordination role of the provinces¹².

3.3 Opportunities and challenges

In the Italian context the economic crisis of 2008 hit harder than in many other European countries due to the period of slow growth that the country was already facing since the 1990s (Cotella et al., 2016)¹³. Furthermore, rural areas had already undergone a process of marginalisation since the 1950s, as evidenced by signs of de-population. Meanwhile, since the 1980s, parts of the most important industrial urban areas were on the verge of crisis and the economic conversion towards a services economy was not sufficiently robust.

The aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis has thus resulted in significant changes and it confirmed the increasingly important role of local and regional actors in the implementation of a place-based approach to development.

In relation to the 7 challenges evidenced in the Chapter 2 of the ReSSI Final Report, Piedmont's regional policies are deploying specific approaches for some of them, while others are scarcely being addressed:

- *Increased exposure to globalisation*: urban and rural areas are clearly differently impacted in spatial terms. However, regional policies that are put in place are quite similar and are mostly based on a place-based approach and on the improvement of relevant institutional capacities.
- *EU integration*: despite Brexit and the related populist waves in Italian politics, development policies are still viewed as strongly dependent on the EU integration process in terms of opportunities for funds in times of financial austerity and in terms of working issues and applied methodologies. Nevertheless, while EU influence is explicitly addressed at the local scale, it does not seem so in relation to cross-border policies, at least in regional strategies of a border region.
- *Challenges to achieving more inclusive innovation*: Innovation policies mainly take place at city level, thus not delivering relevant outcomes in peripheral and less urbanised areas.

¹² At the same time, the Regional Territorial Plan has also identified 33 soft geographies, so-called AIT (Areas of Territorial Integration), which are in turn divided into sub-areas with the aim of promoting coordination among territories, to encourage unions of municipalities in order to foster comprehensive policies about the environment and landscape. However, it should also be noted that other regional policies refer to the five regional sectors identified in the Regional Territorial Plan (the metropolitan area sector, the south/Cuneo, the south-east Asti-Alessandria, the northern-east Biella/Vercelli and the Novara/Verbania sector).

¹³ For a more comprehensive overview of the impact of the global economic crisis and resultant austerity policies over territorial development and spatial planning in southern Europe, see Cotella et al., 2016.

- *Demographic and social challenges*: there is an increasing interest in understanding demographic challenges in peripheral and rural areas (especially because of long term trends of de-population and aging), even if metropolitan and urbanised areas are witnessing shrinking effects. The awareness for policies in favour of mountain and peripheral areas are growing and are considered as a strategic asset for regional and national development perspectives.
- *Climate change and environmental risks*: climate change is increasingly becoming a national issue but it is not satisfactorily paired with a national, or even regional, scheme. There are some collaborative efforts, for instance in a trans-regional board promoted by Italian northern regions, but effective results are yet to be seen. In this framework, the debate on environmental risk concerning the abandonment of rural areas, especially in terms of hydro-geological instability, and soil consumption in urban areas is important, as well are regional actions directed to mitigate those risk impacts. However, since July 2017 the Piedmont Region has established its own Regional Strategy on Climate Change (DGR n. 24-5292) which will have an impact on the Territorial Regional Plan, in particular through the Air Quality Plan, the Regional Energy Plan, the Health Plan, and the Regional Transport Plan.
- *Energy challenges*: the EU's aims to reduce the consumption of fossil fuels can represent a strategic advantage for the Italian energy production that has a high amount of energy production related to hydroelectric and renewable sources (Italy's 2020 target was achieved and exceeded in 2014, according to Eurostat data available in the EEA, 2017). However, there is also a demand for increasing efficiency, to reduce the impacts of energy production (loss of natural resources) and energy consumption (problems of environmental pollution).
- *Loss of biodiversity and vulnerable natural, landscape and cultural heritage*: natural, landscape and cultural heritage are the key drivers of the new national and regional economic development. Actions required to increase ecosystem services concern urban *and* rural areas – both municipal and regional authorities are supporting the realisation of green infrastructures in urban and peri-urban areas. At the same time the value of ecosystem services of peripheral areas must remain fully recognised.

Table 3.2 shows how the above seven challenges are addressed at regional level and through the case studies.

Table 3.2 Challenges and opportunities in Piedmont Region and through the case studies

Challenges	General working approach by the regional authority	Corona Verde	Valle Ossola
Globalisation	Relevant. Place-based approach.	Relevant, especially regarding ecologic and urban-rural issues.	Relevant, especially regarding economic innovation and community development.

EU integration	Importance of EU funds for <i>local</i> development policies.	Strong relevance and high dependence.	Strong relevance, but impact to be assessed. Strategy also funded by ERDF, ESF and EAFRD.
	Importance of EU funds for development policies in cross-border cooperation.	Not relevant for this case.	Not so relevant, but too early to be assessed.
Inclusive innovation	Relevant but without important results so far.	Relevant. Current funds come from a national call for neighbourhood concerning social actions.	Not relevant.
Demographic and social challenges	Specific focus on mountain areas.	Relevant. Current funds come from a national call for neighbourhood concerning social actions.	Strong relevance. This is the starting point of the Strategy.
Climate change	Relevant, but depends on territorial specificities.	Partially relevant, especially as regards urban climate.	Partially relevant in the strategy, in particular related to concept of resilience.
Energy	Relevant but importance may vary depending on the cases.	Not relevant.	Very relevant in terms of green economy, green community and circular economy.
Biodiversity and cultural heritage	Strong relevance in regional policies.	Strong relevance.	Strong relevance.

Source: authors

4 Case Study Analysis

4.1 External drivers

4.1.1 International drivers

Both the Corona Verde and the SNAI Valle Ossola cases (and the strategies to which they contribute) were strongly influenced by international trends and in particular by the European debate on models of development and on methodologies to achieve it.

Corona Verde was shaped within the broader context of innovation in environmental preservation and valorisation being developed within the European Union (EU) leadership on global environmental issues in the last decades of the 20th century (Kelemen, 2010). Starting from the 1980s, the EU's attention to environmental conservation issues developed via two parallel paths: one focussing on the development of environmental legislation, the other paying more attention to the development of proactive environmental policies. At the policy level, those Structural Funds' programming periods that started at the end of the 1990s have progressively focussed on the importance of increasing the quality of life through the preservation and valorisation of natural and landscape assets, but have also focussed on the promotion of new forms of development based on environmental quality as a resource for tourist and leisure activities.

In this light, it is possible to argue that the Corona Verde approach builds upon elements that developed and consolidated in the EU discourse (but also the Council of Europe) throughout the 1980s and 1990s, and most importantly on the idea that natural assets should not be confined to the boundaries of protected areas, but should be considered a part of broader territorial systems and, as such, be subject to ordinary planning and policy making processes and not only of conservation norms (Cassatella, 2013). For this reason, the project itself goes beyond the concept of 'green belt', rather aiming to be a new way to foster environmental quality in the urban-rural belt.

Concerning the SNAI programme, this is rooted in the more general strategy for 'economic, social and territorial cohesion' contained in Article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union¹⁴ (Barbera, 2015). The Strategy was developed under the supervision of Fabrizio Barca, who at the time served as the Italian Minister of Territorial Cohesion and had previously been a special advisor to EU Commissioner for Regional Policy, Danuta Hubner.

