

Ground(s)

Mapping, Designing and Caring:
Towards a Convivial Society

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GROUNDs

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The Val di Sole Blueprint: Mapping Dynamics Assets for Sustainable Development of Marginal Territories in Alpine Context.

Fragile Landscapes; Water Ecosystems; Inner Territories; Dynamic Mapping; Branding4Resilience

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In Italy, the fragile territories addressed by the National Strategy on Inner Areas (SNAI), despite their geographical marginalization and demographic decline, are lately experiencing a growing momentum. Currently lacking successful policies for effective transformations, the adoption of a sustainable design-driven approach is necessary in order not to compromise the territorial resources of these areas with a spread “urbanized” strategy. The PRIN project “B4R. Branding4Resilience” addresses such issue investigating marginal territories around the Italian peninsula and proposing territorial brands that promote resilience. This paper presents the first results of the University of Trento research unit after the preliminary phase of context exploration: according to a multi-disciplinary and multi-level approach, a data collecting process allowed to map the ecological, social, and spatial elements of the Val di

Sole pilot area. As a portrait map of the valley, the presented “blueprint” highlights the hydrological network, where springs and thermal waters are at the center of the blue infrastructure that has to be developed. Indeed, this digital cyanotype is an operative tool to support further co-design and co-visioning processes towards a territorial strategy based on the value of the water resources and focused on the implementation of thermal landscapes through spatial transformation.

Introduction

The current (post-)pandemic era has reactivated many reflections about the relation among natural and urban environments, with particular interest to marginal areas¹. Small villages all over Italy—from the Alps to the Apennines and the islands—are spaces for re-habitation in new and different life and work models². Indeed, these “inner areas”, as defined by the National Strategy for Inner Areas (SNAI) (Fig. 1), are not

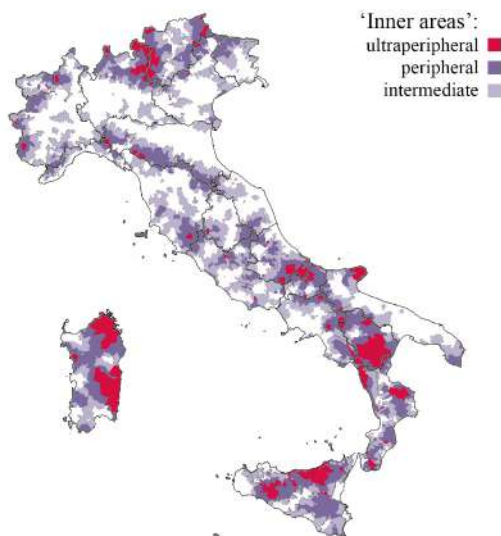


Fig. 01

Inner areas in Italy according to the SNAI.
 Credits: Coordination Sara Favargiotti, graphic elaboration Chiara Chioni, 2022

1. *Aree interne e covid*, ed. Nicolò Fenu (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2020).

2. In *Riabitare l'Italia. Le aree interne tra abbandoni e riconquiste*, ed.

Antonio De Rossi (Roma: Donzelli, 2018), the huge territorial capital made up of villages, agricultural and river systems, woods, and minor infrastructures was presented, waiting to be reinterpreted, reused, maintained, and renewed.

residual³, but account for almost 53% of municipalities, 23% of the population and about 60% of the entire territory⁴ and require a sensitive, respectful, and sustainable design-driven approach in order not to compromise their territorial resources. Economic, service, and infrastructure marginality have been the primary focus of studies and funding initiatives, with the classification of the inner areas based on quantitative indicators primarily aimed at assessing their "accessibility" to essential services⁵. However, the value of natural resources, contemporary interpretations of ancient land management processes, and innovative practices to care for landscape and building heritage in vulnerable contexts have yet to be fully explored and used as indicators of quality of life⁶.

In this framework, the PRIN project, "B4R. Branding4Resilience"⁷, aims to investigate the possibility of a new role of the peripheral contexts in relation to metropolitan areas, for a more balanced human-natural lifestyle. This applied research intervenes on four inner areas in Marche Region,

3. The Italian Pavilion at the Biennale Architettura 2018, "Arcipelago It, curated by Mario Cucinella, chose these territories to represent the Italian identity.

4. Dipartimento per lo Sviluppo e la Coesione Economica (2013), *Strategia Nazionale per le Aree Interne: definizione, obiettivi, strumenti e governance. Accordo di partenariato 2014-2020*, Roma.

5. A similar classification criterion defined the "inner peripheries" of the European project PROFECY (ESPON, *PROFECY – Processes, Features and Cycles of Inner Peripheries in Europe*, 2017).

