

## ***Too small to be beautiful? Challenges and struggles in Italian 'Inner Areas'***

Romina D'Ascanio<sup>1</sup>, Anna Laura Palazzo<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Architecture, Roma Tre University, [romina.dascanio@uniroma3.it](mailto:romina.dascanio@uniroma3.it)

<sup>2</sup>Department of Architecture, Roma Tre University, [annalaura.palazzo@uniroma3.it](mailto:annalaura.palazzo@uniroma3.it)

*Then we come to man and his place in the system of life. We could have left man out, playing the ecological game of "let's pretend man doesn't exist." But this seems as unfair as the corresponding game of the economists, "let's pretend that nature doesn't exist."*

*The economy of nature and ecology of man are inseparable and attempts to separate them are more than misleading, they are dangerous. Man's destiny is tied to nature's destiny and the arrogance of the engineering mind does not change this. Man may be a very peculiar animal, but he is still a part of the system of nature.*

Marston Bates

### ***Abstract***

The so-called 'Inner Areas' have been defined by the Ministry of Economy in 2012 as areas far away from urban centres and a full range of facilities such as education, mobility and healthcare services, suffering over the last decades from depopulation and ageing, poor job and welfare opportunities.

Measures targeted at safeguarding and rehabilitating inner areas, that make up for approximately 60% of the country's surface area and 13.5 million people, have been deemed necessary to counteract negative demographic trends.

Heritage and nature are both at stake, due to high presence of small historic cities gathering dense and complex heritage assets, and protected areas as well. When it comes to the institution of protected areas, conservation issues have to be met with sustainable living and settlement requirements in order to counteract demographic trends. As a matter of fact, Italy, with almost 3 million hectares and over 10% of protected areas, has made a relevant contribution to the implementation of the Natura 2000 European network.

In the Lazio Region, covered by protected areas for about 11%, the very idea of park lends itself to a positive dialogue between the natural sciences and the humanities. This contribution will delve into the mainstream debate related to the Inner areas, stressing some considerations in the case of the Natural Reserve of the Navegna and Cervia Mountains, set apart from the Roman metropolitan area but close enough to benefit from its agglomerations economies. Inhere the main actor, the Park itself, is struggling to promote an inclusive approach addressing both territorial production and landscape reproduction, encouraging bottom-up development paths drawing upon the natural capital and its vast reservoir of biodiversity.

### ***An overview***

According to the 2011 Istat Census, out of 8,057 municipalities, 5,652 have a population of less than 5,000 inhabitants, of which 1,936 less than 1,000. Altogether, these municipalities host 10,190,451 inhabitants, 17% of the Italian population on a territory corresponding to about 54% of the national total, mainly in hilly and mountainous areas.

If we assume the threshold of 10,000 inhabitants, the 'small municipalities' (Fig. 1) would be 6,797 inhabited by 18,239,504 people out of the 59,433,744 residents (30%).

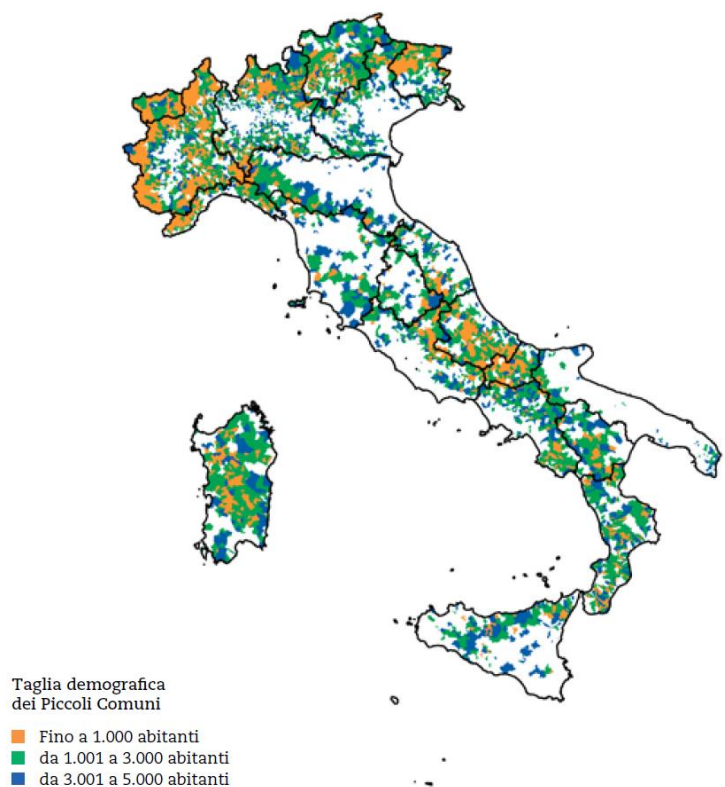


Fig. 1.

In the period 2005-2015, 3,195 small municipalities (equal to 57.2% of the total) display a negative demographic trend, whereas for the other 2,432 municipalities the demographic trend is positive. While the municipalities with negative trend are mainly in the Apennine areas, in the north, notably in the mountainous areas (Valle d’Aosta and Trentino Alto Adige), these dynamics are positive.