It is thus possible to identify many similarities between the approach put in place by SNAI and the main messages delivered in the independent report for the European Commission entitled "*An agenda for a reformed cohesion policy*", the redaction of which was coordinated by Barca himself (Barca, 2009). More specifically, the document introduced the so-called *place-based approach*, that was then adopted as a source of inspiration by the Territorial Agenda of the

¹⁴ <http://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:12012E/TXT&from=EN>

EU in 2011 (EC, 2011) and subsequently influenced the development of the current European Cohesion Policy programming period (2014-20).

Barca's idea of SNAI was that of a national regional policy tool to overcome Italy's traditional approach to regional policy, which mainly focused on the north-south development divide. To do so, SNAI acts in synergy with the EU 2014-2020 programming period, allowing for both the improvement of the main development conditions of all peripheral areas and, at the same time, to exploit the peculiar development potentials of each of them, in line with the mentioned place-based approach. In order to ensure such synergy, SNAI is part of the Partnership Agreement 2014-2020 for Italy, the document that the State co-signed with European institutions, in accordance with EU Regulation n.1303 / 2013, to ensure alignment with the Horizon 2020 Strategy for Smart, Sustainable and Inclusive Growth, and the effective implementation of SIE Funds (Structural Funds and European Investment Funds).

4.1.2 National policies and reforms

The context of territorial governance in Italy, as mentioned, has recently undergone important changes that affect the two case studies. The Delrio Reform (Law 56/2014) has led to the creation of new institutional bodies (metropolitan cities), the transformation of the existing provinces (left with a drastically reduced budget and revised competences), and the promotion of inter-municipality co-operation platforms. This is the starting point of the present analysis because the reform implies new challenges for regional policy and for all administrative levels involved. On one hand, the newly instituted Metropolitan City of Turin requires a rebalancing of the Corona Verde governance structure due to the stronger powers and functions that the Metropolitan City of Turin has now acquired (but has not yet fully exerted). On the other, provinces that were not replaced by metropolitan cities have lost the majority of competences and resources and do not seem to be able to act as drivers for territorial development as they used to do (for instance through the Territorial Plans of Province Coordination or PTCP). This new framework thus requires a new role for the regional authority in promoting local development and, at the same time, new functional and inter-institutional cooperation capacities at local level.

As mentioned, Law 56/2014 also required the fostering of inter-municipality cooperation through the introduction of the so-called Unions of Municipalities. In this light, even if it is not explicitly affirmed, SNAI contributes to overcoming the excessive administrative fragmentation that characterised the Italian local level. Requesting that municipalities be associated with service access-related funds is in line with the European trends and complies with the Delrio Reform, that pushes towards the merger or association of small municipalities.

4.1.3 Local and regional priorities

In the case of SNAI in Valle Ossola, it is possible to recognise regional drivers that have contributed to the selection of this project area. The Piedmont Region, in fact, has integrated the national objectives of the Strategy with its regional spatial development strategies.

More than 40% of the territory of the Piedmont Region is mountainous and a large part of this area is characterized by marginalisation, with problematic demographic, social and economic trends. Due to this, the Piedmont Region has decided to give priority to mountain areas in the context of SNAI, thus strengthening its regional policies on marginal mountain areas.

Piedmont Region considers mountainous areas as a strategic asset for regional development, because of the economic role they can play in providing goods and services in a sustainable way, such as tourism and leisure, health, hydroelectricity, food, and timber whilst increasing the capacity to prevent landslips and flooding at the same time.

Since 2000, the regional authority began a number of policies to stimulate development in the mountains both through EU and national funds, and regional actions and funding. In 2009 mountain area development was declared a strategic asset of regional policy, becoming part of the evaluation plan that comprises the main decision tool of the regional authority regarding EU funding allocation. In 2013 the regional authority signed the EUSALP macro-regional strategy of the European Union¹⁵ which promotes a new relationship between metropolitan, peri-mountain and mountain areas. Beginning in the programming period 2014-2020, EUSALP also increased the integration of different EU funds (EAFRD, ERDF, ESF) as well as the dedicated amounts. Finally, Regional Law 3/2014, the so-called 'Law for Mountains', introduced the Mountain Unions as an inter-municipality administrative level able to guarantee the cooperation among small municipalities in mountain contexts.

4.2 Internal drivers

Both case studies are part of a wider global phase that creates a new vision of territories mostly based on the attractiveness of environmental beauty and ecological and cultural diversity. Even if this is an international trend, it is possible to recognise specific characteristics of the case studies that have driven or have accelerated the transition to this 'new' form of economic development.

As mentioned, the Corona Verde idea developed within a broader context of changes and innovation in economic development and in conservation of historical heritage and nature. Beginning in the 1980s and due to the consolidating concept of sustainability, a new environmental awareness emerged that was closely related to a new model of economic development. Meanwhile, industrial decline in the Turin metropolitan area as well as in the whole Piedmont region required new forms of employment and a rethink around economic

¹⁵ http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/macro-regional-strategies/alpine/#3

development. In the 20th century, Turin was the biggest Fordist city in Italy, whose development was based on the car industry (mainly FIAT's factories). As a consequence of its industrial development, Turin's population almost doubled in 20 years (1951-1971), reaching the unmatched peak of 1,200,000 inhabitants, then slowly decreasing to the current 890,000 inhabitants. The new factories belonging to FIAT and its supply chain attracted new inhabitants that settled firstly in new districts in the city, and then spread towards other surrounding municipalities (Caruso, Cotella, & Pede, 2015). Beginning in the 1980s, the decline of the car industry quickly affected the whole manufacturing system and culminated in a generalised crisis for the whole metropolitan area. The crisis also started a period of general reflection on the future of the metropolitan area, to reinvent its economic development and to shape a new identity based on culture, heritage and quality of life. The quality of the environment, the attractiveness of the landscape, and the general quality of life then began to be considered as a driving force for a new wave of economic development based on tourism, services and what was later to be considered as the green economy.

Regarding the SNAI programme, remote and ultra-remote areas have experienced national negative demographic trends since the late 1970s, as people increasingly moved to the industrialised cities for work. The negative effects of these trends on remote areas are: the increasing share/number of elderly people; the environmental deterioration of territories with increasing landslip and flooding risks; the reduction in the percentage of land exploited for agriculture in remote and ultra-remote areas, and; the increase in low quality forested areas. In Valle Ossola it is still possible to recognise social and economic trends similar to other marginalized areas of the country, but such trends are also due to different causes. Contrasting to most other inner areas, industrialisation played a crucial role within the Ossola valley. In particular, the energy production related to hydroelectric sources led to important national and international players entering the area, also attracted by the presence of international logistics infrastructures. In addition, the high specialisation of the industrial sector has over-exploited the natural resources, marginalizing the traditional agriculture and weakening the local community's ability to organise efficient tourist services. Moreover, the industrial decline that has recently also affected the economic system of the Ossola valley is having consequences on its demographic and economic trends. Initially, the strategic position of the valley, crossed by the international corridor that connects the valley to Switzerland, and in the proximity of the metropolitan areas of Piedmont and Lombardy, has absorbed the occupational shock of the labour market. However, in the long run, and also because of the international economic crisis, the number of people moving out of the valley is increasing (in the last ten years the valley population decreased by -1%¹⁶).