6. Blečić and Cecchini, to assess the fragility/opportunity, propose the reference to the concept of territorial capital based on a combination of human capital, social capital, cognitive capital, infrastructural capital, productive capital, relational capital, environmental capital, settlement capital. (Ivan Blečić, Arnaldo "Bibo" Cecchini, "Elogio della fragilità: città e territorio per l'epoca (post-) pandemica" in *Aree interne e covid* (Siracusa: LetteraVentidue, 2020), 264).

7. The research "B4R. Branding4Resilience. Tourist infrastructure as a tool to enhance small villages by drawing resilient communities and new open habitats" (project number 201735N7HP) is a research project of relevant national interest (PRIN 2017 - Young Line) funded by the Ministry of University and Research (MUR) (Italy) with a three-year duration (2020–2024). The project is coordinated by Prof. Maddalena Ferretti (Università Politecnica delle Marche), and it involves as partners the University of Palermo (local coordinator Prof. Barbara Lino), the University of Trento (local coordinator Prof. Sara Favargiotti) and the Politecnico di Torino (local coordinator Prof. Diana Rolando). For more information: www.branding4resilience.it.

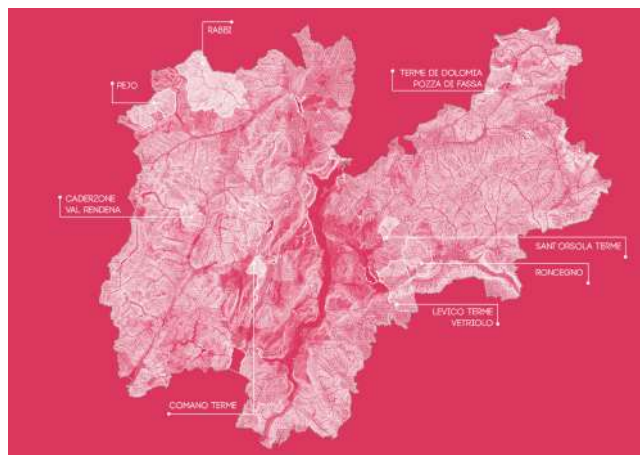


Fig. 02
Thermal system in
Trento province.
Credits: Coordination
Sara Favargiotti,
graphic elaboration
Margherita Pasquali,
2020.

Trento Province, Piedmont, and Sicily to design tourist infrastructures in selected small villages (i.e., focus areas) as agents of a larger transformation path, towards resilient communities and new open habitats. The ongoing project is structured in three main stages: (i) an exploration phase, to identify and describe the contexts involved with a focus on spatial interactions; (ii) a co-design operative phase, and (iii) a co-visioning phase, both involving local actors and communities. Expected results of these phases are an atlas, exploring and mapping the contexts, a web-based collaborative platform, enabling tailored experiences, and a roadmap, drawing and guiding strategic scenarios towards resilient communities and habitats⁸.

This paper aims to present and discuss the first results achieved in the exploratory phase by the University of Trento research unit, which pursues leadership in innovating with nature through locally

8. Maddalena Ferretti, Sara Favargiotti, Barbara Lino, Diana Rolando, "B4R Branding4Resilience. Tourist infrastructure as a tool to enhance small villages by drawing resilient communities and new open habitats" in *Atti della XXIII Conferenza Nazionale SIU. DOWNSCALING, RIGHTSIZING. Contrazione demografica e riorganizzazione spaziale* (Roma-Milano: Planum Publisher, 2021), 346-354.

Maddalena Ferretti, Sara Favargiotti, Barbara Lino, Diana Rolando, Branding4Resilience. Explorative and Collaborative Approaches for Inner Territories. *Sustainability* 2022, 14, 11235. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141811235>.

implementable actions in small thermal villages (Fig. 2), specifically focusing on the Val di Sole pilot area⁹. The goal is to develop a territorial strategy based on the value of water resources, by encouraging the enhancement of the territorial capital through spatial transformation. The development of nature-based activities, focused on creating healthier living habitat, is promoted in relation to blue and green infrastructures¹⁰: the first one corresponds to the hydrological network, where springs and thermal waters are at the center of the enhancement process; the second one is the environmental system that connects the natural resources and the ecological paths.

Methodology

The general methodology developed for the exploration phase is common for all the research units of the B4R project and is structured using an open matrix that allows critical reading and methodological validation. The construction of this matrix started from the analysis of contexts up to their interpretation, based on the definition and sharing of four key concepts: resilience, vulnerability/vibrancy, local identity, and place-making.

In particular, the B4R definition of resilience must guide and verify the exploration phase, which consists in the actions of reading and knowing, interpreting, and selecting the focus areas. This first phase develops through mapping and analysis processes based on reworking and extraction of data, categorizing and grouping them within four macro dimensions: “infrastructure, landscape, and ecosystems”, “built and cultural heritage, and settlements dynamics”, “economies and values”, and “networks and services, community and governance models”. Moreover, numerous sub-themes are defined to thematize and visualize the data in cross maps.