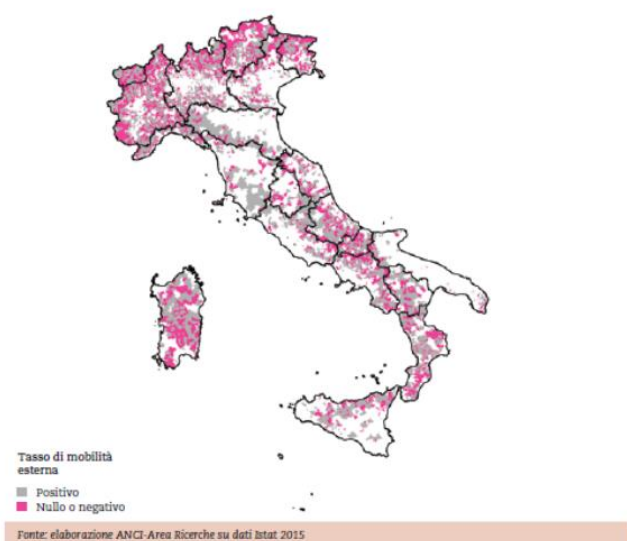
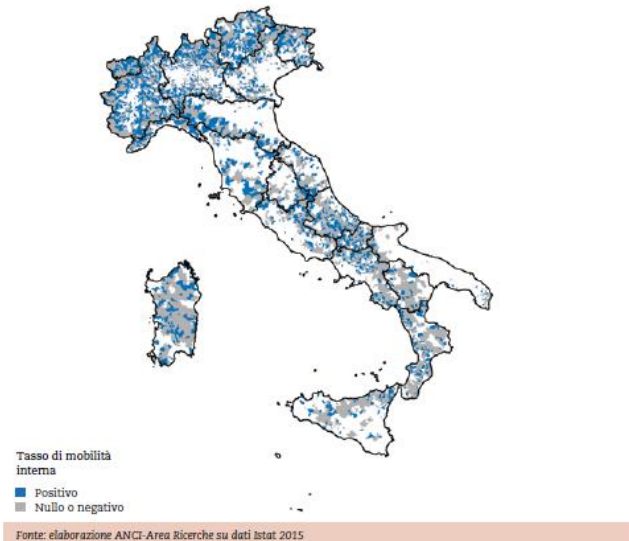
Another interesting dynamic to take into consideration is mobility (Fig. 2), which has been considered, according to the definition by Istat, in two meanings: internal and external mobility.

**Tabella 5. La mobilità interna nei Piccoli Comuni, nei comuni con più di 5.000 abitanti ed in Italia, 2014**

	Piccoli Comuni				Comuni con più di 5.000 ab.
	Fino a 1.000 ab.	Tra 1.001 e 3.000 ab.	Tra 3.001 e 5.000 ab.	Totale	
Iscritti	28.122	113.360	105.148	246.630	1.067.210
Cancellati	30.451	119.288	107.913	257.652	1.054.664
Tasso di mobilità interna	-2,13	-1,26	-0,64	-1,09	0,25

**Tabella 7. La mobilità esterna nei Piccoli Comuni, nei comuni con più di 5.000 abitanti ed in Italia, 2014**

	Piccoli Comuni				Comuni con più di 5.000 ab.
	Fino a 1.000 ab.	Tra 1.001 e 3.000 ab.	Tra 3.001 e 5.000 ab.	Totale	
Iscritti dall'estero	3.860	16.609	15.318	35.787	241.844
Cancellati per l'estero	3.037	11.310	11.068	25.415	110.913
Tasso di mobilità esterna	0,75	1,13	0,98	1,03	2,58



Fonte: elaborazione ANCI-Area Ricerche su dati Istat 2015

Fonte: elaborazione ANCI-Area Ricerche su dati Istat 2015

Fig. 2.

Internal mobility is represented by changes in residence between Italian municipalities. This internal balance in small Italian municipalities (up to 5,000 inhabitants) is negative for 11,022 units. The Small Municipalities up to 1,000 residents have a lower internal mobility rate, while the ones over 3,000 inhabitants have a nearly zero overall balance (-0.64).

This balance in the Italian small municipalities is positive for 10,372 units. The most attractive (positive external mobility rate) appear to be Small Municipalities between 1,001 and 3,000 inhabitants.

The external mobility rate of the Small Municipalities is positive in all the regions, except for Friuli-Venezia Giulia; it is particularly high in Emilia Romagna, Tuscany and Lazio. These areas compose a specific geography of fragile territories to take into account when designing strategies and policy measures.

In order to tackle serious phenomena of isolation and demographic and economic decline that prove even a heavy unbalance in terms of hydro-geological instability and decay, the Department for Economic Development and Cohesion in the Ministry of Economics launched in 2012 the so-called 'National Strategy for Inner Areas' (SNAI). Such policy measures aim at providing redistributive opportunities in peripheral areas, covering 60% of the peninsula, a quarter of the Italian population and over four thousand municipalities, most of them below the threshold of 5,000 inhabitants. (Fig. 3a). The fall in population has been matched by a decline in personal services.

The differing levels of distance-remoteness require specific policy efforts even with ordinary tools to rethink the provisions and endowments to be set and additional resources whose availability is subject to certain conditions: multi-level governance, participation and result-driven management.

Out of the 65 eligible areas on the basis of particularly high values of the indicators (loss of population higher than the average recorded in inner areas and high aging indexes), few pilot cases per region represented by an ad-hoc inter-municipal team have been selected.

This governance involved institutions, citizens and entrepreneurs, matching production activities in at least two of the key sectors to be taken into account<sup>1</sup> with long-term interventions on equipment and services for producing or reproducing public goods: basic facilities mainly intended for the residents (health, education, mobility, environment, technology, smart solutions), and eventually for a wider market.

In most cases, heritage and nature are equally at stake, due to high presence of small historic centres, gathering tangible and intangible assets often within protected areas. Here, the reasons for conservation should comply with a sustainable human presence able to counter the demographic decline.

Italy has made a significant contribution to the implementation of the European *Natura 2000* system, with almost 3 million hectares of protected land and as many at sea level and over 10% of the total area of our country (Fig. 3b). The very idea of *park* lends itself to a fruitful dialogue between the natural sciences and the humanities, witnessing an evolution from an approach addressing overall protection issues within exceptional habitats to an attitude encompassing even human settlements and activities.