¹⁶ Source: ISTAT.

4.3 Actors

Both Piedmont Region case studies show the incremental development of a governance-oriented attitude from the involved stakeholders, characterised by the institution of increasingly strong horizontal and vertical relations. However, the governance structures of the case studies are the result of very different approaches. In Corona Verde the governance structure is constantly evolving, increasing the number of actors and territories (municipalities) involved in the project through a bottom-up approach. It also involves a *soft* functional geography that has not resulted in a new administrative territory. In contrast, the SNAI programme, being developed in a phase of strong centralisation under a technical ‘caretaking’ government, presents a strong top-down flavour and is characterised by a strong governance structure ‘imposed’ from above.

The Regional Authority, the Regional Park Authority and the Province of Turin (now Metropolitan City) originally promoted the Corona Verde. During the first phase the Regional Authority allocated funds (based on EU ROP-ERDF 2000-2006) to 30 local projects involving 24 municipalities (Figure 4.1). This phase was characterised by fragmented interventions at local scale and was in need of integration. During this period there was no meaningful cooperation between the Regional Authority and the municipalities: municipalities of a specific area took part in an open call with local projects but without an existing strategic framework or specific technical support (except for technical support provided by the former Province of Turin as it was legally required in planning issues). Due to such conditions, most municipalities that were selected were those that already had experience in EU programming or that had specific agencies or departments to manage such complex projects.

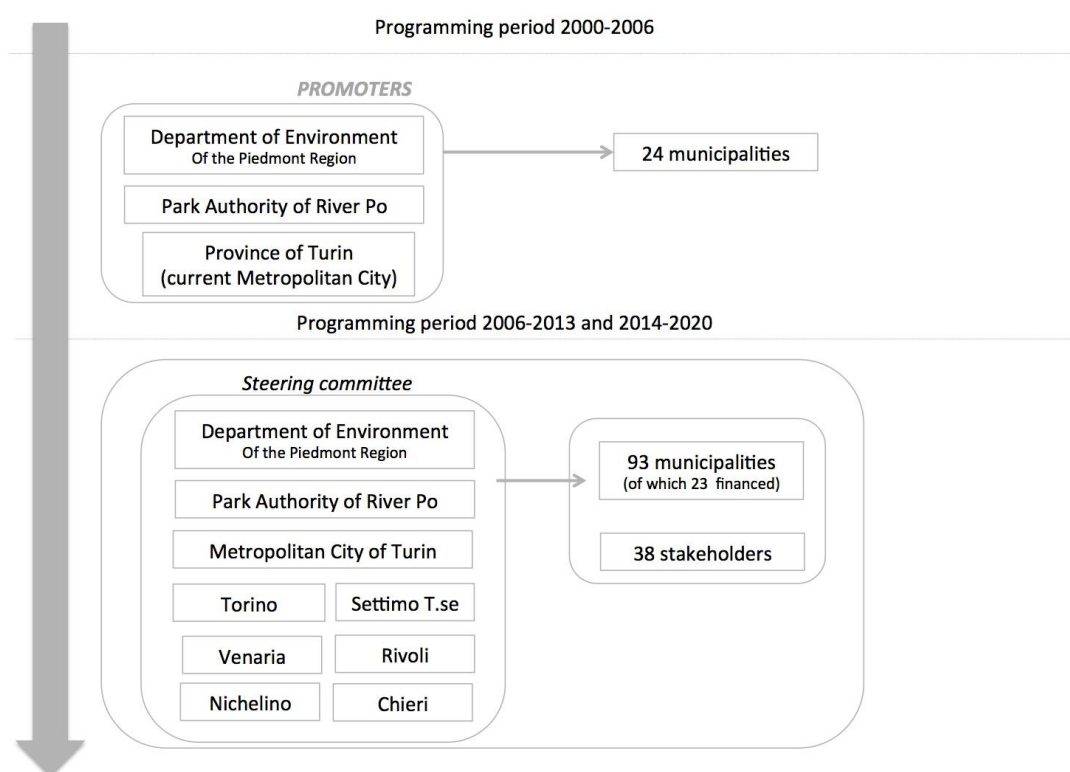
It was in the second phase of the life of Corona Verde (2007-2013 programming period) that strong governance emerged with both vertical and horizontal cooperation. Corona Verde became the tool for integrating strategic, landscape and urban planning objectives in a multi-scalar framework. In that period, projects were based on a strategic masterplan that established medium- and long-term integrated management methods and operational strategies, within which the initiatives of the programme should be implemented. Despite, or because of, the first phase, the Regional Authority worked in promoting greater awareness on environmental and landscape issues as well as on the value of inter-municipality cooperation. At the same time, the role of some stakeholders was strengthened, as in the case of involved park authorities and the leading municipalities¹⁷ of the six areas. The Corona Verde programme actually includes six park authorities and several “Natura 2000” protected areas that had already promoted cooperation among municipalities and stakeholders. In the same way, the six leading municipalities (one for each of the areas identified by the masterplan) were selected in order to promote the coordination inside their area, because of their competences in managing complex projects. Their leading role has improved capacity

¹⁷ The six leading municipalities were: Turin, Settimo Torinese, Venaria, Rivoli, Nichelino, Chieri.

building in those wider areas and, in particular, where small municipalities were unable to undertake complex projects on their own.

At the end of the second phase, 93 municipalities were involved in the project together with another 38 stakeholders to support the concept and the strategy of Corona Verde. Among the 93 municipalities, only 23 were financed and have seen projects implemented in their territories. The remaining joined Corona Verde because they understood the indirect benefits from the network in terms of enhancement of tourism, economic development and protection against soil erosion.

Figure 4.1: Corona Verde evolving stakeholders' framework.