9. Sara Favargiotti, Margherita Pasquali, Chiara Chioni, Angelica Pianegonda, Water Resources and Health Tourism in Val di Sole: Key Elements for Innovating with Nature in the Italian Inner Territories. *Sustainability* 2022, 14(18), 11294. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su141811294>.

10. Maria Beatrice Andreucci, *Progettare Green Infrastructure* (Milano: Wolters Kluwer Italia, 2017).

These maps are the result of the collection, analysis, and interpretation of the same categories of data for the four focus areas, simplifying their reading and transversal comparison. Finally, a summary portrait-map identifies the peculiarities of each area towards the creation of a territorial brand.

In this framework, the University of Trento research unit has specifically contributed to define the sub-themes and parameters for the “infrastructure, landscape, and ecosystems” macro dimension, since both the Trento Province and the Val di Sole pilot area are characterized by an important presence of natural capital¹¹. The authors propose an interdisciplinary approach that combines landscape ecology, territorial metabolism, mapping, and spatial data to comprehend the dynamics of marginal territories. An in-depth data collecting process is conducted to explore the natural identity of the Val di Sole (Fig. 3).

The mapping process is used as a tool for the spatial representation of the experience acquired in the pilot area¹²: the qualitative and quantitative data collected are spatialized, mapped and reworked in a series of maps and finally in the synthetic Val di Sole blueprint, presented in the following sections. The landscape heritage (i.e., water resources, agricultural systems, forests, natural and human landscapes) is the object and the objective of the mapping action to store and transmit knowledge about the environmental resources of the territory. The main steps are: (i) data collection and structure from multiple sources (Fig. 4); (ii) thematic maps creation, focusing on the hydrological resource in relation with the small villages¹³; (iii) actual resources and potential values identification; (iv) portrait map creation, enlightening the natural identity of the Val di Sole.

11. Comitato per il Capitale Naturale, *Capitale naturale: la nostra eredità. Quarto Rapporto sullo Stato del Capitale Naturale in Italia. Sintesi* (2021).

12. See James Corner, “The Agency of Mapping: Speculation, Critique and Invention” in *Mappings*, ed. Denis E. Cosgrove (London: Reaktion Books, 1999), 213-252: “[...] the map always precedes the territory, in that space only becomes territory through acts of bounding and making visible, which are primary functions of mapping.”

13. In computing, the first two steps are known as a unique phase called “Extract, Transform, and Load (ETL)”.

Fig. 03

Natural and human landscapes in Rabbi (top) and Peio (bottom) (TN). Credits: Veronique Panciera (top, left), Chiara Timpone (top, right), 2020 and Chiara Chioni (bottom), 2021



Fig. 04

Multiscale and multilevel open data sources for the Val di Sole. Credits: Coordination Sara Favargiotti, graphic elaboration Chiara Chioni, 2021.



Results of the exploratory phase: a first atlas

The Val di Sole inner area comprehends 13 municipalities and extends for about 611 km². Because the territory is mostly mountainous, the 15,600 inhabitants (ISTAT, 2020) are concentrated in the main centers on the valley floor and in the side valleys of Peio and Rabbi. The strategic project, drawn up from the Trento Province based on the SNAI and updated on February 2020¹⁴, presents an overview of the actual conditions and the evolutionary trends of the valley to define a desired future scenario of sustainable development. The first twenty-one maps, elaborated from the University of Trento research unit and composing the work-in-progress atlas, spatialize such conditions and trends allowing the reading and the

14. Provincia Autonoma di Trento, *Strategia Nazionale delle Aree interne. Progetto strategico della valle di Sole* (vers. 4.0, February 2020).

interpretation of the relationships between ongoing phenomenon and their physical imprint on the territory.

The “natural and landscape heritage” map (Fig. 5) identifies the presence of high natural capital—nearly half the territory is subject to protection and preservation measures – with a limited spread of built-up areas coinciding with the ancient areas of anthropization of the mountains.

The “geomorphological and hydrographic character” map (Fig. 6) highlights the massive presence of water and blue infrastructure systems. Rivers, lakes, glaciers, springs, and thermal waters are the most valuable resources as well as the generators of local cultural and economic values (e.g., hydroelectric centrals, mineral water bottling plant, thermal and wellness centers).

The “natural risks” map (Fig. 7) shows a fragile land characterized by a medium hydrogeologic (flooding, avalanche, landslide, storm) level of risk to be addressed through landscape planning, design, maintenance, and care actions.