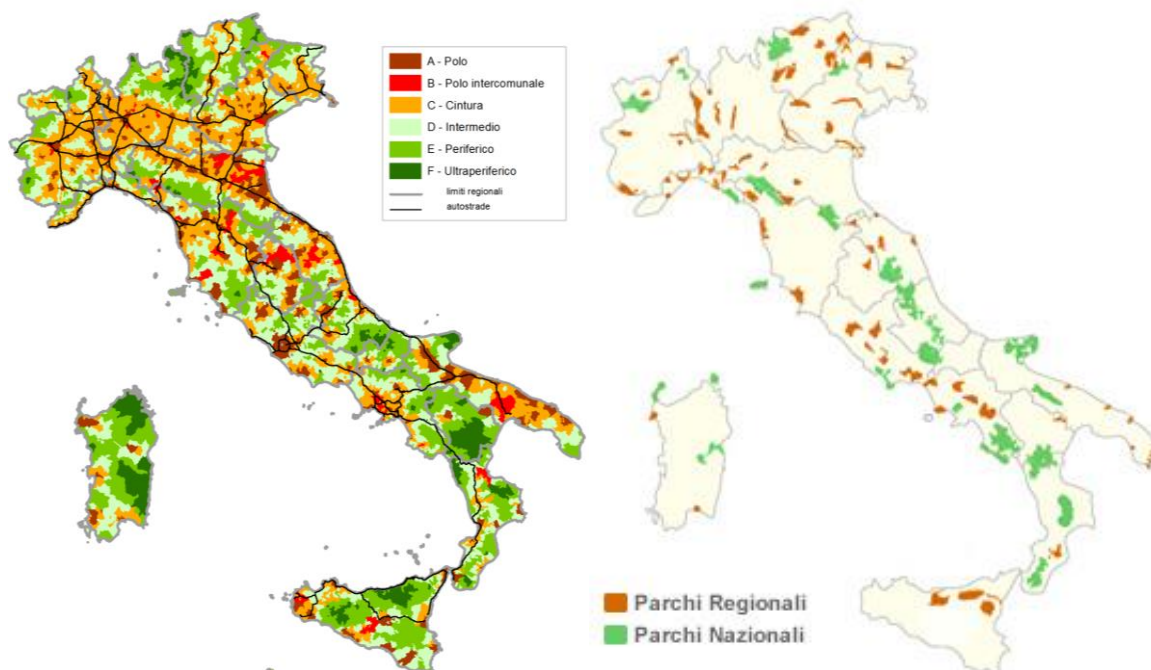


Fig. 3.

3a. Geography of remoteness (inner areas are in dark green). Demographic trends, access to healthcare and adequate education provision are just some of the essential criteria for defining and classifying Inner Areas. Remoteness is acknowledged in terms of travel time from centres able to guarantee a pre-established level of healthcare, education and mobility offer.

<sup>1</sup> Enhancing natural resources, heritage and sustainable tourism; supporting for agri-food systems and local development initiatives; energy saving and local renewable energy sources; know how and crafts.

3b. Natural areas are the most powerful means of protecting nature and ecosystem services production (for cities). They are also places for 'green' experimentation, such as: green economy, slow tourism and slow mobility, landscape, territorial marketing, able to activate new expertise and activate people potential.

As a rule, up to the latest reviews, the establishment of regional parks was largely depending on the availability of public land and/or resources belonging to or affecting the whole of communities. Besides the differences between regional contexts as regards survival and vitality of *Commons* and the general tendency towards the privatization of land ownership, almost everywhere the initiatives aimed at getting hold of common land still encounter strong opposition. Moreover, the perception of private ownership falling within protection measures is being increasingly familiar to people. This can also mean possible cooperation ways between local authorities and communities in overall strategies.

#### *Local development and opportunities over time*

Rurality and rural development are indeed at the core of major concerns in EU.

Relevant changes to the Common Agriculture Policy, carried out since 1963, have been promoted in the late 1980s, based on subsidies to farmers that were 'not subject to any condition relating to their use' (Commission Regulation EEC/3813/1989, art. 1). Subsequently, further aid has been conveyed to 'farmers committed to use agricultural production methods compatible with the requirements of environmental protection and the maintenance of the countryside' (Council regulation EEC/2078/1992). This reform defined a new role of farmers directly committed to environmental issues, notably land conservation and landscape protection while keeping watch over territories, and lastly to leisure and welfare facilities towards residents and tourists as well.

The definition of 'rural' and the concept of 'rurality' go far beyond agriculture productivity encompassing issues related to remoteness of places often connected with abandonment and hydrogeological risks. In such cases, agriculture by itself is no longer able to realize the conditions for survival. Its making depends, in fact, on rural development, which engenders an increasing demand for products and services and exchange of the factors of production, particularly entrepreneurship and employment<sup>2</sup> (Pascale, 2015).

In the framework of the 2014-2020 programming period, the institutional support has been devoted to place-based development paths seen as a driving force for economic, social and political recovery, matching environmental protection and precise local welfare policies. This approach complies with the LEADER programme, from the acronym of *Liaison entre actions de développement de l'économie rurale*, that for 20 years now has implemented local strategies for rural areas on a case-by-case basis. Differentiation is the distinctive feature of place-based approaches, closely related to the variety of tangible and intangible assets. If cities tend to resemble each other more and more, liveliness within the rural areas may also stand as a sort of resistance to homologation.

Moreover, the LEADER programme had an experimental and highly innovative feature because for the first time local public-private mixed partnerships were established. The Local Action Groups (LAGs) have been laboratories with the task of experimenting methods based on a bottom-up approach, and managing integrated and multi-sectoral interventions, mainly based on local resources, in compliance with a philosophy based on endogenous and self-driving development.

The LEADER programme is implemented under the national and regional Rural Development Programs of each EU Member State, co-financed by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development.

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<sup>2</sup> Pascale A. (2015). Educarci all'agricoltura sociale. Prove di terziario civile innovative, GAL Capo S. Maria di Leuca

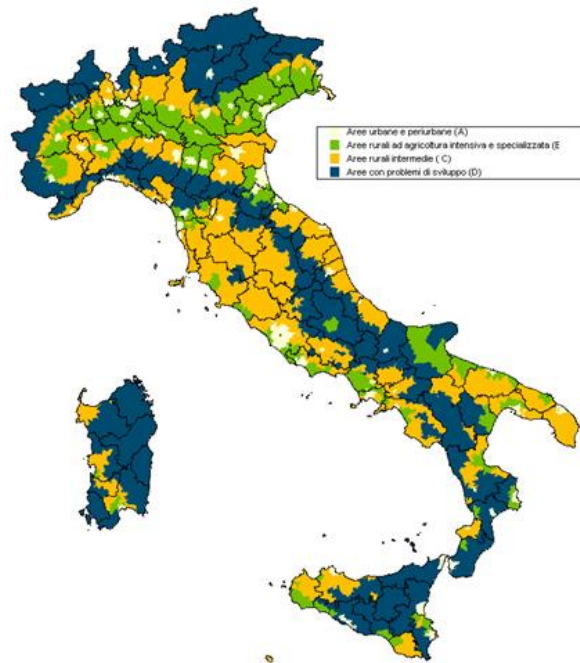


Fig. 4.