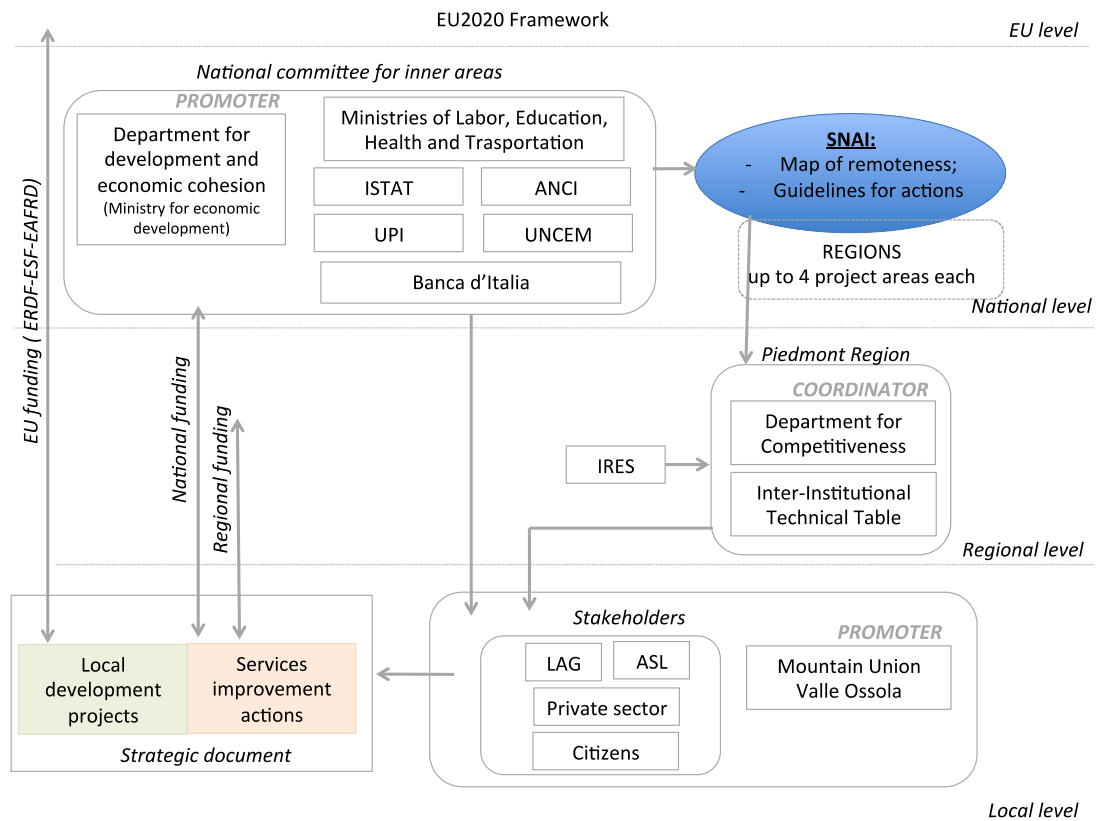


Source: authors

In the second case study of SNAI in Valle Ossola, instead, the action arises in 2011 from the initiative of the Ministry for Territorial Cohesion¹⁸, at that moment led by Fabrizio Barca. Since the beginning the Strategy foresaw the involvement of several actors at different territorial levels, with a perspective of strong vertical integration and wide horizontal cooperation. Figure 4.2 maps the institutional actors of the project.

¹⁸ Later the Ministry for Territorial Cohesion became a department of the Ministry for Economic Development, called the Department for Development and Economic Cohesion.

Figure 4.2: SNAI Valle Ossola stakeholders' framework.



Source: authors

The Strategy foresees a Technical Committee at the national level formed by ISTAT (the national statistics institute), Banca d'Italia, Anci (the national association of municipal governments), Uncem (the national association of mountain communities), Upi (the national association of provinces), and the Ministries of Labor, Education, Health and Transports, being led by the Department for Development and Economic Cohesion of the Italian Ministry for Economic Development. The Committee firstly built the methodology to evaluate the *remoteness* of the Country. Then it was at the forefront of fostering and monitoring the Strategy's application. Finally, it holds the responsibility for managing the National Federation of Project Areas, a platform for promoting and facilitating the outcomes of the Strategy.

According to the Strategy, the regional level is responsible for selecting the specific areas, providing political and technical support to the municipalities. Specifically, the Region plays a crucial role in managing the funding as it manages both the ROP and the RDP and also makes use of its own additional resources for health and mobility interventions. The Piedmont Region was supported also by IRES Piemonte, a regional institute in charge of research activities to assist the Region's planning responsibilities, for the selection of the project areas. The national agreement to be reached among the different institutions involved also requires an inter-institutional technical panel at the regional level. In the case of Piedmont, this includes the Departments of: Competitiveness (leading); Culture, Tourism and Sports; Environment; Agriculture; Transport, Infrastructure, Mobility and Logistics; Soil Protection,

mountain economy and forests; Education, Training and Labour; and Health. The leading department also has to ensure coordination with the ministries and the other stakeholders.

Regarding the SNAI programme, according to the interviewees, centralised management has caused some conflicts and frictions between the government and the regional authorities. In Italy, the strong regionalisation process is the key link between EU cohesion policy and the regional level, whilst the government decision to dedicate part of EU funds to the (nationally-driven) SNAI programme has been viewed as an interference in the internal affairs of the regions. However, such conflict between government and regional authorities has triggered positive outcomes, even though it has caused some delays.

The local level is entitled to apply to take part in the SNAI Strategy, identifying the objectives and actions needed for achieving the intended results. It must be noted that the project area can be both an administrative or functional territory, but it should be an aggregation of adjacent municipalities that already have associated municipal organisations (more or less formalised) and/or consortia services. In this framework the project area of Valle Ossola is a particular case because the SNAI area only partially overlaps with the Mountain Union of Valle Ossola. The project area includes 10 municipalities of which eight are part of the Mountain Union and two are not part of the Union but have consortia services. There are another 10 municipalities outside of the Mountain Union without the necessary criteria to be part of the project area, but forming a strategic area of influence in the project. The fragility of the institutional framework at local level was the critical element in the implementation of the Valle Ossola project. The voluntary nature of the aggregation has also had alternative phases of commitment due to local political changes. The biggest municipality of the area, Domodossola, had withdrawn from the Mountain Union and then also from the SNAI programme in 2017. It remains, however, the main inter-municipal 'pole of attraction' for education, health and transport services in the area, so its exit can have negative consequences on projects related to pre-conditions' actions concerning access to services.

Nevertheless, at the local level, the Mountain Union of Valle Ossola has the steering role. It promotes and facilitates the Strategy involving the private sector, associations and citizens. Other public bodies at different scales also take part in the process, such as the local action group (LAG), the local health agency (ASL) and transport companies. The methodology of the Strategy foresees focus groups, meetings and events for the involvement and inclusion of all involved stakeholders. Due to the lack of specialised institutional and technical capacities, the Mountain Union required the support of a private consultancy Caire Consorzio (specialising in planning and local development) that had already supported inter-municipal cooperation in the area and that is also the consultant for another three SNAI projects in the central and southern part of Italy. Caire plays the role of mediator and consultant, promoting the participatory process.

The main tool for implementing the SNAI programme is the Project Framework Agreement (PFA) signed by the Region, local bodies, the Central Coordination Administration and other

dedicated administrations. It is a negotiating tool that enables all the parties to agree on sectors and areas in which territorial development interventions are to be carried out. The PFA foresees a Coordinating Committee (that includes all the signatories) comprising a Technical Secretariat and a Team of Experts. The PFA provides the requisite regulations to fully apply SNAI and it is designed to be an effective decision-making tool (Barca, Casavola, & Lucatelli, 2014). Use of PFA does not preclude the use of other legislative tools for implementing individual projects such as Community-Led Local Development (CLLD) and Integrated Territorial Investment (ITI).

Some of the actions of the Strategy can also impact on the spatial local plans. In those cases, special planning tools are not foreseen. The modification of the spatial local plan will follow normal procedures as prescribed by existing planning law.