The “infrastructure network and mobility” map (Fig. 8) identifies the only main route that crosses the valley, connecting it to the nearby Lombardy region (on the West) and to the other valleys of Trento Province (on the East). The side valleys of Peio and Rabbi are dead-end systems for vehicles, aggravating the marginality of the upper Val di Sole. This status of fast mobility generates inconveniences especially during peak tourist periods (winter and summer). On the other hand, a widespread pathway of slow mobility (e.g., bike paths, trails, mountain routes) covers the territory and can be the driving force to promote sustainable tourism flows. The “dynamism of the tertiary sector” map (Fig. 9) identifies tourism as the leading economic sector, stable in employment and with positive prospects for the future. Indeed, the provincial strategic project for the Val di Sole states that the driving force for the future development of the territory will be tourism, as it has been for the last fifty years: the medium to long term perspective is to invest in strengthening the quality of tourist services and the seasonal adjustment of demand (i.e., by promoting local resources to diversify the offer with respect to winter sports).

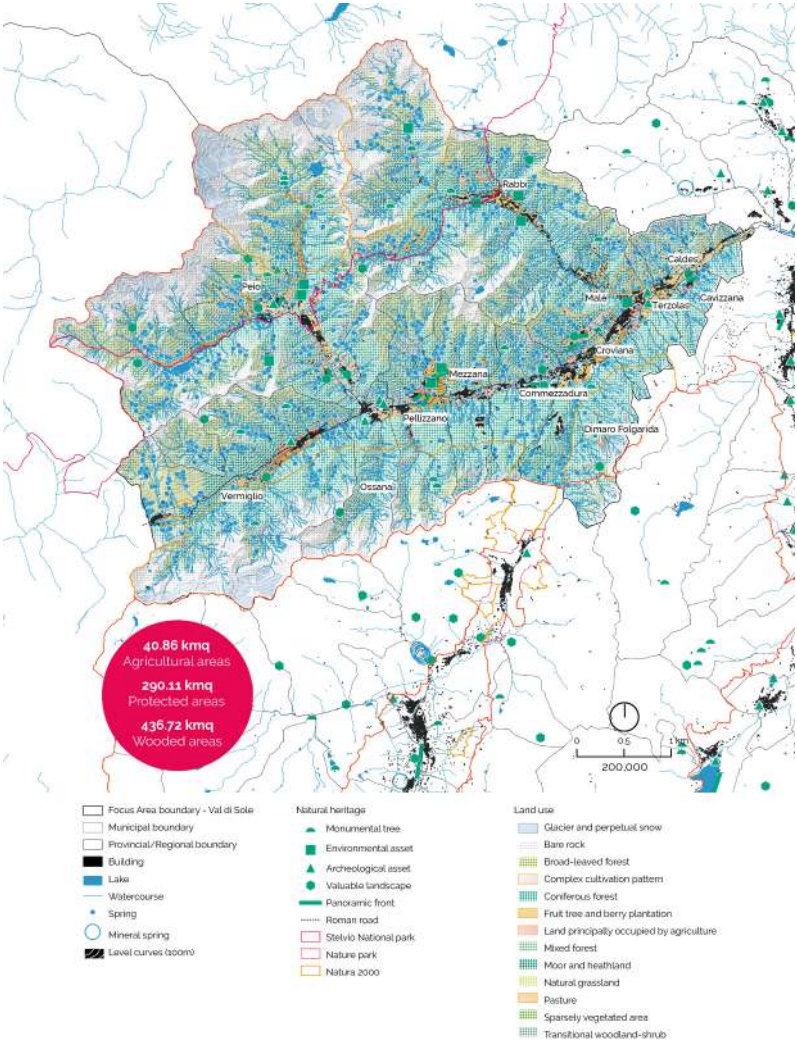


Fig. 05

“Natural and landscape heritage” map¹⁵.
Credits: Coordination Sara Favargiotti,
graphic elaboration Chiara Chioni and
Margherita Pasquali. ©Branding4Resilience-
UNITN, 2020-2024.

15. Data sources: ISTAT (2019, 2020), CTP (2017), “TINITALY” DEM (2007), CORINE Land Cover (2018), Geoportale Nazionale (2017), PUP (2019), GeoCatalogo PAT (2010, 2018, 2019).