Maps of Rural Areas, elaborated by CREA. Source: Di Napoli R., Tomassini S. (2017). *Leader: un grande avvenire dietro le spalle?*. "Agriregionieuropa", anno 13, n. 48.

The territories involved in LEADER Local Development are those defined in the Rural Development Program 2014/2020:

- B areas (in green), 'rural areas with specialized intensive agriculture', included in local development plans financed under the previous 2007-2013 Leader program.
- C areas (in yellow), 'intermediate rural areas'.
- D areas (in blue), 'rural areas with overall development problems'.

Since the 1990s, the LEADER approach, supported by the Structural Funds and the Rural Development Fund, has helped rural operators to consider long-term potentials and has demonstrated its effectiveness as a tool for implementing development policies.

Over time, it has experienced different approaches. In 1991-1993, the so-called LEADER I set a very first initiative about inclusive approaches in fragile territories. Such experimentation, positively conducted throughout Europe, continued in 1994-1999 with LEADER II and subsequently in 2000-2006 with LEADER +.

In the LEADER I, the eligibility for funding for lagging regions concerned rural areas with a local dimension and a population not exceeding 100,000 inhabitants, and also with specific features, such as low settlement density (on average 71 inhabitants / sq km), low level of education of the resident population, high youth unemployment rate, significant weight of the primary sector (17% on average against 8% of the national average), infrastructural inadequacy and lack of real services to businesses and people.

In the years 2007-2013, LEADER became the fourth axis of the Rural Development Program, and in 2014-2020 Measure 19 of the Rural Development program.

Some researchers underline several limits of the LEADER approach, such as the passage from the multi-fund to mono-fund rationale weakening cross-sectoral actions. Moreover, the EU defined in the LEADER + some catalyst themes, common to all Member States, which caused a disconnection between LEADER Local Plans and the strategic framework of the Rural Development Policy (RDP).

In the 2007-2013 programming period, LEADER was not an independent program anymore, but it was integrated into all national/regional RDPs, becoming the fourth axis of RDP. However, this new setting highlighted, in some Regions, critical issues such as bureaucratic problems with consequent impossibility to achieve innovation<sup>3</sup>.

Furthermore, the indications given by the EC were rather incomplete, triggering diametrically opposed behaviours among the different nations and regions. On the one hand, there were restrictive RDPs enabling the activation of very few measures with specific LEADER actions. In the opposite cases, the Local Plans were too generalist and all-inclusive. The ongoing 2014-2020 programming period has extended the LEADER approach to three other European funds, taking the more general name of Community-Led Local Development. This term is used by the European Commission to describe an approach that radically reverses the traditional top-down development policy. With the CLLD, the local community is bound to form a local partnership that develops and implements innovative practices. The strategy is designed to tackle social, environmental and economic strengths, for example on community heritage, rather than

<sup>3</sup> Assogal Calabria, (2014) *Lo sviluppo locale di tipo partecipativo nella programmazione 2014-2020 della regione Calabria*.

simply compensating for problems. For this reason, partnerships receive long-term funding and decide how to spend it. The approaches for participatory practices imply a vision and a declaration of sustainability. It should take in to account cultural repercussions, capable of working within the conservation-innovation binomial, adherence to the intelligence of things, sustainability towards global challenges (upscaling), in order to achieve the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy for intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth.

In Italy, due to strong convergence between the structural funds for cohesion and those for rural development, this phase has witnessed integration between the territorial cohesion objective, at the core of the Inner Areas Strategy, with the Rural Development Policy.

Summarizing, over time the role of the Local Action Groups (LAGs) and LEADER approach have been recognized for their important role of capacity building for local actors in developing and implementing their strategies. Still, most times the critical mass – in terms of population, size, economies within the Leader areas – remained unaddressed.

This issue will be tackled in the following paragraph, with reference to the Natural Reserve of the Navegna and Cervia Mountains, in the Lazio region.

#### *Upscaling and upgrading. The Natural Reserve of the Navegna and Cervia Mountains*

The literature on local development allocates a crucial role to the concept of *milieu*, as a system of relationships, knowledge and trust to be taken into account in planning and management tools.

The milieu mediates the complex bi-directional dynamics between environment and communities referring to the very nature of places, to the perceptions, values and meanings allocated to local resources, according to the following dimensions<sup>4</sup>:

- (i) geographical proximity, that is: location, climate, natural, cultural and economic resources, quality of life;
- (ii) socio-cultural proximity, related to intangible assets, such as culture, tacit knowledge, traditions, social capital, that is so-called *climate of opinion*<sup>5</sup>, the quality of governance, mutual trust, and all the informal rules that allow actors to cooperate in conditions of uncertainty.

In order to tackle the *agency of place* in such dynamic exchange, the concept of 'affordance' proves crucial<sup>6</sup>. It refers to the latent opportunities offered by the environment to the social actor, to be grasped sometimes even before and beyond the perceptual and cultural mediation.

In the case of the Natural Reserve of the Navegna and Cervia Mountains, established in 1988 (LR 56 9/09/1988 - LR 29 6/10 / 97 - LR 28 5/10/99), and currently encompassed within the SNAI strategy, the main actor, the Park itself, is struggling to promote an inclusive approach addressing both territorial production and landscape reproduction, supporting development paths drawing upon the natural capital and a vast reservoir of biodiversity.

The area, covering 3.563 hectares in 9 municipalities (Ascrea, Castel di Tora, Collalto Sabino, Collegiove, Marcellini, Nespole, Paganico, Rocca Sinibalda, Varco Sabino), partly falls within the boundaries of an inter-municipality: the *Comunità montana del Turano*, dating back to the early 1970s and currently reduced in size (from 20 to 8 municipalities). The Turano valley (from the name of the river) underwent in the 1930s a huge transformation due to the construction of an artificial lake for the electricity needs of the steel mills of Terni. The city of Rieti (47,700 inhabitants), just north of the area, provides the area with most facilities and services, while the metropolitan area of Rome is close enough to favor commuting, notably for people with no daily needs to reach the Capital city.