Leadership of the project has involved different stages. In the first stage of the SNAI programme, the Regional Authority was comprised of a right-wing majority at the time. Then a left-wing majority won the election in 2014, which resulted in changes to the priority order of the selected project areas. However, there was, and still is, a good political understanding of the potential of SNAI at the regional level, even if some difficulties can be witnessed in the relationships among all the departments directly and indirectly involved in the programme. The Department of Competitiveness, in particular, is the lead body for the implementation of SNAI because ERDF funds are mainly managed by it, while the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Department of Mountain Affairs have been less invested, although SNAI brings with it enormous implications for these sectors.

With regard to governance amongst actors, the national SNAI programme developed tools for promoting vertical and horizontal governance, which particularly include inter-level and inter-sectorial technical panels. Contrary to what happened with the Corona Verde experience, where the steering committee and the working group became the driving force behind the project, the inter-departmental coordination panels have been at best only a partial success, as they have rarely convened. This happens particularly at regional level, compared to local level where the use, for the first time, of participatory methodologies have prompted local actors to get involved due to the benefits of capacity building and for local planning practices.

4.4 Means

The two case studies show a very different initial approach to funding. Corona Verde was based on the idea of initial 'seed' funding followed by substantial EU funding, after which the project was expected to find a way to be self-sustaining. Specifically, the Regional Authority, during the two programming periods 2000-2006 and 2007-2013, dedicated a specific axis of the ROP to the Corona Verde programme: the 30 projects of the 2000-2006 programming period were financed with a €12.5 million grant, whereas during the programming period 2007-2013 an additional grant of €10 million was provided. Besides this funding, the

Regional Authority also invested some internal funds for the development and implementation of a masterplan, commissioned to the Politecnico di Torino (2007). In the 2014-2020 programming period the Regional Authority did not foresee a specific axis for the Corona Verde programme and today, due to the lack of financial driving forces, project implementation is based only on the stakeholders' capacity to access funding. On the one hand, this improved the institutional capacity in functional cooperation but at the same time no guarantees can now be given regarding its implementation, thus also putting at risk already consolidated cooperation.

In contrast, one of the novelties of the SNAI programme is its multi-fund approach, both in terms of sources and target issues. The rationale behind this approach lies in the typologies of actions, considering that actions with long term or permanent impacts (e.g. the provision of adequate services) cannot be funded through one-off funds but need ordinary resources. Thus, the Strategy foresees the integration of (ordinary) national and regional resources and (extraordinary) EU ones.

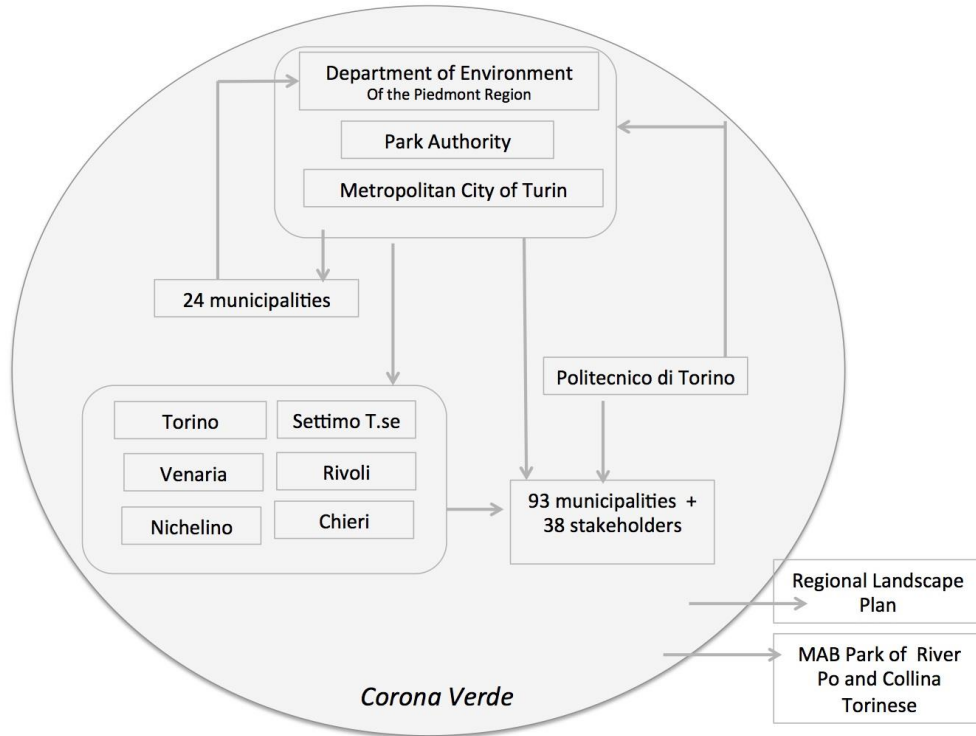
A second factor of innovation in the sources of funding in SNAI concerns the overcoming of the sectorial approach and the integration of funds with different scopes (EAFRD, ERDF, ESF). Despite the reforms of the 2014-2020 programming, EU funds continue to have mechanisms and timing schedules that do not make fund integration easy. The Strategy tries to overcome this perspective, for example combining the rural issue and the social inclusion issue into the well-known LEADER approach. According to interviews, SNAI attempted to overcome the sectorial approach but did not take into account the full extent of the procedural constraints involved in aligning these diverse funds¹⁹. Piedmont Region thus foresees Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) as instruments for creating attractiveness in inner territories, guaranteeing to this extent specific axes of the ROP. The Region should also attempt to ensure synergies between ERDF and ESF and EAFRD programming, as well as financial integration with other national resources (with the framework of the Stability Law) and regional funding (Meloni, 2015).

4.5 Knowledge and Communication

The two cases show different approaches to knowledge flow and communication. As mentioned, SNAI is characterised by a top-down structure that has defined (as much as possible) the various steps of the process, including the management of knowledge. In contrast, governance structures for the Corona Verde programme have developed along the way and the flow of knowledge has followed different phases and players (Figure 4.3).

¹⁹ The ERDF, for instance, allows the selection of a specific area as target, while the PSR is based on the principle of equal access, thus cannot target any particular area. There is an exception with LEADER areas, but in general the regional administration is struggling to overcome such conflicts.

Figure 4.3 Knowledge flows of Corona Verde programme.



Source: authors

The main innovation in the knowledge flow of Corona Verde, however, has been the capacity to interact at different scales and, at the same time, the capability to increase the knowledge of the actors involved, recognising the value of their tacit knowledge. As a result, Corona Verde programme has resulted in the witnessing of: a general improvement of institutional capacities; the creation of a new awareness in local communities on environmental issues, and; a new strategic consciousness amongst key actors / institutions.

Specifically, the project began from the idea to integrate the cultural and the natural heritage of the metropolitan area in order to connect the different parts (buildings and parks) of the 'Crown of Delights'. It is important to highlight that before the first programming period there was meaningful interaction between the Region and the municipalities. However, selected projects showed the institutional capacities of the different territories of the metropolitan area and the functional geographies that already existed and cooperated within them. Only with the masterplan elaborated by the Politecnico di Torino and the second programming period it is possible to see an increase in the flow of knowledge of the whole Corona Verde programme. The milestones of the knowledge flow in that period were: the above masterplan, the integration of Corona Verde in the Regional Landscape Plan, and the Communication Plan.