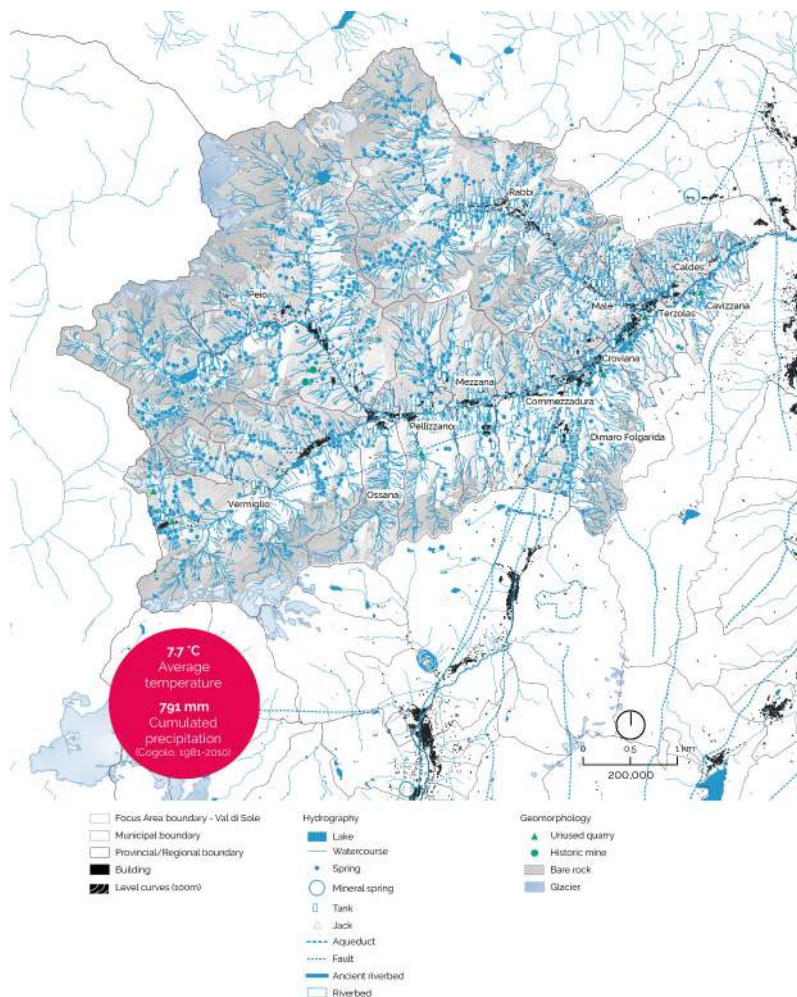


Fig. 06

“Geomorphological and hydrographic character” map¹⁶. Credits: Coordination Sara Favargiotti, graphic elaboration Chiara Chioni and Margherita Pasquali. ©Branding4Resilience–UNITN, 2020-2024.

16. Data sources: ISTAT (2020), CTP (2017), “TINITALY” DEM (2007), CORINE Land Cover (2018), PUP (2019), Protezione Civile (2018), ISPRA (2014).

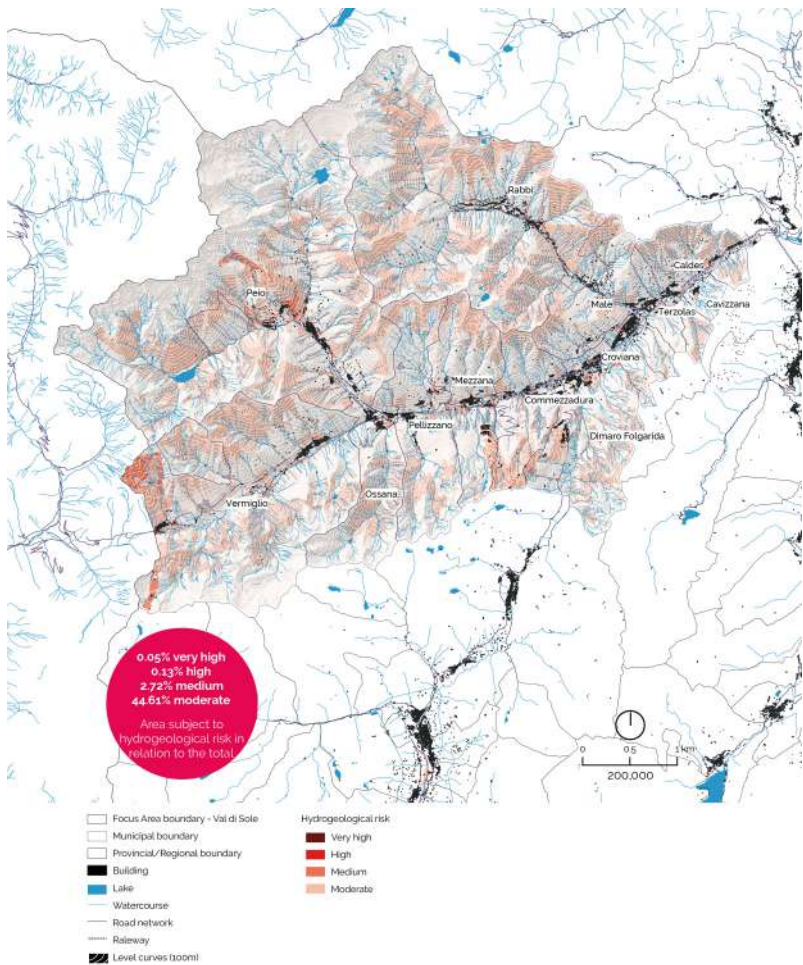


Fig. 07

“Natural risks” map¹⁷.