During the 2007-2013 EU programming period, the Reserve participated in an integrated program with the support of the Rural Development Plan of the Lazio Region. A threefold approach was put in place. The main point was to support the establishment of agro industrial and agroforestry chains: the agri-food sector was obviously a main topic, but also the reintroduction of the hemp cycle, long since practiced along the Turano river, associated both with traditional textile and innovative green building materials. A second aim addressed individual companies and their evolutionary dynamics, encouraging the establishment of young farmers. Finally, the third one was intended to address the community as a whole, dealing with identities and synergistic and/or leverage effects that can be obtained through the concentration of resources and interests. The main requirement for the regional call for proposals for such 'integrated territorial planning' approach (PIT) was 'critical mass'. 'Upscaling' the area of the PIT in order to increase effectiveness would mean encompass the *Comunità Montana del Salto* as well.

From the point of view of the Reserve, this approach implied the need to overcome both its borders (that do not overlap with the municipal boundaries) and the limits of its self-reliant special and separate management, by means of a language and a practice compatible with the needs of neighbouring territories. For this purpose, it was necessary to focus on the so-called 'buffer zones' of the Reserve, able to mediate between the privileges of the internal areas and those of the areas outside it.

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<sup>4</sup> Dessein J., Battaglini E., Hurlings L., eds. (2016). *Cultural sustainability and regional development. Theories and practices of territorialisation*. London: Routledge.

<sup>5</sup> Whitehead W.N. (1925). *Science and the Modern World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>6</sup> Gibson J.J. (1979). *The Theory of Affordances. The Ecological Approach to Visual Perception*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

From the point of view of both communities (Salto and Turano), the point was to overcome particularism and the administrative fragmentation and to recognize the common need to enhance environmentally friendly activities and the preservation of agroforestry.

The PIT, started in 2010 and not yet completed, was bound to merge into a single proposal neighboring and similar initiatives, in order to reach the minimum population threshold. Profitability of local businesses, quality of life of the residents and increase in tourism are at the core of this approach, through

- (i) modernization of firms and enhancement of quality productions;
- (ii) strengthening and adaptation of local public services (lighting, street furniture, support for educational institutions, investment in technology, mainly broadband);
- (iii) support for small-scale adaptation projects and soft mobility programmes.

The area addressed by the SNAI in 2015 encompasses a much broader area for 31 municipalities belonging to the Turano Valley, Salto Valley and Velino Valley, the so-called 'Monti Reatini' area, for about 34,000 inhabitants, deemed suitable for launching and implementing the Inner Areas Strategy (SNAI) in terms of size and critical mass. In here, the presence of young immigrants has mitigated depopulation in recent years, but many barriers to the foreigner are still in place. Distrust is also common among neighbouring communities and is rooted in the past. The Turano and Salto Valley, split by the borders between the Pontifical State and the Kingdom of Naples (Fig. 5), were poorly connected to each other (no roads, only few trails still overpassing the ridges), and never felt like as a community. Poor connections are still today the main obstacle to the merge or cooperation attitudes at least as for the facilities to be shared, so that, when asked about their expectations, several mayors pointed out their difficulties in sharing the strategy, even more so that the serious earthquake in Amatrice has set different scenarios and priorities for this area.

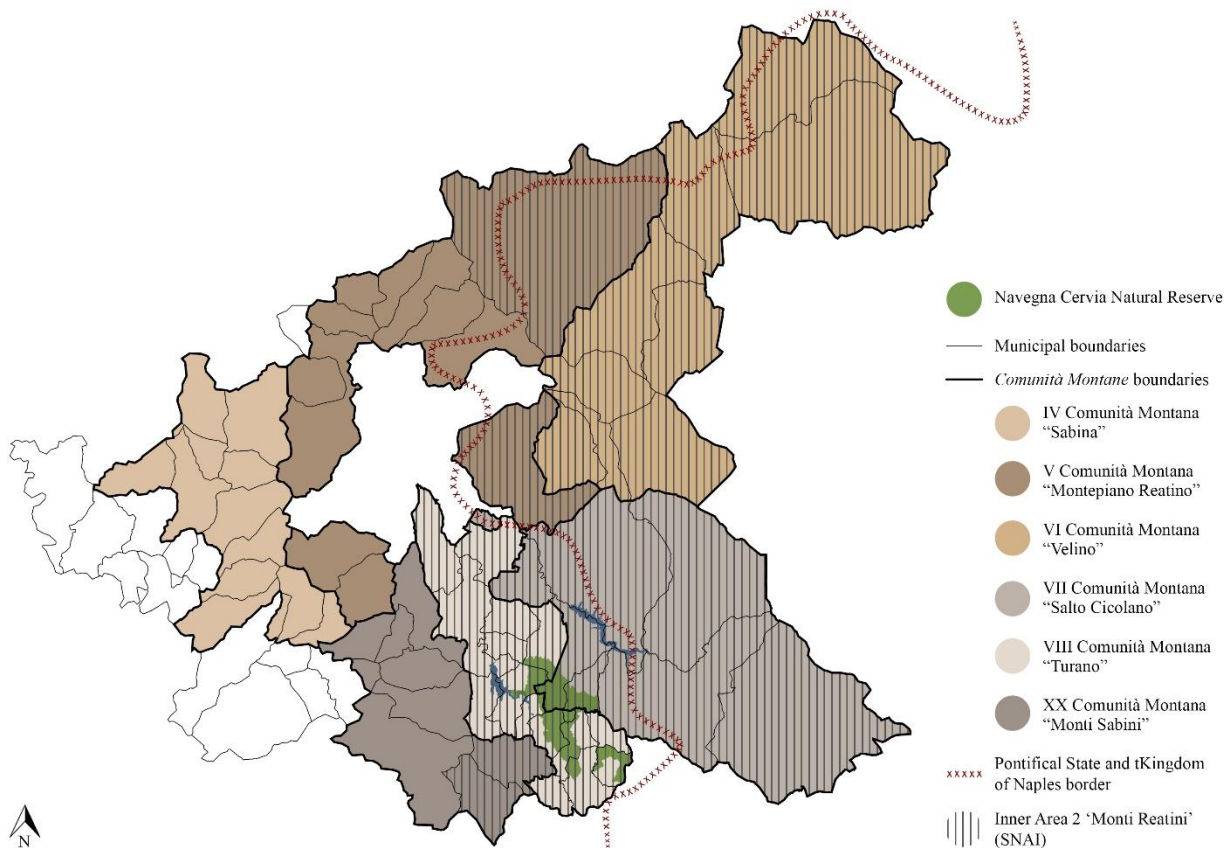


Fig. 5.