The masterplan constitutes the first spatial visualisation of the territorial analyses and has contributed to the awareness of the potential of the different resources when, and if, integrated. The integration in the Regional Landscape Plan and the adoption of the Corona

Verde approach contributed to regional knowledge in terms of tackled issues and adopted methodologies. The Communication Plan, on the other hand, contributed to the inclusion of citizens in the process, increasing the attention in local agendas to sustainable mobility and quality of open spaces.

Furthermore, the knowledge (and the infrastructures) produced by Corona Verde have been fundamental for other projects, such as the Man and Biosphere Reserve nomination for the River Po and Collina Torinese Park, and the participation of the Piedmont Region to VENTO, a national project for creating a cycle route along the River Po to connect Turin to Venice.

Currently the knowledge flow of Corona Verde is still ongoing, thanks to the integration of knowledge from other regional projects and plans as in the case of the Regional Ecological Network²⁰ (adopted by the DGR n.52-1979/2015).

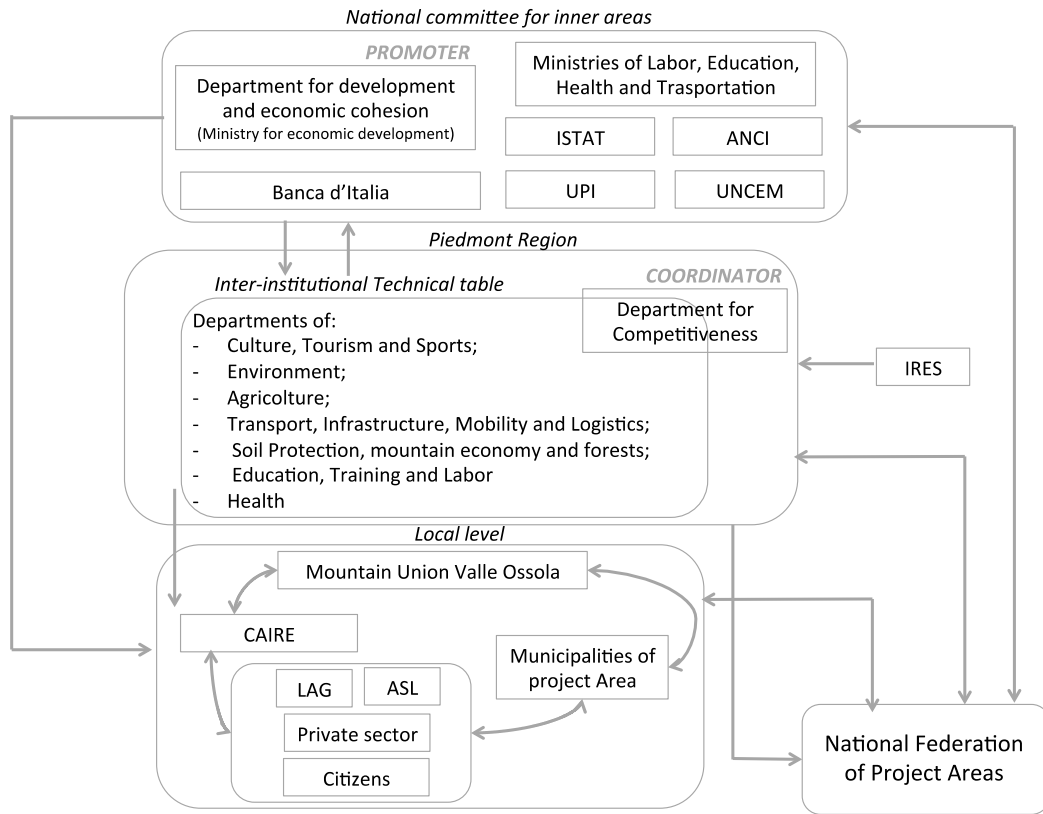
Figure 4.4 maps the knowledge flows involved in the SNAI programme. Much of the knowledge exchange takes place directly among the participants in the project, but also contributions from some national agencies. The Strategy foresees strong sets of criteria based on national and context data that have to be used for all the phases of the project: during the selection phase, indicators have the specific purpose to support and guide policy making; after that, indicators are used to reduce the degree of fuzziness of objectives, helping to quantify targets and define timing.

At the national level, indicators (e.g. education rate, demographic trends, tourism related measures, etc.) are provided mostly by ISTAT and Banca d'Italia, but also ANCI, UNCEM, and UPI have contributed to mapping the *remoteness* of the country. At the national level knowledge mostly concerns quantitative data, while at the regional level knowledge is based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis, in order to ensure a deeper understanding of territorial specificities. The analyses were provided by IRES Piemonte, but the selection of the project areas also took into consideration the capacities and potentialities of the different areas, evaluated through the tacit knowledge of the regional Department of Competitiveness. At the local level the process allows for the widening of collective knowledge through the inclusion of several stakeholders and of citizens. In most of the cases, this was an opportunity for collecting, organising and systematising a form of knowledge that is mostly tacit in small communities.

In addition, the SNAI programme aims to disseminate knowledge created by the different projects through a platform called the National Federation of Project Areas. The Federation serves to promote and facilitate the dissemination of the outcomes of the Strategy through sharing and comparison of experiences related to methods. It provides know-how in the field of marginalised areas and creates opportunities for exchange with other areas and institutions working on similar objectives.

²⁰ <https://www.arpa.piemonte.gov.it/approfondimenti/temi-ambientali/ecosistemi-e-biodiversita/reti-ec>

Figure 4.4: Knowledge flows of SNAI Valle Ossola



Source: authors

4.6 Main obstacles and bottlenecks

The main bottlenecks envisaged in the case studies result from the typologies of funding, leadership and commitment.

As mentioned, the two cases have different approaches to funding. However, they both show problems in integrating EU funds from different sources (such as EAFRD, ERDF and ESF). Despite the reforms of the programming period 2014-2020, EU funds continue to have mechanisms and timing that do not make their integration easy. The greatest difficulties concern the integration of ERDF and ESF funds with EAFRD, contributing to the strong division which still exists between urban and rural policies. This is particularly evident in projects that are green-oriented, requiring synergies among economic, social and environmental sectors. For example, in Corona Verde the lack of funding integration was the main cause of the low level of participation of the (private) agricultural sector that is usually financed by the EAFRD, whilst the ERDF mainly finances public entities. Thus, Corona Verde, that was financed by ROP axes, missed the target of involving the farming community because they could not directly benefit from the financial incentives.

Timing is also relevant in another way. The recent economic crisis has produced a dramatic impact over the financial budget of Italian public bodies, nowadays depending more and more on opportunities offered by EU funding programmes. The use of short-term funds, however, can hamper the success of strategies that need long periods and more permanent funding. This is evidenced in Corona Verde where progress is stuck, at present, due to lack of funding. The current funds come from the so-called Bando Periferie (national call for neighbourhood), but these funds are dedicated to actions on governance, communication, green education and cycling mobility, not for building new / green infrastructures.