Credits: Coordination Sara Favargiotti,
graphic elaboration Chiara Chioni and
Margherita Pasquali. ©Branding4Resilience-
UNITN, 2020-2024.

17. Data sources: ISTAT (2020), CTP (2017), “TINITALY” DEM (2007), Servizio Gestione Strade PAT (2020), PUP (2019), Geoportale Nazionale (2013).

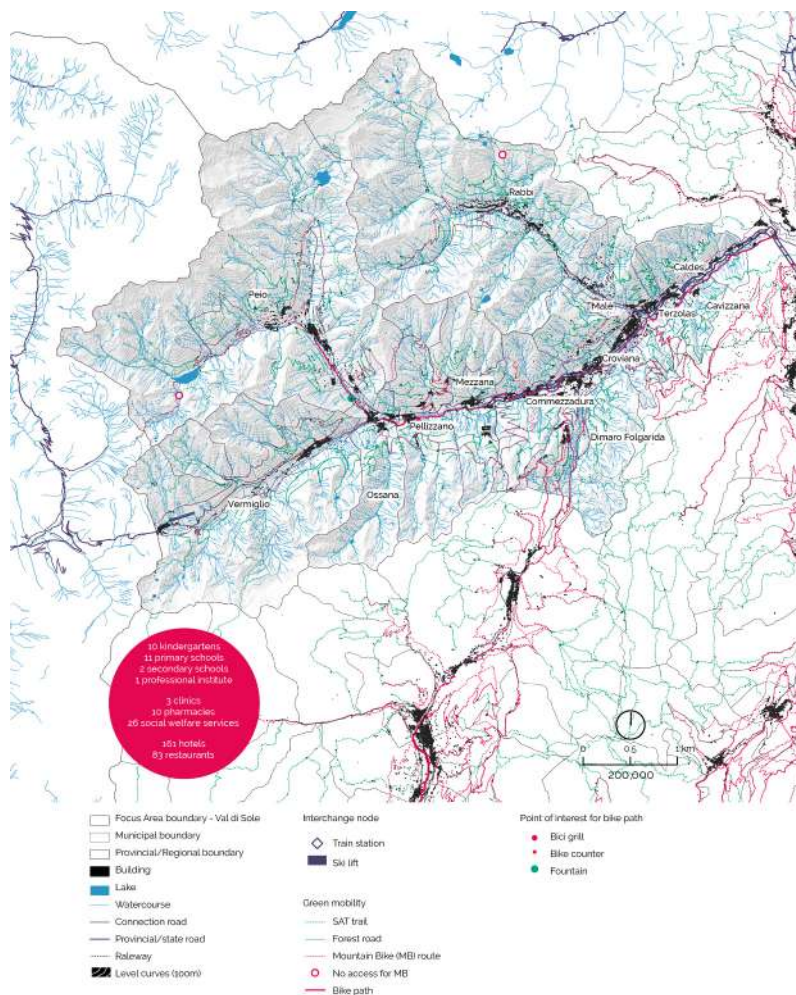


Fig. 08

“Infrastructure network and mobility” map¹⁸.

Credits: Coordination Sara Favargiotti,
graphic elaboration Chiara Chioni and
Margherita Pasquali. ©Branding4Resilience-
UNITN, 2020-2024.

18. Data sources: ISTAT (2020), CTP (2017), “TINITALY” DEM (2007), PUP (2019), Servizio Gestione Strade PAT (2020), GeoCatalogo PAT (2008, 2013, 2019, 2021), OPENDATA Trentino (2013), Azienda per il turismo delle Valli di Sole, Peio e Rabbi SCPA (2021), Vivoscuola (2021), Azienda Provinciale per i Servizi Sanitari PAT (2021), OpenStreetMap (2021).