Boundaries. The Reserve and the different *Comunità Montana* within the Inner Area 'Monti Reatini'. The Monti Reatini area is constituted by 31 Municipalities, 14 in peripheral and ultra-peripheral areas, 34,239 inhabitants, surface of 1,623 sqKm, 21.1 inh/sqKm., -1,8 decrease in population from 2011 to 2017, 6,3 the percentage of foreign-born people. Credits: Elisa Zaccardi, Thesis "Metafore verdi. Ecologie ed economie per un'area interna", tutor Prof. Anna Laura Palazzo, co-tutor PhD Romina D'Ascanio, summer 2019.

Specifically, the Cervia Navegna Reserve assumes a barycentric position between the Turano Valley and Salto Valley, playing an important role in the environmental, social and economic scenario. The main features of the whole area are summarized in the following tables, through a SWOT analysis.

STRENGTHS	WEAKNESSES
GENERAL OVERVIEW	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Ancient villages rich in history and traditions, some already selected as ‘most beautiful villages in Italy’</li> <li>- Strong sense of belonging by native people and resident communities</li> <li>- Presence of numerous traditional festivals</li> <li>- Proximity to access points (Rieti, Carsoli, L'Aquila) well linked to national transport networks</li> <li>- Presence of foreign residents</li> <li>- Cultural, architectonic and archaeological emergencies</li> <li>- Thanks to the decentralized position, architectural and naturalistic assets have suffered less contamination</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Widespread and neglected centers</li> <li>- Inadequate local public transport service and infrastructure, including main roads, abandoned and unsafe</li> <li>- Poor local supply of basic services</li> <li>- Times of high displacement</li> <li>- High index of elders</li> <li>- Very low population density</li> <li>- Poor collaboration and dialogue among local authorities</li> <li>- Lack of work</li> <li>- Serious problem of digital divide</li> <li>- Phenomenon of scholastic and working commuting</li> </ul>
NAVEGNA AND CERVIA NATURAL RESERVE	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- High environmental and landscape values</li> <li>- Presence of the Reserve Authority unifying all the Municipalities</li> <li>- Video surveillance network in the Reserve and in the Municipalities</li> <li>- Presence of 50 environmental and hiking guides called ‘Reserve Guide’</li> <li>- Highest peaks of the <i>Monti Carseolani</i> which is a relevant area of naturalistic and geolithological interest</li> <li>- High presence of wood;</li> <li>- Extensive chestnut trees, cultivated since ancient times</li> <li>- High floristic richness with different entities that are rare or very rare in Lazio Region</li> <li>- Presence of a species/habitat type of EU importance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The lakes have very little suitability for the fauna of the Reserve</li> <li>- Numerous landslide-prone areas</li> <li>- Progressive abandonment and low economic use of productive forests; the management of the forest is aimed at firewood</li> <li>- Chestnut tree diseases</li> <li>- Absence of paths specifically set up for people with disabilities</li> <li>- Inadequacy of the signage inside the Reserve</li> </ul>
TOURISM AND INITIATIVES	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Numerous sports activities organized on the artificial basins</li> <li>- Projects and initiatives led by local authorities and associations</li> <li>- Castles as great touristic attractors</li> <li>- Places of attraction for those who love sports; the Reserve and the Lakes attract people who practice water sports, hiking, climbing, cycling, mountain biking ...</li> <li>- Well-known and popular hiking trails: <i>Sentiero Italia</i>, <i>Cammino di San Benedetto</i>, <i>Sentiero Europa E1</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Frequent incompatibility between the touristic/recreational activities and hydro-electric management of artificial basins</li> <li>- Poor presence of well-organized tourism business</li> <li>- Lack of professionalism to satisfy new forms of tourism</li> <li>- English language not known</li> <li>- Poor winter tourist flows and substantial flows in the summer period</li> <li>- Lack of an adequate supply of accommodation that forces tourists to a limited presence in the area</li> </ul>
SUPPLY CHAINS AND ECONOMIC SECTOR	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Development of cattle breeding (instead of sheep) as it requires a greater initial investment but less assistance thereafter</li> <li>- Presence of sector chains such as: Wood supply (Municipalities of Rocca Sinibalda, Varco Sabino, Castel di Tora and Ascrea), Meat supply (Municipality of Paganico Sabino), Chestnut supply (Municipality of Collalto Sabino)</li> <li>- Typical agri-food products</li> <li>- Presence of some new generation agricultural and tourist entrepreneurs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fragmentation of land ownership: the largest part of the production is carried out by small and very small farms which do not have the adequate size to face investments and innovation</li> <li>- Poor channels for the marketing of products from the area to the national and international market</li> <li>- Wild or poorly controlled grazing</li> <li>- Poor propensity for associations among producers</li> </ul>