In addition, austerity policies have also limited the use of financial instruments like those that provide support for investments by way of loans, guarantees, equity and other risk-bearing mechanisms, reducing the possibilities of funding.

In terms of the SNAI programme, another bottleneck results from the different phases in both vertical and horizontal governance influencing its leadership and political commitment. SNAI was, in fact, born as a strongly centralised initiative (national government driven) due to a caretaker government. During this phase there was big interest in this policy and several national funds were allocated for achieving it, mostly due to the individual effort of the then Minister for Territorial Cohesion. After the reshuffling of the national government and migration of the relevant competences from a ministry to a department, the whole SNAI programme lost a lot of its momentum. There is no guarantee that the programme will continue financing all the project areas selected by the Italian regions, but they will most likely depend on the national Stability Law, on a year-by-year basis.

A similar situation can be witnessed at the local level: changes of political leadership in municipalities in the Mountain Union have triggered a crisis in the local process related to SNAI. The biggest municipality of the Union (Domodossola) has already withdrawn from the Mountain Union, while in 2018 other municipalities will have local elections, with the risk of new defections from the Union. The first pilot project of the SNAI programme in the Piedmont Region (in Valle Maira and Grana) has had strong local actors driving the process, while the weakness of the leadership in Valle Ossola is strongly affecting the impacts of the Strategy, with the risk of failure of the project.

In this light, it should be noted that the Piedmont Region is a very noteworthy case in the Italian framework. The high administrative fragmentation and the regional law on Mountain Unions and Unions of Municipalities in fact appear to contribute to the instability of soft aggregations. According to law, Mountain Unions are not legally obliged to be neighbouring, they do not have time constraints (each municipality can decide to exit the union at any time), and the Region has not put in place an appropriate incentive scheme to guarantee real benefits for those municipalities wishing to associate. All these aspects have contributed to generate aggregations of municipalities that are more based on short-term political affinity than on socio-economic, cultural or historical and geographical reasons.

4.7 Analysis and evaluation (Impacts)

The Corona Verde programme has promoted, through 30 projects of the first phase and 14 projects of the second, the ecological restoration of riverbanks and green corridors, the improvement of infrastructures, and the realisation of cycling paths and recreational equipment. Surprisingly, it did not plan a methodology to measure and evaluate its results, thus it is not possible to evaluate, for instance, the economic impacts of the new infrastructures on tourism or on rural activities. However, it is possible to see positive trends in the metropolitan area, in the last few years, around those sectors and activities promoted and developed by Corona Verde. The new infrastructures have also contributed to raising awareness in institutional actors and local communities around quality of the environment and quality of life issues, while the increasing number and length of cycling lanes (112 km) has contributed to a more sustainable mobility. In general, and as an indirect measure, the number of investments in environmental, sustainable mobility and on tourist services has increased in the municipalities that took part in Corona Verde programme.

Furthermore, Corona Verde has played a crucial role in the creation of a new vision for Turin. The City of Turin during the 2000s adopted its first Strategic Plan that, in just a few years, has widened its objectives to include a metropolitan perspective. In that framework, Corona Verde introduced a different and innovative vision of urban quality and urban development (Cassatella, 2016) to the extent that this has been considered part of the strategic vision for development of the metropolitan area (Torino Strategica, 2016).

The most innovative impacts certainly concern the governance structure and cooperation among institutional bodies. The number of actors involved has constantly risen and the leadership of the project has changed over time, adapting to different numbers and dynamics of actors according to the scale. Park authorities and the biggest municipalities, that already had competences in cooperation, became important nodes for the governance of Corona Verde and leading actors for their respective territories. At the same time, territories and institutions that did not cooperate in the past have started long-term cooperation with neighbouring municipalities. Nowadays Corona Verde does not benefit from guaranteed funding, but the technical and administrative skills acquired by involved actors over the years should enable to adaptation of the project to different funding sources while maintaining consistency in the original vision.

As regards SNAI in Valle Ossola, the process is currently at its beginning at the local level. It is thus not possible to evaluate its results while only a preliminary version of the Strategy has been produced and no action has been undertaken.

However, it should be stressed that the national SNAI programme calls on each local area involved in the programme to develop a logical scheme that outlines the links between expected results, outcome indicators and actions to achieve the desired results. Each project must define the most suitable outcome indicators that are able to both translate into

measurable goals and communicate progress of the Strategy to all who are interested in its success.

The national guidelines provide a schema of potential outcome indicators to monitor progress in each area; indicators that are largely based on those collected during the process for the selection of the areas (e.g. education rate, demographic trends, tourism, etc.). In this context, the use of indicators is twofold: during the selection of the pilot areas the indicators have the specific purpose to support and guide policy making whereas, during the process that leads to the strategic document, indicators are used to reduce the degree of fuzziness of objectives, to help quantify targets to be achieved within a few years (Barca, Brezzi, Terribile, & Utili, 2005).

5 Overall findings

5.1 The role of the Piedmont Region

The overarching purpose of the ReSSI research project is to examine how the Europe 2020 objectives of smart, sustainable and inclusive development can be promoted by local and regional authorities in Europe, in the context of evolving landscapes of territorial governance and planning. In order to achieve this purpose, the cases in the Piedmont Region – in the context of deep changes in territorial governance and spatial planning in Italy – has aimed to address the following research question:

What is the role of Piedmont Region in governing the change in the non-metropolitan part of its territory, to ensure that these areas are not excluded from the main development trajectories?

The analysis shows that efforts to promote smart, sustainable and inclusive territorial development is even more complicated, in the context of the Piedmont Region, because of the peculiar institutional configuration that characterises the region (and Italy more broadly) as a consequence of the 2014 Delrio administrative reforms (law 56/2014). The creation of the Metropolitan City of Torino and the drastic reduction of resources and responsibilities to the remaining provinces are, in fact, forcing the Piedmont Regional Authority to pursue a twofold approach when promoting the development of its territory. On the one hand, it has to come to terms with the emergence of an institutional subject, the metropolitan city, that will supposedly play a relevant role in the territorial development of the territory of the former province of Torino. On the other hand, the Region should cooperate directly with the many diverse municipalities lying outside the metropolitan city, without the coordination of any other strong intermediate level in between.

The performed analysis of the case studies shows that the Piedmont Region has been undertaking a range of efforts, in the last two decades, towards the promotion of smart, sustainable and inclusive development in its territories, both in the metropolitan area and in remote areas. Furthermore, both case studies can be considered part of wider global phase that considers environmental, ecological and cultural diversity as strategic assets for regional and economic development. The industrial decline of the region has accelerated the transition to this 'new' economic development – in the metropolitan area first and more recently in the non-metropolitan areas. Regarding remote areas, in particular from 2000, the Piedmont Regional Authority has promoted a number of policies to stimulate development in the mountain areas, leading to Regional Law 3/2014, the so-called "Law for Mountains".