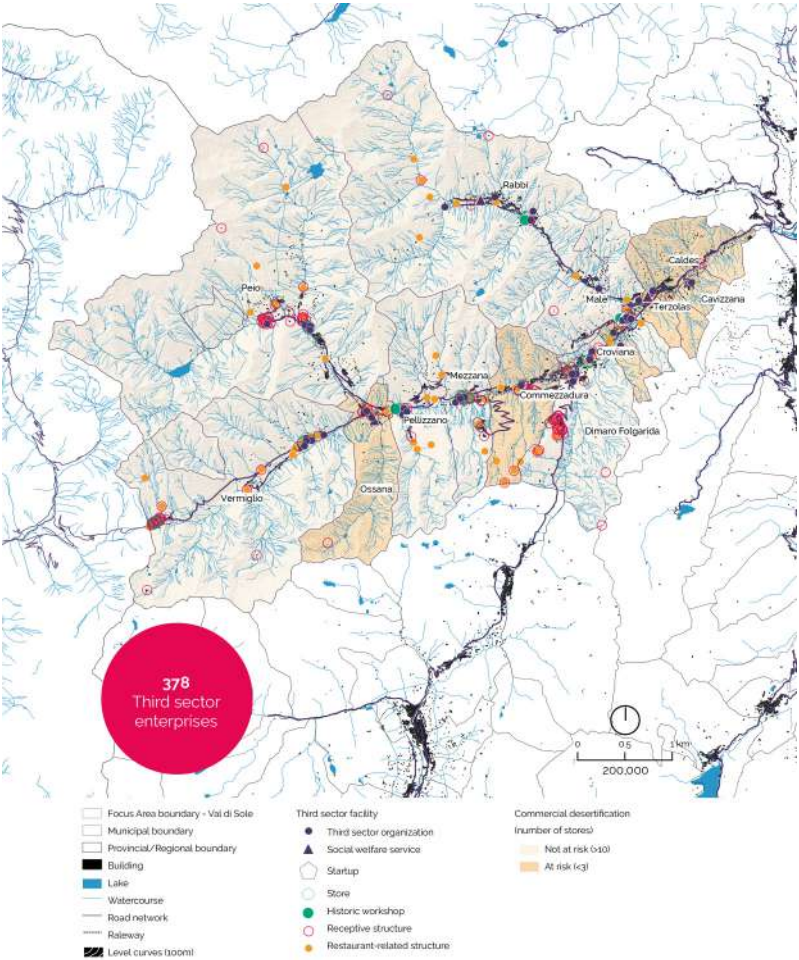


Fig. 09

“Dynamism of the tertiary sector” map¹⁹.

Credits: Coordination Sara Favargiotti,
graphic elaboration Chiara Chioni and
Margherita Pasquali. ©Branding4Resilience-
UNITN, 2020-2024.

19. Data sources: ISTAT (2020), CTP (2017), “TINITALY” DEM (2007), PUP (2019), Servizio Gestione Strade PAT (2020), OPENDATA TRENTINO (2019, 2020), OpenStreetMap (2021), GeoCatalogo PAT (2013, 2016, 2021), Trentinosociale.it (2021), Azienda per il turismo delle Valli di Sole, Peio e Rabbi SCPA (2021).

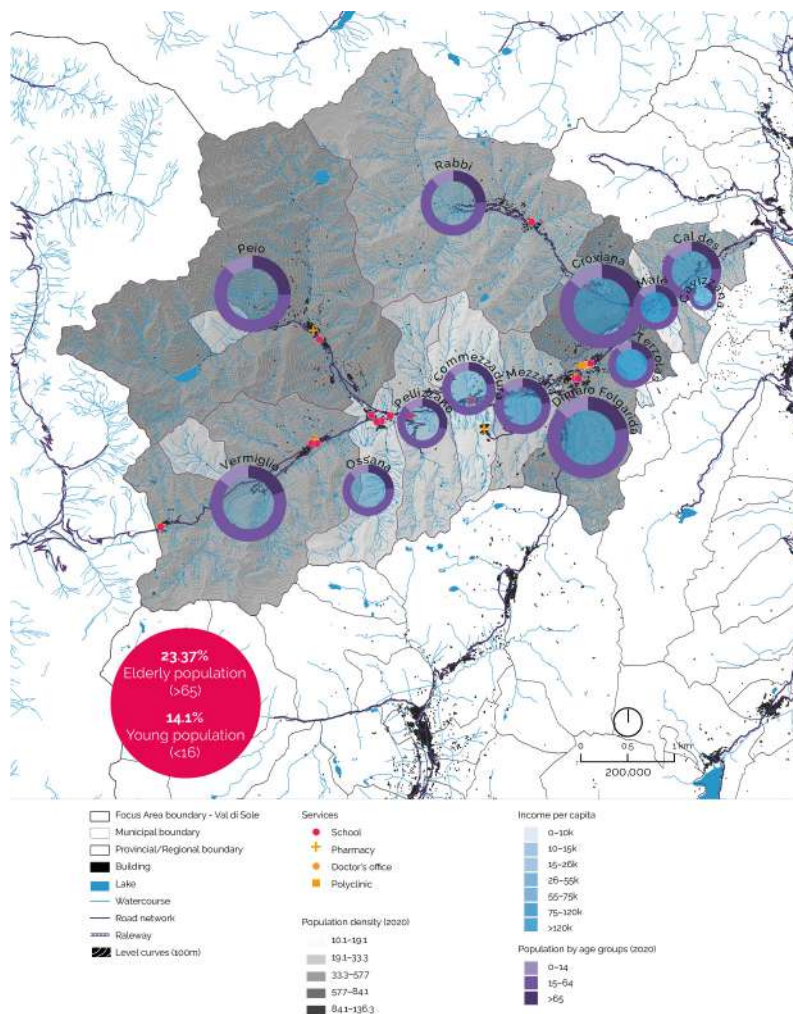


Fig. 10

“Communities and fragility” map²⁰. Credits:
Coordination Sara Favargiotti, graphic
elaboration Chiara Chioni and Margherita
Pasquali. ©Branding4Resilience-UNITN,
2020-2024.