Table 1.  
SWOT Analysis: strengthens and weaknesses



OPPORTUNITIES	THREATS
<b>GENERAL OVERVIEW</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Better use of information and promotional channels depending on the proximity of the territory to the city of Rome</li> <li>- Creation of interventions to build participation and interest</li> <li>- The possibility to live villages as real social laboratories</li> <li>- Possibility of access to European or regional funds</li> <li>- Social promotion actions of the local population. Broader participation and exchange circuit reintroducing the elderly and young people remaining</li> <li>- Enhancement of heritage and environmental value</li> <li>- Availability of a substantial built heritage awaiting reuse; reactivating it would also mean putting it in safety.</li> <li>- Possibility of promoting widespread hospitality through the functionalization of second homes</li> <li>- Migrants or foreign people as social dynamic</li> <li>- Possibility of leading a high quality life in terms of environmental health and sustainability</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Failure to achieve a shared vision</li> <li>- Failure to have qualified personnel and new human resources</li> <li>- The flows of people, of economies, of products, of ideas impact on the places changing them and transforming them deeply, distancing them from their original identity</li> <li>- Supporting choices that are not specifically aimed at safeguarding the historical and social memory of the place</li> <li>- Development of unsustainable activities and/or not regulated</li> <li>- Dissatisfaction of community residents who live their daily lives without any aspiration and/or trust towards change, and with a general tendency towards passivity</li> <li>- Poor communication between protected area, local communities and tourists</li> <li>- Inability to connect with larger networks</li> <li>- Dissolution of the network of services and activities</li> </ul>
<b>NAVEGNA AND CERVIA NATURAL RESERVE</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Possibility of carrying out re-naturalization of the lake and river banks through the planting of hygrophilous species (reeds, willows, alders, etc.)</li> <li>- The Reserve can boost the economic sector</li> <li>- Park as the main actor in sustainable development</li> <li>- Integration of the Park with the planning and promotion of tourism at the regional level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Reliance on the Reserve for increasingly broader tasks with decreasing financial resources and lack of political attention</li> </ul>
<b>TOURISM AND INITIATIVES</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Current interest by northern European tourists</li> <li>- Peripheral places as high quality touristic destinations</li> <li>- Cooperation networks among stakeholders</li> <li>- Tourist offer deeply centered on the sense of place (heritage, landscape, biodiversity)</li> <li>- Promotion and communication initiatives through social media</li> <li>- Organization of events with a shared calendar among municipalities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of development opportunities for all the actors present and active in the tourism sector</li> <li>- Lack of identification in the tourist market</li> <li>- Mass tourism</li> <li>- Inability to recognize the right way resources deserve to be 'touristized'</li> <li>- Excessive environmental impact of tourism-related transport</li> <li>- Increased vandalism</li> </ul>
<b>SUPPLY CHAINS AND ECONOMIC SECTOR</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Creation of cooperation networks in order to improve high quality products</li> <li>- Development of a network of rural services with the involvement of farms</li> <li>- Enhancement of local agri-food productions</li> <li>- Identification and dissemination of a shared brand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Poor development of the sector chains</li> </ul>

Table 2.  
SWOT Analysis: opportunities and threats

## Insights and conclusions

This contribution highlighted several weaknesses related to the intervention in inner areas, namely within protected areas.

A main crucial issue affects the merging of municipalities (Fig. 6 - 7) in order to overcome the ‘small is beautiful’ approach and get critical mass sufficient to guarantee, in such conditions of environmental surplus and structural sub-equipment, adequate living conditions and facilities for the populations, at least through tolerable levels of accessibility to goods and services available elsewhere<sup>7</sup>.

Unfortunately, these processes are under way with many difficulties, despite the Law 7 April 2014, n. 56, “Provisions on Metropolitan Cities, Provinces, Unions and Mergers of Municipalities” (so-called ‘Legge Delrio’) establishing compulsory ‘unions’ between two or more Municipalities sharing functions and facilities within their competence in case of municipalities with less than 5,000 inhabitants.

As long as the planning schemes associated with local strategies keep following pre-existing initiatives and inter-municipality is randomly called upon, the outcomes will be unsteady and insecure.

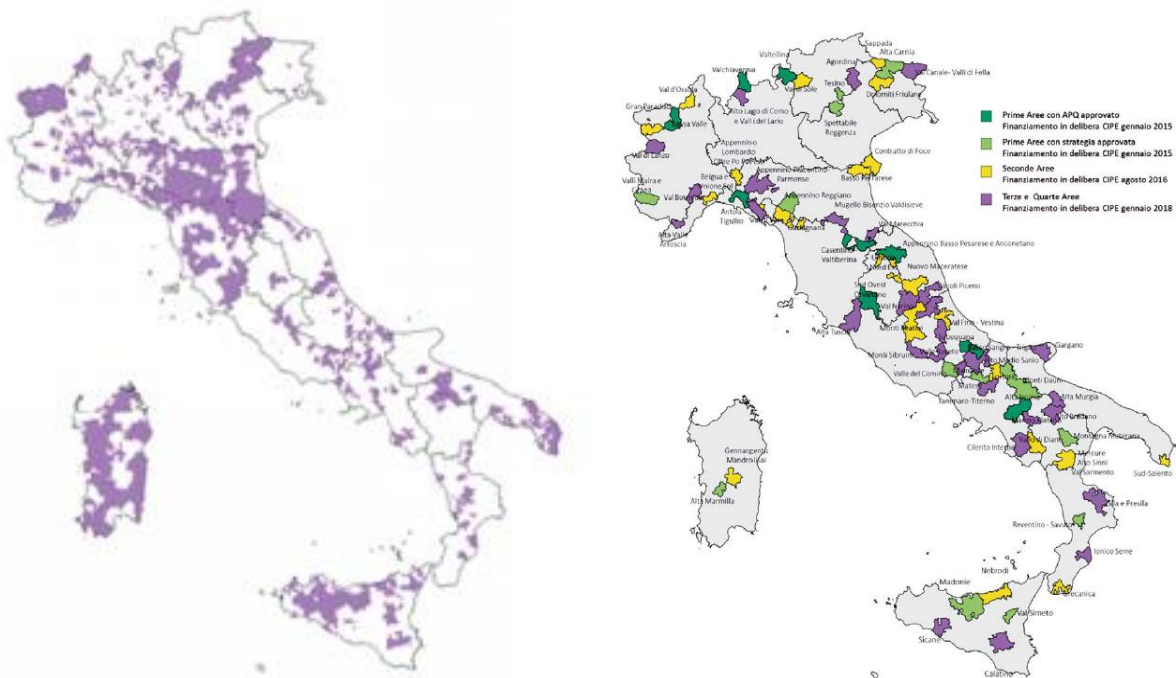


Fig. 6.

Current mismatch between ‘Inter-municipalities’, as of 2015, and the 72 selected ‘Inner areas’ (2017), deemed liable to obtain relevant results in the short term, ruled by agreements with the Regions and local authorities.

<sup>7</sup> This issue has been addressed long since in France in the late 1990s through the *Schéma des services collectifs* entrusted to the Regions, and more recently through the *Pôles d'équilibre territorial*, inter-municipalities envisioned as an antidote to the administrative fragmentation.