There is still a potential key role for regional authorities more broadly in their support of smart, sustainable and inclusive development, primarily due to the global challenges that regional territories have to face. Firstly, the actions required to reach goals of environmental quality, attractiveness of the landscape and the services related to the green economy cannot be

limited to local level but need a wider vision that overcome the dimensions of any single municipality. In this light, regions have competence over regulating the organisation of functions at supra-municipal level, along with forms of partnership among local authorities. Therefore, regional authorities should do more to enable municipalities to overcome long-standing political and other rivalries, and undertake actions around more streamlined management of services. Secondly, regions have technical skills and instruments in managing complex networks and projects, and should work to strengthen capacity building at local levels.

To this extent, the strong regionalisation of EU Cohesion policy management has facilitated place-based approaches, but the sectorial division of funding (public, private, industrial sector) affects horizontal governance among regional authorities and agencies.

It is also important to highlight that the regional authority should continue to undertake the exchange of knowledge, information and technical assistance, as more integrated approaches are needed to address global challenges for smart, sustainable and inclusive development. Finally, in the two analysed cases there is evidence of emerging topics in the European debate, in particular, the role of ecosystem services and the integration between rural and urban policies.

5.2 Recommendations to the Piedmont Regional authority

The above findings highlight how there are opportunities for improving regional coordination and developing more effective strategies to deliver smart, sustainable and inclusive development in the Piedmont Region (and potentially in other regions). In this context, the following recommendations to the Piedmont Regional Authority are proposed:

- **Reinforce aggregations of municipalities through laws, incentives, and funding:**
The analysis of the case studies highlights how the institutional hyper fragmentation and the excessive flexibility in the aggregation of municipalities represent critical elements. The traditional boundaries of local governments are defended involving the identity argument, without any considerations of scale economies and efficiency in the provision of public services. It is not only a budgetary problem, since small-sized municipalities have few and often little or low-skilled human resources and thus fewer opportunities to attract public and private investment. But also, the current Piedmont law on Unions of Municipalities is weaker if compared to other Italian regions (e.g. Emilia-Romagna) promoting aggregations that are based more on political affinities than on social-cultural or historical and geographical reasons. In this light, the regional law should require more functional coherence in municipal aggregations. At the same time, incentive mechanisms should be established to ensure benefits and/or funding are reserved for aggregations. For example, specific ROP axes or

premium points for Municipalities Unions that submit projects concerning aggregation should be introduced.

- **Implement mechanisms for horizontal governance in regional authority departments:** the horizontal coordination between the various departments of the regional authority should be improved, to favour synergies among the existing regional planning tools and funding. The current instruments for coordination, such as inter-department technical coordination panels, have proved to be inadequate and ineffective.
- **Improving institutional capacity building at local level:** particular attention should be dedicated to supporting micro- and small-sized municipalities, as they often lack the necessary institutional capacity to perform the task. The scarce institutional capacity at local level may undermine success of complex projects and may result in unequal access to funding. Thus, the implementation phase should not just be focused on physical and functional achievements, but should also involve the empowerment of actors involved. In this light, small municipalities (inhabitants of between 5,000 and 10,000) are most affected because they are more cautious of the aggregation process but, at the same time, have low-skilled human resources.
- **To further promote, within the governance framework, the “Corona Verde rationale”:** attention should be devoted to establishing a proactive cooperation with the newly instituted Metropolitan City of Torino, ensuring that the strategic and coordination planning documents that will be produced by the latter will include the Corona Verde rationale or model as a pivotal element. This could also represent the opportunity to finalise the specific masterplans of the six areas of Corona Verde that have not yet been completed. In this light, the recently adopted PPR may constitute a promising way forward, as it incorporates the rationale of Corona Verde and will exert a binding influence over the local land use plans of the regions’ municipalities. Overall, efforts towards an efficient non-hierarchical vertical coordination should aim at enhancing coherence between regional and metropolitan city territorial development strategies, as well as exploiting synergies in funds’ programming.
- **Carefully monitor and capitalize the development of the SNAI strategies and their impact:** given the interesting character of SNAI, which constitutes an attempt to integrate EU and national priorities throughout Italian territory, the Piedmont Regional Authority may want to carefully accompany and monitor its development and implementation, to capitalize on the ongoing process, thus deriving interesting elements that may in turn contribute to informing the contents of future regional development strategies and related programming instruments more broadly.

5.3 Recommendations to regional stakeholders across Europe:

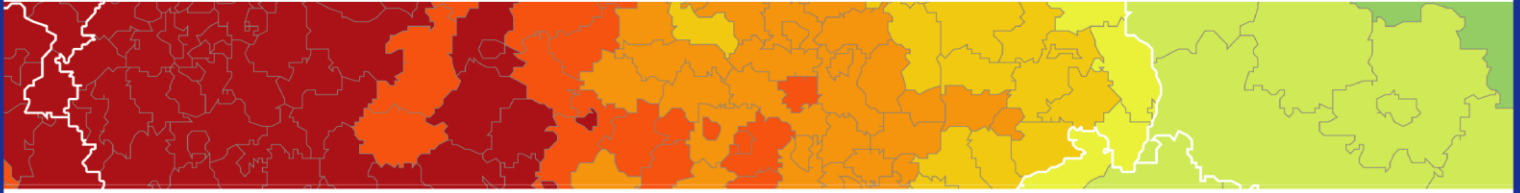
The overall findings also suggest elements that may also constitute sources of inspiration for other socio-spatial and territorial contexts in Europe. In this light, the following recommendations are identified:

- **To reinforce shared territorial visions among stakeholders:** Territorial vision and strategies shared among stakeholders (regional and local mobilisation) enhance policy action, especially in a framework of scarce financial resources. Funding is crucial and when it comes to an end there is a risk of losing consolidated cooperation capital or of changing the aims in order to get new funding. The case of the Corona Verde programme shows how strong shared knowledge / consciousness makes it possible to adapt project aims to different funding sources whilst maintaining consistency with the original vision. 'Fishing' for funds can be effective but it should be fitted into a wider strategy.
- **Vertical and horizontal integration of funding should be improved in order to ensure proactive coordination and synergy:** the vertical integration of EU, national and regional funds can guarantee more coherence of the agendas at different governance and planning levels. Despite the reforms of the 2014-2020 programming, EU funds continue to have mechanisms and timing schedules that do not make fund integration easy. In the same way, territorial approaches have been implemented via different tools (CLLD and ITI) in the evolution of the Cohesion and Rural Development policy, but their use cannot be considered satisfactory regarding ERDF.
- **In addition to the programming document, a strategic (territorial) document could help to link territorial needs to fund opportunities:** currently, the European Structural and Investment Funds do not sufficiently focus on the territorial dimension of their impact. There is a lack of focus on strategic planning and priorities that should be overcome by integrating a strategic territorial document to the programming document. In Corona Verde, the spatial visualisation of the guidelines through the masterplan has reinforced the objectives of the project, especially through the alignment of the project to the wider regional strategy.
- **Recognize the role of cohesion policy on matters of ecosystem services and peripheral areas:** debates around EU policies are paying more attention to topics such as ecosystem services and the development of peripheral areas. These topics are mostly faced by the Common Agricultural Policy rather than Cohesion Policy because they primarily concern areas that are rural in character and economy. The Italian experience of the SNAI programme addresses this debate by demonstrating routes for cohesion policy to be aligned with a place-based development approach.

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