20. Data sources: ISTAT (2018, 2020), CTP (2017), “TINITALY” DEM (2007), PUP (2019), Servizio Gestione Strade PAT (2020), Azienda Provinciale per i Servizi Sanitari (2021), Vivoscuola (2021), OpenStreetMap (2021).

The “communities and fragility” map (Fig. 10) shows the aging of the population, particularly those living in the more marginal areas of the valley and less dynamic from an economic point of view. This situation poses problems in terms of care, mobility, and abandonment of the territory: centuries of interaction have produced a fragile but fascinating balance in which the alpine territory needs man and man needs the territory.

The portrait map: Val di Sole blueprint

Each B4R research unit, after the preliminary mapping phase, made the effort to represent the selected territories through a synthesis map which highlights their hidden and unexplored potential. In the case of Val di Sole, the thermal landscape and the hydrological resource mainly represent the territory's natural capital and, therefore, its portrait map is a “blueprint”, intended in its extended meaning of tool to drive scenarios.

Indeed, in addition to its technical meaning of “drawing”, referring to white lines on a blue background especially used in the architecture, engineering and construction, the term blueprint means a preliminary plan for future achievements. Critically summarizing the water potential, the Val di Sole blueprint uses the same graphic semiology²¹ of the technical drawings: the hydrographic network of the territory, enhanced by watersheds and water flows, leaves a white imprint on the blue ground, defining by subtraction the valley geography. The focus area thus appears as an island in a larger archipelago in which the topography becomes the bathymetry (Fig. 11). In particular, the blueprint highlights the two thermal resorts in the small villages of Peio and Rabbi as attractive poles of the blue infrastructure system²². Making visible the invisible connections, this map relates the settlements producing and using water and thermal resources to the hydrography of the territory. This interpretation suggests the delineation of

21. Jacques Bertin, *Semiology of Graphics: Diagrams, Networks, Maps* (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1983).

22. Elena Dai Pra, *Geografie del benessere. La riqualificazione ecosostenibile del comparto termale e paratermale in Trentino* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 2013).

unknown routes towards the development of a new network that enhances the natural capital of the area (Fig. 12)²³.

Finally, the aim of the blueprint is to offer an operative tool to analyze and interpret the territory, towards landscape and architectural design actions. Reading the fragility/opportunity of the area establishes a new "territory of possibilities"²⁴ on which to act with a resilient strategy that must respond also to the need for a new economic model, not related only to the tourism sector²⁵.

Conclusion and future developments

The B4R research approach proposes a re-generative and adaptive territorial brand promoting resilience: its transformation processes and subsequent benefits are to be assessed by including community to preserve the local identity and – for the University of Trento's focus area – to renew the wellbeing tourist offer.

An interdisciplinary and multiscale methodology, combining qualitative and quantitative approaches, has been adopted to collect data and explore the natural identity of the Val di Sole, contemplating both ecological and spatial elements (i.e., physical and immaterial qualities, weaknesses and needs of local communities).

The creation of an atlas of thematic maps allows to visualize the complexity and the dynamism of the territory, supporting the development of a territorial brand. The effective usage of the maps to support participative planning actions would be directly assessed by experts and citizens during workshops, seminars, and meetings in the following B4R project phases. Starting from the synthetical, recognizable

23. Margherita Pasquali, Chiara Chioni, Sara Favargiotti, "Soaking in the thermal landscapes: A Slow Tour Across the Italian Inner Territories". *Ri-Vista* 2022, 20, 222–237.

24. Giuseppe Dematteis. *Le metafore della terra. La geografia umana tra mito e scienza* (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1985).

25. Leonardo Becchetti, full professor of Political Economy at the University of Rome Tor Vergata, in his intervention at the *Green Week* in Trento (February 26 - March 3, 2019) proposed a "hybrid economic system, therefore civil".

and brandable image of the Val di Sole blueprint, it will be easier for the involved stakeholders to read the exploration phase, interpret the concepts developed by the research and directly participate in the planning of their territory.

Author Contributions: This paper is to be attributed in equal parts to the three authors (S.F., C.C., M.P.), who have collaboratively contributed to its conceptualization, methodology, investigation, and writing. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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