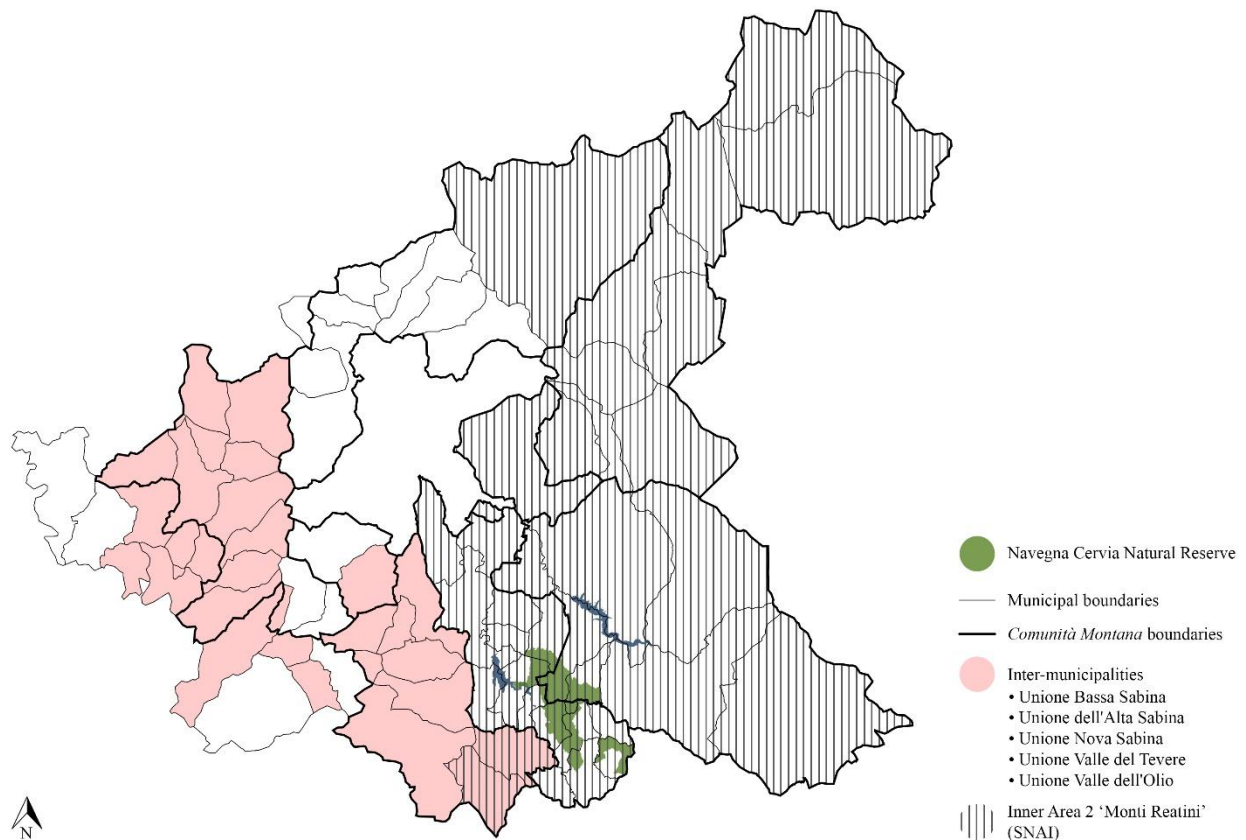


Fig. 7.

All the Municipalities of Rieti Province are represented. In red the 'inter-municipalities', in grey the 'Monti Reatini' inner area and in black line the *Comunità Montana*. Territorial management strategies or authorities do not overlap. Credits: Elisa Zaccardi, Thesis "Metafore verdi. Ecologie ed economie per un'area interna", tutor Prof. Anna Laura Palazzo, co-tutor PhD Romina D'Ascanio, summer 2019.

A further point is to come to grips with the divide between conservation (within land management plans) and development (within action plans), by means of effective land use regulations. When it comes to inner areas where strategic Environmental Assessment is a relevant issue, the core problem is to bridge the gap between the comprehensive approach featuring the planning culture and the incrementalism typical to life sciences.

As a matter of fact, the logic stemming from the environmental paradigm hardly matches with the synthetic 'overall vision' of regional planning. The environmental sciences are widely depending on thresholds related to resource conservation/reproducibility (indicators of optimum and critical consumption of land, air, water and energy prescribing the limits to growth), while planning is called upon to locate and qualify its field of activity and its practical aims by means of spatial analysis and zoning techniques.

It is clear that the idea of a 'common path' rooted on the concept of 'landscape', that both approaches share, can only be the result of a strong dialectics between assessment and planning traditions, organized around the classical formulation 'if...then'. In regional planning practice, the accent is placed on the latter (then, or rather the far future), whilst the environmental sciences look at the near future (if), approaching it by gradual steps, also taking into account possible alternatives.

Starting from these considerations, a State-Pressure-Response conceptual scheme provides a methodology based on stronger connections and a dialogue between evaluation and planning paths comparing and balancing if and then within different scenarios.

According to the European Landscape Convention, landscape has to be regarded as a common place for sharing opinions and visions in order to achieve 'landscape quality objectives'.

- (i) Landscape units are to be identified for the characterization process dealing with tangible and intangible assets and their relationships, values-in-use, and to provide quality objectives, guidelines and operational issues.
- (ii) Different 'predictory states' related to different pressures are to be assessed using both spatial and environmental criteria and indicators.
- (iii) The preferred scenario is to be shared within public bodies, communities and practitioners.

- (iv) Policies and managerial tools for landscape are to be put in place collecting major issues in order to increase environmental and social sustainability conditions.

Such processes can be reshaped, if the case, according to the objectives to be fulfilled. Indeed, the environmental tradition and the principles of strategic action can dialogue.

In conclusion, whereas the environmental thinking is crucial in the renewal of planning paradigms, circularity between knowledge and action underlines the cultural shift from a substantive rationale, linked to an 'ends-means' approach, to an incremental one, in which capability, compatibility and performance are at stake.

Moreover, assessing sustainable development over time is more than a quantitative operation. It implies symbolic values, perceptive aspects, personal considerations, that cannot be reduced to simple logic operations. A strong management is required in merging different (quantitative and qualitative) factors, and looking for a synthesis.

It is therefore necessary to address both territorial production and landscape reproduction encouraging bottom-up practices drawing upon the natural capital and biodiversity reservoirs that are also helpful for urban populations.

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